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dialogue

Agnès Varda: From Photography to Cinema and Vice Versa

(dis)agreements

The state of criticism in Spain



FROM CAMERA TO CAMERA

Still Photography and the Moving Image

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By Carlos Planes Cortell.



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table of contents

L'ATALANTE. ISSUE 12. JULY-DECEMBER 2011 (2013 REEDITION)

EDITORIAL

- 5 Avatars of the image. **Rebeca Romero Escrivá.**

NOTEBOOK

From Camera to Camera: Still Photography and the Moving Image

- 7 *Time-Lapse, Time Map*. The Photographic Body of San Francisco in David Fincher's *Zodiac*. **Damian Sutton.**
- 12 Cartier Bresson's *Le Retour*, or, What Is Wrong with this Picture. **Stuart Liebman.**
- 20 The Strange Twentieth-Century Family Album. **Sylvie Lindeperg**
- 28 Migrations: *The Grapes of Wrath* and the Aims of the Farm Security Administration. **Rebeca Romero Escrivá.**
- 40 The Suspension of *Cinematic Momentum*. **César Ustarroz.**
- 46 The *Camera Lucida* (and the Digital Camera): the Re-mediation of Photography in Computer Generated Animation. **Marta Martín Núñez.**
- 52 Cinema and Photography: The Poetics of *Punctum* in Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1962). **Javier Marzal Felici.**
- 62 Ariadne's Thread. The Beaches that *are* Agnès Varda. **Shelley Rice.**

DIALOGUE

- 68 **Agnès Varda:** From Photography to Cinema and Vice Versa. **Christa Blümlinger.**

(DIS)AGREEMENTS

The State of Criticism in Spain

- 76 Introduction. **Jordi Revert.**
- 78 Discussion. **Daniel Gascó, Carlos Losilla, Diego Salgado.**
- 83 Conclusion: Loving Criticism. **Jordi Revert.**

VANISHING POINTS

- 86 Polanski's Head. **Javier Alcoriza Vento.**
- 92 Torture as an Inversion of the Social Order: A Commentary on Roman Polanski's *Death and the Maiden*. **Efrén Poveda García.**
- 98 The Myth and Legend of Columbus: In Search of Christopher Columbus in Film. **Asela R. Laguna.**
- 106 *Tokyo-Ga*: A First Person Journey (A Filmed Diary about Absence). **José Antonio Hurtado.**
- 112 Visual Architecture in the Action Film. **Jordi Revert.**
- 120 Looking at the Little Events: The Case of Chris Marker and David Perlov. **Marta Montiano.**
- 126 "*He opened his eyes and saw only light blue... veils of pink*": Notes on *Let the Right One In*. **Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín, Iván Bort Gual, Shaila García Catalán.**



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Avatars of the image

Rebeca Romero Esquivá

The tension between photography and cinema has been inherent to the latter since its birth. On the 22nd of March 1985, six days prior to the presentation of the cinematograph, Louis Lumière gave a conference to the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale, illustrated by the projection of a number of photographic plates and the well-known animated scene depicting workers leaving a factory for their lunch break. Still pictures came to life for the first time to the sound of the whirring projector. The sudden animation of pictures for that impressionable audience highlighted the differences between photography and cinema even back then, establishing the frame as the basic unit of the celluloid strip, as well as contrasting its stillness with the cinematic illusion of movement. Beyond the material relationship between the two mediums, filmmaking has generated an endless number of combinations of photography and cinema that have given life to many more dialectics and opened up possibilities for digression around the temporal and spatial flow of still and moving images based on the techniques and discourses that propelled it: films made with photographs, frames taken from still pictures that have historically functioned as icons (the transition known as picture migration), the use of freeze frames, archival photographs, time-lapse photography, etc., right up to today's digital re-mediation. All this is dealt with by the authors –coming from different countries and different aesthetic and historiographic positions that do not always coincide– who contribute to this issue's Notebook, *From Camera to Camera: Still Photography and the Moving Image*, as well as in the Dialogue with Agnès Varda, a filmmaker whose particular approach to photography is not limited to her films alone, as her career also represents the contrary movement followed by film-makers and artists of various generations, like Ulrike Ottinger, Chris Marker, Chantal Akerman, Peter Greenaway, Atom Egoyan, Victor Erice and Abbas Kiarostami, whose works have generated exhibitions examining the intersections between cinema and the new media, between moving image and screening practices. Installations, multimedia art and work based on the study of and reflection on space-time (through the use of video and photography both in analogue and digital formats) blur the boundaries between theatre screenings and galleries or museums, a topic that will be dealt with in depth in the next *Disagreements* section in issue 13 (January-June 2012), *Cinema in the museum*. In this issue, this section explores a completely different topic with which, without shying away from discrepancies or contradictions, we seek to echo the current state of film criticism in Spain by giving voice to the professionals who work in the field. Criticism, as the umbilical cord between the cinema and its audience, bears witness to the need to keep communication alive between these two spheres without harming either one, always seeking to consider the low in light of the high, with the aim of conveying the sense of elevation intrinsic to the critic's work. It is easy to overlook its mission on the pretext that Spanish cinema is not a favourite of audiences, or that audiences are only interested in films that appeal to their lowest instincts. The verdict traditionally proclaimed by the critic (as an artist or demiurge) is a symbol of the responsibility critics hold.

Finally, as usual, in *Vanishing Points* a group of authors analyse different topics from different areas. This miscellany, which ranges from Polanski's metaphors to the visual architecture of action films, has the genuinely truthful vitality of "wild thinking". The articles that form this last section could be labelled with the warning that the practically unassailable objection to criticism is the terror that it will be overwhelmed by the object of its appraisals. ■

NOTEBOOK

From camera to camera

Still Photography and the Moving Image

TIME-LAPSE, TIME MAP. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC BODY OF SAN FRANCISCO IN DAVID FINCHER'S ZODIAC

Damian Sutton

Halfway through David Fincher's 2007 crime thriller *Zodiac*, a police procedure movie recounting the twenty-year investigation of a serial killer who terrorized California in the 1960s and 1970s, a brief time-lapse sequence shows the construction of the iconic Transamerica building in downtown San Francisco. A 48 floor, 260m high pyramid, the Transamerica tower is perhaps the most prominent building in the city, and was built between 1969 and 1972, designed by William L. Pereira Associates. The time-lapse sequence charts the growth of the building over approximately one year, from 1971-1972, and is accompanied by Marvin Gaye's Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler) from 1971. In the film's narrative, the sequence segues between the early successes of the investigating team and reporters in tracking and identifying the prime suspect, and the beginning of the story of this group's obsession and dissolution, starting with

the alcoholic reporter Paul Avery (Robert Downey Jr.) The film follows the trials of lead detective inspector David Toschi (Mark Ruffalo) and cartoonist and eventual true-crime writer Robert Graysmith (Jake Gyllenhaal) in their pursuit of the Zodiac, a killer who chose his victims seemingly at random, in different parts of California, whilst sending taunting letters to adversaries via the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Famously, the Zodiac was never conclusively identified, and the film ends unresolved, with only a suggestion (made through a silent encounter between Graysmith and the chief suspect) of any identification, which is later thwarted by retrospective DNA sampling. In order to tell this story, the film uses a number of telescoping devices to narrate the passing of empty time between periods of the film's activity, including an audio montage of pop songs and radio clips over a blank screen, a digital overlay of the Zodiac's letters across the actors in

one scene, and this time-lapse sequence of the Transamerica building. One of the most striking elements of the sequence is its apparent ellipsis of one day, so that it begins with foundations caught in the evening sun, passes through night and through daytime as the building rises, and is topped out as the sun sets and the building is illuminated from within. So one year is presented as one day, which is presented in 30 seconds of screen time. Throughout the sequence, the flickering spider legs of construction cranes circle the construction, their spiraling pattern apparently exposing the individual frames which make up the time-lapse sequence. Importantly, like all time-lapse sequences, it returns cinema to its constituent construction of still photographs, perhaps more so because it interrupts a studio feature film.¹

The time-lapse sequence was completed by Steven Messing and a team at Matte World, and stands out in the film for two key reasons. In the first instance, *Zodiac* was filmed entirely on digital video – the new Thomson Viper Film-Stream, with digital magazines storing all its rushes as data. In addition, substantial elements of the film's production design, including some of the outdoor sets, gunshot wounds and helicopter views of the city, were constructed as 3D digital sets. This included the Transamerica sequence, which was achieved by compositing time-lapse photographs of the sky with a 3D digital model of the building and day/night effects. CGI in cinema often relies upon the physical simulacra of photography in order to attest to the real: lens flare, film scratches and other artifacts of photography are added to the image, and less obvious rendering effects, such as motion blur, make digital creation appear to be photographic capture. In this sense, it is easy to see why the Transamerica sequence has been viewed as a technical flourish, even if this makes director Fincher uncomfortable (Fincher 2007). In all other respects the digital capture, compositing and rendering of the film is intended to be imperceptible, and great lengths were taken to achieve a distinct filmic look, including a digital

In order to tell this story, the film uses a number of telescoping devices to narrate the passing of empty time between periods of the film's activity

restoration at DTS Digital Cinema, who had previously restored the original *Star Wars* trilogy. (Kadner 2007: 88) The visual texture of the film was heavily influenced by the still photography of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore, two great American photographers who rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, and whose use of colour was at the time something of a radical departure. Whilst it is not unusual for a film to have a visual style guide – indeed effective production design and cinematography depends upon it – what is telling is the evidence of debate over the appearance of the filmic, or photographic, that a digitally shot movie should have. As cinematographer Harris Savides remarked, making the production look like film “was in my mind's eye, but I don't know if I'm necessarily right. Should a movie look like film or something else?” (Williams 2007: 41). Elsewhere he betrays the friction caused by the director's adherence to testing the possibilities of the new Viper camera: “For me the benchmark is film, so why not shoot film? [...] Yet Fincher wanted us to use this technology” (Taubin 2007: 27). Perhaps then the Transamerica time-lapse sequence has a critical role, not just to give the semblance of photography within the feature film, but to naturalise and make unremarkable the considerable efforts the director and his team took to make the production look like film.

The second reason for the sequence to stand out has more to do with the filmic than even the strenuous efforts made in pre- and post-production. CGI features often make pointed use of metaphors of

photography, and this has been particularly so in the first few years of digital feature production. *Vidocq* (2001), the period crime thriller directed by Pitof and starring Gerard Depardieu, was shot entirely on digital video, and has some astonishing CGI effects sequences, even for its time. But it is the *modus operandi* of the vampiric serial killer which provides the movie's important metaphor for the passing of the photographic image in cinema: the killer wears a mask made of mirrored glass, so that his visage is not unlike the appearance of a daguerreotype. The daguerreotype, one of the earliest and most successful photographic processes, was a piece of highly polished copper and silver plate, upon which the image appeared. When a viewer looked directly at the plate, they saw themselves only in its mirrored surface.² The Transamerica sequence provides just such a reflection on photography in *Zodiac*. As the critic Amy Taubin describes, it is a film in which the “relationship between the analogue past and the digital future has to do with knowledge and its empirical basis and representation in codes and data” (Taubin 2007: 24). For Taubin the film is historically significant because of its digital production and its attention to accuracy, even if this means breaking the connection between the photograph and its object – the precious indexical connection upon which so much of our trust in photography is based. But is also significant because it is a story about the distance travelled in terms of technology, and its relationship to evidence, between the 1960s and the present, in that the use of photography as evidence is presented as an after-thought (one of the surviving victims is shown a mugshot of the suspect only after two decades have passed), whilst the collection of data is hampered by jurisdiction problems and inadequacies of communication technologies. In a similar manner, the Transamerica sequence narrates the gap between the technologies of CGI and 3D digital filmmaking and the analogue source photographs of the building's construction, which were shot across the city from a vantage point owned by Francis Ford

Coppola. The apparent signs of photography, most importantly the flicker created by the rotating cranes, demonstrate something else about photography (and especially cinema) that must inevitably undergo a further revolution: They demonstrate how reliant we are upon photography and cinema to provide us with a way of comprehending time.

The relationship between photography, cinema and time has been explored by a number of film critics and philosophers, with perhaps the most influential being the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. His two books on cinema – *The Movement-image* and *The Time-image* – describe cinema as a process of constructing an expression of time which follows closely our *modern* comprehension, with time appearing to flow logically from movement in space. (Deleuze 1997 and 1994) For Deleuze, the cinema “conveys a relief in time, a perspective in time [...] This is why time essentially takes on the power to contract or dilate, as movement takes on the power to slow down or accelerate” (Deleuze 1997: 24). Profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson, Deleuze saw the photograph as a still image, an immobile section, from which a particular logic of cinema was developed. The still images are captured in sequence, which are strung together as shots, with editing proceeding from this to create our classic idea of narrative. Cinema narration evolved from film by using a succession of still images as a false movement. It is a system reliant upon how it replays our sense of time back to us, so that the shot reconstitutes time in a way that will appear to be our own time, making the reconstruction invisible. In Deleuze’s work, the photograph almost always appears as a metaphor for stasis, insolubility and stagnation. In his work with the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, the photograph is used to describe a competent “tracing” of identity, in antithesis of the growing, changing individual for whom *coming-into-being* is an ongoing project. Hence psychoanalysis is the practice of taking “photos of the unconscious” in the manner of a snapshot. (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 13) This is opposed

to *mapping*, which is offered as a process that rhizomatic, and sensitive to growth, since it is always “detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits” (Ibid. 21). In what ways, then, might a photograph be a map, rather than a tracing?

In his book on cinema and the photograph, *Between Film and Screen*, Garrett Stewart reminds us that the flicker in cinema is invisible, suggesting audiences have only very rarely ever marveled at, cared or even known about photography’s role in cinema. (Stewart 1999: 260) Time-lapse photography then may be the only time the photograph within cinema becomes visible, or even wondrous, and it may be this release from its invisible role in cinema which allows it to express other representations of time than the snapshot. As David Lavery has noted, time-lapse photography is a technique which is well known and often visible in our everyday visual culture – including in corporate identity and advertising, feature films, as well as scientific applications. (Lavery 2006: 1-3) Time-lapse is an often-used practice in contemporary art and in amateur production, to the extent that amateur or ‘prosumer’ video equipment now have specific time-lapse functions. This should hardly be surprising since many of the pioneers of time-lapse photography have emerged from the amateur, rather than the professional, sphere of filmmaking practice, including the interdisciplinary application of time-lapse photography in botany and the life sciences. These include pioneers such as Wilhelm Pfeffer and Roman Vishniac, but perhaps most famously the American small-town banker John Nash Ott. It was Ott’s home experiments, his employment by schools’ boards, scientific and medical bodies, and his prodigious public lectures, which perhaps cemented in the public mind the idea of time-lapse photography as a technical flourish by competent amateurs. Ott’s work in particular specialized in botanical growth normally difficult to observe in human time, and it is perhaps this focus on growth as wondrous and playful (he describes, in his autobiography, making a film of ‘dancing

primroses) that has done much to further naturalize our cinematic understanding of time. (Ott 1958: 19-21) Even in Peter Greenaway’s *A Zed & Two Noughts* (1985) the use of time-lapse is an experimental, interdisciplinary leap by the film’s twin zoologists from the study of animal behaviour to the study of animals in death and their decay.

The fact that time-lapse presents to us different blocs of time which are normally beyond our endurance (or simply our patience) illustrates how much time itself is a psychological concept. Alexey Alyushin, for example, has written of how Bergson’s philosophy of perception (which influenced Deleuze) understood it to be a kind of mental snapshot photography, drawn up in sequence, which is uncannily close to the concept of temporal neurophysiological frames in modern brain science. (Alyushin 2010: 440-441) Time-lapse extends our temporal frames, in that we see or perceive through photography a larger wholeness of time which we might ordinarily enter or leave at any point, since we are unlikely to experience this whole directly. Time-lapse therefore exposes time as hodological – a mental bloc of forces through which actions exist as pathways. This is developed from the concept of hodological space introduced by the psychologist Kurt Lewin. (Lewin 1935) Tarja Laine has explored the notion of film providing a hodological space in Lars von Trier’s *Dogville* (2003), since the film eschews sets and props in favour of an empty sound stage:

The primary significance of objects [in hodological space] is not that they exist as conceptual entities (defined by their general properties such as size or shape). Instead, they are functional entities which are understood through their capacity as instruments (that are used in order to obtain certain goals)...By removing the setting in *Dogville*, von Trier leaves the ordinary Euclidean space behind and creates a hodological field of force instead. (Laine 2006: 131-2)

We can propose a concept of hodological time if we remember Deleuze’s argument that time is represented by movement in space. It is for this reason

that his theory of cinema based on logic and action (the action-image) is one based on the hodological. He writes that “the action-image presupposes a space in which ends, obstacles, means, subordinations, the principle and the secondary, predominances and loathings are distributed: a whole space which can be called ‘hodological’” (Deleuze 1994: 203). So the hodological space of cinema is one of resolution and structure, a *way-space* through which the narrative moves in time, toward a conclusion. However, the abstract nature of time-lapse photography complicates this, since it makes immediately apparent the reality that objects as functional entities are really bodies in time. Whether demonstrating this as growth from seed to flower, or in decomposition from animal to cadaver, time-lapse makes explicit the identity of the object as a temporal one, which needs a different sense of the whole of time in order to comprehend.

For this reason, time-lapse landscapes, such as we see projects such as Godfrey Reggio’s *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983) or Ron Fricke’s *Chronos* (1985), are images of bodies which form over millennia, and each of which is perhaps difficult to determine as one body from another. They also delimit the body from the landscape, so that the image maps new bodies over others. For example, in the timelapse cityscape, roads, buildings and streets become bodies and bloodstreams in time-lapse photography, and this is exactly what the Transamerica sequence in *Zodiac* aims to show: to demonstrate how the city grows each building as a new child. *Zodiac* is therefore indebted to the experimental nature of Fricke’s work on *Chronos*, on his later film *Baraka* (1992), and as director of photography on *Koyaanisqatsi*. It was this work which opened up time-lapse as an explicitly contemplative form of photography for its own sake, and as a part of specifically filmmaking practice.

Koyaanisqatsi, part of a trilogy of films under the direction of Godfrey Reggio

including *Powaqatsi* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi* (2002), has been described as a ‘visual-tone-poem’, and is indeed a film with no explicit conventional narrative, characters, or even personnel; but only a sequence of images with a musical score. (Ramsey 1986:62). Images of America, filmed using various types of motion picture photography including speeded up and slowed film, infra-red film, and

qatsi is motion...a cohesiveness or flow... This undulating motion carries from one camera speed to another, whatever the subject” (Gold 1985: 70). *Koyaanisqatsi* had a troubled production, lasting over seven years, and involving the participation of various cinematographers (often taking the directorial controls for a time), and a producer, Reggio, whose directorial input was not fully realised until the project was nearing completion.

Indeed, Gold’s account of the filming of *Koyaanisqatsi* places much emphasis on the autonomy of Fricke as a cinematographer, particularly for those sequences (many of the aerial and time-lapse shots) that required heavy experimentation. In these, it appears, it was more often the technology that

provided the impetus than any narrative, thematic, or even generic considerations. This strikes a significant parallel with Savides and Fincher on *Zodiac*, for whom the discussion focused, as we have seen, on producing an image that was filmic in appearance. At the same time, Savides insisted on testing the new digital equipment to the edge and beyond of its technical limits, always comparing it with the capabilities of analogue film. (Williams 2007: 36) It is this experimentation with technology which begins to shape cinema as an apparatus rather than a specific technology, so that different capture modes (analogue or digital) become subordinate to a particular set of ideas and a particular representation of time. The photograph as the constituent of cinema is replaced by the temporal frame, in the same way that the reference photographs of the real Transamerica building are replaced by simulations that allow us to witness the construction of the building as a body of the city.

The production of bodies leads to a hodological space in cinema, in which objects gain identity and purpose. The location and synchronization of sound is a part of this, so whilst the image and sound remain unconnected (time-lapse cinema is, after all, silent) the image re-

The fact that time-lapse presents to us different blocs of time which are normally beyond our endurance (or simply our patience) illustrates how much time itself is a psychological concept

aerial photography, are presented with a musical soundtrack (composed by Philip Glass). *Koyaanisqatsi* presents its images as images, its sounds as sounds, and, as Michael Dempsey notes, the “impactful” images are “doubled by the score”, to create a richness of experience that Reggio himself admits can only be appreciated fully through memory “revisited” (Dempsey 1989: 5). *Koyaanisqatsi* is full of images of the body, and particularly the face, that dominates even in the landscapes that appear. It is difficult not to scan the surface of the screen looking for distinguishing features that might help identify the deserts of Arizona, or the cityscape of New York. The buttresses of Monument Valley or the building’s of Manhattan’s skylines are landscapes that become recognizable as faces, just as any human face might instantly be scanned for features to identify it. Similarly, the faces of Vegas croupiers might be real faces, but they are not as clear as those instantly recognisable faces of the Vegas street-lights. In this way, *Koyaanisqatsi* turns the undoubted intensity of its images into one act of signification as a whole, just as its time-lapse photography is so regulated that it turns even out its various intensities of motion. As Ron Gold noted on its release: “The one constant in *Koyaanis-*

mains in a pre-hodological state. Cinema that explores the body also remains pre-hodological, and so Deleuze, for instance, points to the role of children or clowns in cinema as something that disturbs ("haunts") the creation of hodological space. (Deleuze 1994: 203) This is also the case with the vision of the growth of plants, or of the decay of the animal body; they complicate the creation of resolved space. The photographs, for an attenuated moment of wonder, map time rather than trace its path. *Zodiac* is a cinema of bodies – mostly the victims, but in particular the haunting presence of the Zodiac as a character from the Grand Guignol. The building of the Transamerica tower – as a real building and as a 3D digital model – neatly parallels the piecing together of the Zodiac's identity by the Graysmith in particular, who collects circumstantial evidence as a network of pathways which can be mapped to locate the killer. The film collapses this decades-long process into two and half hours, and it is then collapsed further into the piecing together of the Transamerica building over 30 seconds. This is a conceit of digital cinema which is only achievable through 3D technology, which replicates what the photographing camera might have captured in 2D. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the building is not photographed the *building* of it is still achieved, and reduced to the temporal frames of the still image from which film prints (as well as video) are still reconstituted.

Whenever cinema encounters the photograph it is always reflecting upon its own ontology, its own analogue base. However, where this is normally seen in the act of filming the photograph or in the freeze-frame, which stalls on the constituent still images of cinema, it is in the time-lapse sequence that attenuates the wondrous as part of its construction. What I have tried to show in this article is how a digital revolution in cinema is nonetheless indebted to the photograph, beyond any reliance on the index or the causal real. The time-lapse sequence in *Zodiac* neatly diverts attention away from the role and use of digital technologies in production design and compositing,

as well as image rendering to produce the "filmic" appeal of a period film. But it does more than this: it introduces the body to digital cinema in a manner which is reliant upon the digital's photographic legacy. The photograph within cinema gives the sequence a mechanics by which it can digitally build in three-dimensions, a mechanics based on the stringing together of still images to make up the cinematic shot. The sign of the photograph is no longer the still image, but is instead the flicker generated by this succession. At the same time, it provides for the digital image a contiguity with the photograph no longer based upon the analogue capture but now based upon the apparatus as a set of photographic ideas. Whilst digital production may have left the analogue far behind, the exploration of the photographic, and of the sense of time and space it gives us, may yet continue. ■

Notes

* Editor's Note: This essay included still frames (screenshots) of *Zodiac* as a support to the arguments explained by the author. However, the current distributor of the film in Spain, Warner Bros, has not authorized the publication of those images, neither, as alternative, has provided free use promotional images.

1 In preparing this article, I am grateful for discussions on time-lapse with the online community *Film-Philosophy* (film-philosophy.com), especially Henry Miller.

2 I discuss this film in greater depth in SUTTON, Damian (2009). *Photography Cinema Memory: The Crystal Image of Time*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

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CARTIER BRESSON'S *LE RETOUR*, OR, WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE

Stuart Liebman

Henri Cartier-Bresson's well-known theorization of his photographic practice - what has since become branded by the shopworn phrase "the decisive moment" - proposes the image as a geometric spatial construction in which gestures, persons and narrative congeal in a quantum of time virtually without temporal extension. On the flat surface of such a photograph all pictorial elements - shapes, spaces, tones, postures, gazes, demeanors - converge in a compelling structure to articulate and illuminate the crucial heart of an event. The pregnant indexical image suspends the "before" and "after" of historical time in a continuous present; history nevertheless continues to haunt the picture from just outside its margins. The triangulated transaction between the photographer, the world and the spectator is completed when a viewer perceives the print in a glance, in a flash of recognition itself existing almost outside time¹.

In this conception, the unfolding of a plastic configuration of spaces and bodies in time into an anecdote, can only appear as a fall from the state of tense, but graceful equilibrium which is the decisive moment. That is certainly the implication one often encounters in comments by the great photographer's epigones, who unfortunately use it as a criterion to diminish the stature of the films Cartier-Bresson made. Consider, for example, remarks by Pierre Assouline, Cartier-Bresson's principal biographer, when he invidiously compares a scene Cartier-Bresson's camera team recorded in Dessau, Germany for his 1945 film, *Le Retour*, and the celebrated still the master himself shot as the action was taking place. The circumstances are these: A female collaborator is being interrogated at a Displaced Persons camp while a large crowd of former inmates looks on. A woman - presumably a former victim - sullenly

listens; suddenly, she lashes out in rage while the audience silently watches. Cartier-Bresson captured the moment of maximum intensity with his Leica, while his colleagues filmed the scene as the drama mounted, then exploded, over several minutes from a few different vantage points. Many appear in the final, edited version. The photograph, Assouline observes,

is striking to start with because of its composition, superbly structured by an invisible diagonal that runs from the cold expression of the interrogator below right, through the shifty look of the suspect in the centre, to the accusing stance of the internee above left. Then there is the violence that leaps out of the picture. The whole image possesses absolute clarity, with each figure fixed in his or her pose, which accentuates the movement of the avenging woman's arm. Finally, there are the expressions of the people themselves: the grimace of the avenger, the instinctive self-protection of the one who is being attacked, the mixture of joy, fear and indifference in the crowd. All these things rush past too quickly in a film to be seen properly, but a photograph freezes them forever [...]. The two forms can scarcely be compared...²

Cartier's powerful photograph of this wrenching moment is deservedly famous. But one need not even have seen the film Assouline treats so summarily to notice that he does not make the slightest effort to describe what this sequence in Cartier-Bresson's film looks like or how the several shots work in context. Why, then, his unexplained, disparaging critical comments and the breezy declaration that the two versions cannot be compared? He is remarkably vague, moreover, about the complex goals pursued by the film, and the circumstances in which it was conceived and produced get surprisingly short shrift. Quite astoundingly, despite the fact that Cartier-Bresson worked assiduously on *Le Retour* for more than six months, Assouline even goes so far as to suggest that Cartier-Bresson was indifferent to the way his film was shot and structured. "As he

had a team of technicians at his disposal", Assouline notes, "he left it to them to implement his instructions, which allowed him the freedom to take his photographs" (ASSOULINE, 2005: 138). His casual dismissal leaves unexplored the film's history, its importance as a historic document and work of art in its own right³, the photographer's commitment to his project, and, finally, the more important problems compromising his cinematic achievement. In account such as Assouline's, we can never reach a decisive moment of judgment of this still under-researched and underestimated film.

hed into the borders of the foundering Reich, and his offer was accepted. On September 2, 1944, he was recognized as a member of the Mouvement National des Prisonniers et Déportés. By September 8, he received authorization to work on a film about returning prisoners from the Syndicat des Techniciens de la Production Cinématographique. On September 12, the Director General of the Ministère des Prisonniers, Déportés et Réfugiés (hereafter MPDR) issued "Ordre de mission no. 56" which permitted the photographer to travel unhindered in the liberated territories so that he could take still and moving pictures of returning POWs, forced

Cartier-Bresson captured the moment of maximum intensity with his Leica, while his colleagues filmed the scene

Le Retour's history may be said to begin with Cartier-Bresson's own experience as a long-term POW. Captured in the late Spring of 1940, he escaped a German labor camp in February, 1943. Eighteen months later, after he had clandestinely resumed his photographic work, Paris was liberated in late August. Present during the giddy celebrations, Cartier-Bresson volunteered to accompany Allied troops as they pus-

and voluntary laborers, and deportees⁴. Paillolle, the Director of (French) Military Security, as well as the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces had no objections.

This rapid sequence of approvals was animated, no doubt, by the nascent French government's desire to document their efforts to assist the return of millions of French prisoners amidst the chaos while the Allies defeated

Henri Cartier-Bresson's photograph, April, 1945. Magnum Photos / Courtesy of Contacto Agencia de Fotografía



Nazi Germany. The reincorporation of French captives from Germany and Eastern Europe, in fact, lay at the center of its struggle to reconstitute and reconcile the nation. The sense of urgency was particularly acute in the MPDR headed by Henri Frenay, who sought to allay the anxieties of hundreds of thousands in France who were awaiting the return of their loved ones from Germany and beyond⁵. Lacking sufficient resources and personnel, Frenay appealed to Les Services Américains d'Information, a section of the Office of War Information, for its support of a film that would convey French repatriation initiatives to home audiences. An American producer, Noma Ratner, was appointed to secure the funding. These were evidently late in coming, and the start of principal filming seems to have been delayed until at least April, 1945, after many of the Western camps had been liberated and prisoners were al-

ready streaming toward France⁶. This late start decisively shifted the film's focus away from the detainees' treatment in the camps to the governmental measures to bring them home.

Two Americans - a Captain Krimsky and Lt. Richard Banks - as well as additional support staff were hired to assist Cartier-Bresson. The available documents I have seen do not make clear precisely when these individuals joined the team or what roles they played during production⁷. Nor do we know when the journalist, poet, Communist Party member, and former internee Claude Roy was hired to write the script. A statement he had published on September 9, 1944, however, clearly expressed sentiments in keeping with the spirit of Cartier-Bresson's project as well as the thrust of the French government policies the film was intended to dramatize. Roy supported what he called a "liberated cinema" that would

leave its ivory tower and the constraints of the Occupation. "What freedom will perhaps allow us would be [...] a cinema of reality [...] in which we could find the image of our adventures and our challenges, of our struggles and our joys"⁸. No current struggle or potential joy was more pressing than ensuring the safe return of France's sons and daughters from captivity.

Undoubtedly, preliminary conversations about the themes and shape of the film began even before the arrival of production monies. Although Cartier-Bresson always insisted on his complete independence, certain ideas probably emerged following discussions with the sponsoring agencies (DRAME, 2007: 50). The general aim was to portray prisoners and forced laborers not primarily as abject victims, but as returning heroes. However, it is unlikely any script could have been completed until Cartier-Bresson edited a rough cut

Still frames (screenshots) of *Le Retour*. / Courtesy of Fondation Henry Cartier Bresson



over the summer of 1945. Their inability to film the liberation of the camps, must have led to an early decision to sketch the vile conditions in which prisoners had lived by using Allied pooled footage of the camps freed in April and early May⁹. Some of these shots had already been shown in newsreels. Such representations, however, were highly controversial and had to be treated delicately so as not to offend the sensibilities of French families still awaiting loved ones or already dealing with the psychological and social consequences of their return¹⁰. The images Cartier-Bresson chose, however painful they surely must have been (and still are) to watch, were therefore among the more anodyne available¹¹. The initially grim mood of the opening shots, however, was quickly dispelled by the next sequence, derived from the same filmed sources, in which prisoners at several different camps rapturously greeted their liberators. The emotional rhythm then shifted again with shots of limping or emaciated figures but these, in turn, give way to images of ill victims smiling stoically from their hospital beds as they are tended by physicians¹². This first and shortest section of the entire three-part, thirty-two minute film lasts nine minutes.

The second section begins with columns of prisoners jauntily ambling down German roads on their way home. It was here that Cartier-Bresson's team attempted at first hand to capture, in Roy's words, "the image of our adventures and our challenges". Most prisoners, however, were simply too physically depleted to complete the journey; they were forced to established unsanitary, makeshift rest sites the voiceover narrator insensitively likens to Gypsy encampments. They offered little support for ill or weak individuals. From the Allies' point of view, moreover, the prisoners' impulsive treks created a major, potentially embarrassing crisis: the former prisoners' haphazard wanderings not only jeopardized their health, they threatened widespread disease and also impeded the movement of troops and

war materiel to the front. The governments needed to take control of the repatriation process for these reasons as well as for very real security concerns.

The central section of *Le Retour*, approximately ten minutes long, lays out these crucial messages, stressing the need for caution, prudence and patience by explaining the reasons for the delays government intervention would cause. Key scenes in Cartier-Bresson's film dramatize the wisdom of the creation of DP camps and strict quarantine policies, which were deemed essential to organizing more efficient forms of transportation home amidst the extraordinary chaos of Europe in the Spring of 1945. The sheer scale of the problems encountered emerges in a listing of the many millions of former prisoners - 2.4 million Russians, 1.5 million Poles, 1.75 million Balts, 2.1 million French, etc. - crisscrossing the continent on their ways home. They had to be nourished, receive medical attention and be disinfected with DDT. All these processes required enormous commitments from personnel who were learning on the job, working for a new bureaucracy that inevitably slowed, even as it guaranteed the safety of the repatriation process. As the voiceover narration insists, the camps and procedures created a "zone where thousands rediscovered hope".

Interestingly, this reassuring message is flanked by two sequences stressing the need for vigilance in unmasking former collaborators and criminal perpetrators mixing with the flood of their former victims¹³. The first is the scene at the DP camp in Dessau described above. The edited construction of this event contains eight shots and is in two parts. The first five establish the outdoor courtroom scene as various suspects are assembled in long shot. Then, a woman in mannish, military garb is escorted to a table in medium shot. The camera shifts to a higher angle and the next shot employs a longer lens to get even closer to the action. The shot's framing closely matches Cartier-Bresson's famous photo. A woman in

a black dress glimpsed at the edge of the crowd in two prior shots has now drawn near to the suspect; rage clearly building in her eyes, she suddenly strikes her. Cut to a long shot of a dense line of witnesses watching intently. The first two shots of the second, three part section approach a male suspect being interrogated, although without the violent blow; it, too, concludes with a long shot of massed onlookers. The denouement in violence is present in both the still and the cinematic version but, *pace* Assouline, I find the filmed sequence in some ways even more compelling than the still. The cinematic syntax is disarmingly familiar as it proceeds in measured steps to the unexpected eruption of violence. With each step closer, the tension builds, especially since each shot reveals that the woman in black, as if via a jump cut, has moved closer to the accused. And because of the duration - albeit brief

Still frames (screenshots) of *Le Retour*. / Courtesy of Fondation Henry Cartier Bresson





Still frames (screenshots) of *Le Retour*. / Courtesy of Fondation Henry Cartier Bresson

- of the shot in which she strikes the alleged criminal, the audience - despite what Assouline asserts - is able to see, in a flash of real time, the rage welling up in her eyes that is only released in her blow¹⁴. The editing is sophisticated and assured in its subtle variation on standard editing practice. In the careful way it builds to a dramatic climax, the cinematic account is every bit as compelling as Cartier's Bresson's famous still image of the scene. A film, after all, is not simply a compilation of geometrically composed stills, nor should it be. It is a temporal art constructing events in a duration marked by varying degrees of tension. A film's artistic value is in no way diminished, certainly, by the lack of precise geometric compositions; indeed, such strategies may detract from the fresh sense of life caught unawares in its myriad variety that Cartier-Bresson prized so much and realized in his cinema.

As I have already suggested, many sequences in *Le Retour* may be said to continually build and release tensions rooted in supposedly impromptu events caught on the fly by the cinema-

tographers: the desperate condition of some prisoners gives way to joyous celebrations upon their liberators' arrival. Illness and desperation are sketched, then overcome. The cocky march of prisoners going home yields to their weakness, and so on. Many of these are forecast, amplified or ironized by the canny soundtrack composed by Robert Lannoy, another French former POW¹⁵.

The third section, approximately eleven minutes long, represents the film's emotional peak and culminates in the joyous return of the captives to France. The *rappel à l'ordre* imposed by government authorities has worked. Restored by their stays in the transit camps, prisoners by the thousands - the sick and the maimed as well as the merely haggard - are efficiently returned by trains and airplanes, to Le Bourget airport or the Gare d'Orsay. They are greeted by masses of cheering compatriots. Not insignificantly, Cartier-Bresson included an outsize portrait of General DeGaulle in one of the shots where the veterans registered. DeGaulle's image symbolized the watchful eyes of the French government as it carefully mo-

nitored the vital procedures shown in considerable detail. The climax is reserved for the very end, when families and friends nervously await a glimpse of their loved ones as they leave the station. Some ask timid questions and receive evasive shrugs. Stoic or weary expressions ultimately give way, however, to unbridled emotions. A lucky mother hugs her son; a man weeps in his friend's embrace; husbands, wives and lovers hug each other, cheek to cheek. These shots were taken in early April by Pierre Renoir, though it may be that Cartier-Bresson did specifically ask his old friend for certain kinds of shots with the conclusion of his film already in mind¹⁶. A viewer is left with an impression of a hard-won, deeply moving reunion of individuals, managed by the state, that would serve as a model for the national social reconciliation the government hoped to engineer. So, what is wrong with this picture? Certainly, the film's flaws have little to do with its confident, subtle aesthetic design. Rather, they are conceptual. Briefly stated, Cartier-Bresson and his collaborators too readily adopted the



Still frames (screenshots) of *Le Retour*. / Courtesy of Fondation Henry Cartier Bresson

discursive framework erected by the French government at the time. Eager to bring the massive purge of collaborators to a halt and facilitate political reconciliation, the government strongly promoted a homogenized account of the war's victims. They preferred upbeat portrayals of survivors as combatants and heroes, which was certainly true of many former POWs and political deportees. But the same cannot be meaningfully said of the thousands of women and children termed "racial deportees," namely the Jews who received "special treatment" at Auschwitz and other camps. In fact, neither the word "Jew" nor the names Auschwitz, Birkenau or Treblinka where Jews were murdered en masse were ever mentioned in Roy's commentary. The tone was struck in the very first voiceover one hears:

...Germany yesterday [was]... an immense prison in the heart of Europe whose frontiers were prison fences. Into this immense prison the Gestapo threw victims by the millions.

The Nazis tortured and exploited six million prisoners of war and fifteen mi-

llion forced workers and adversaries of Fascism, Hitler's captives condemned to slow death in a concentration camp or tragic death by torture in the gas chambers and by cremation. ...The Germans sought to degrade their souls by breaking their bodies, and if this did not succeed, death followed. Only one tenth of all political prisoners called political deportees survived¹⁷.

The last claim is exaggerated. As Annette Wieviorka notes, 63,085 persons, including hostages, resisters, political opponents and common criminals were deported to concentration camps from France. Of these 37,025 - that is 59% - survived. By contrast, 75,721 French and foreign-born Jews were shipped to centers of extermination in the East, and only 2500 - 3.3% - returned to their homes at the war's end. The figures simply do not add up; they create a fiction of a common fate that was not shared (WIEVIORKA, 1992: 20-21). It is true, of course, that much confusion about the victims reigned during this early period. As Olga Wormser-Migot reports, the lists of those deported were incomplete; fleeing Gestapo functiona-

ries destroyed arrest files. Many of the vulnerable remained in hiding; many more unknowns had died in the camps. Firm numbers were hard to obtain and in constant flux¹⁸. In this respect, *Le Retour's* submerging of the special identity of Jewish victims into the mass of interned soldiers, forced as well as voluntary laborers, and political prisoners was very much in step with government propaganda policy. Like other news accounts and newsreels published up to the moment of the film's release in November, 1945, *Le Retour* adopted blinders that distorted historical facts¹⁹.

Nevertheless, there *was* at least an incipient awareness that Jews had not been prisoners like any others²⁰. Many "ordinary" prisoners had been killed and many others had died in the camps, but no other group shared the Jews' special fate. The public's perception of that fate would only slowly be augmented, first as the Nuremberg Trials unfolded their startling revelations, and then as more candid films made abroad were shown in France. *Le Retour*, one might charitably say, was completed too soon to embrace that candor. ■

Notes

* Editor's Note: This essay was originally published in *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, num. 12, in July 2011 under the Spanish title "El Retorno, de Cartier-Bresson, o algo no cuadra en esta fotografía" (translated by Fernando Medina Gálvez). The pictures that illustrate it have been provided voluntarily by the author. *L'Atalante* is grateful to Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson for its permission to publish still photographs from *Le Retour* as well as to Contacto Agencia de Fotografía for the print of Magnum's Photo taken by Bresson (for more information: www.henricartierbresson.org, www.contactophoto.com and www.magnumphotos.com).

1 First enunciated in an epigram to his introduction to *Images à la sauvette* (Paris: Verve, 1952), the phrase became a slogan when translated in the English-language edition, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952). Reprinted many times, it is most accessible now in English in Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers* (New York: Aperture, 1999), pp. 20-43. The emphasis on geometry may well reflect the photographer's early training with the painter Andre L'Hote. See Michel Frizon, "Unpredictable Glances", in Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Scrapbook* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), p. 41.

2 Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson, A Biography* [1999]. Trans. David Wilson (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), pp. 137-138. Note, too, that Assouline incorrectly states that the film "opens with the scenes of disinfection" and gives the film's length as 25 minutes, when it actually lasts just over 32 minutes.

3 Assouline does praise one unspecified pan shot by attributing it without evidence to Cartier-Bresson. Once again he highlights that it ends on what he vaguely calls a "perfectly geometrical composition of great spiritual depth". But he then offers a backhanded compliment to other shots in which, he says, "emotions...speak for themselves", that is, without any attention to compositional geometries. These inconsistent remarks leave his standards for evaluating the aesthetic value of the shots unclear. Assouline, op.cit., p. 137.

4 These documents are preserved in the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris. I thank Clément Chéroux, Curator of Photography at the Centre Pompidou for suggesting that

I visit the Fondation, and Aude Rachimbault of the Fondation for her help in securing these texts for me. Note that the order makes no distinction between political and "racial" (i.e., Jewish or Gypsy) deportees.

5 A comprehensive overview of French policy toward repatriation can be found in Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci and Edouard Lynch, *La Libération des Camps et le Retour des Déportés* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1995). See also Annette Wiewiorka, *Déportation et génocide* (Paris: Plon, 1992). Description of other French films made during this effort are discussed by Claudine Drame in *Des Films pour le Dire: Reflets de la Shoah au cinéma, 1945-1985* (Geneva: Metropolis, 2007), pp. 15-70. Curiously, Henry Rousso does not mention *Le Retour* though it would support the general thesis articulated in his excellent *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

6 The delay may have been caused by OWI's severe budgetary constraints; the agency was itself terminated in September, 1945. Drame notes that Cartier-Bresson claimed to have filmed the bridges over the Elbe at the time the Soviet and American armies linked up, on April 25, 1945. See op. cit., p. 47.

7 Assouline credits both Krimsky and Banks as co-directors, although *Le Retour's* credits do not list them in these roles. Neither does the shorter American version of the film, *Reunion*, whose substantial reediting was supervised by Peter Elgar. In *Films Beget Films* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 71, Jay Leyda names Banks only as co-editor. Agnès Sire, in her essay, "Scrapbook Memories", claims Banks as a co-director, but only on Banks's authority. See *Scrapbook*, p. 13 and p. 220. Cartier-Bresson assigned himself the more modest title of "Conseiller Technique" although it is clear that he was *Le Retour's* guiding force. Incidentally, Cartier-Bresson clearly preferred his own cut to the shorter *Reunion*, whose substantial differences Leyda inexplicably understates. See Cartier-Bresson's letter to Beaumont Newhall dated February 18, 1946, reproduced in *Scrapbook*, p. 18.

8 *Carrefour* (No. 3, p. 4), cited by Sylvie Lindeperg, *Les écrans de l'ombre* (Paris: CNRS, 1997), p. 149.

9 *Le Retour* starts with some German footage showing French soldiers marching and working in camps.

10 For information about the censoring of newsreel footage shown in France in the early post-war period, see Drame, op.cit., pp. 15-70; and Sylvie Lindeperg, *Clio de 5 à 7. Les actualités de la Libération: archives du future* (Paris: CNRS, 2000).

11 Comparisons would include *Les Camps de la mort*, compiled from Allied and French camp footage. This film was made to accompany the exhibition, "Hitler's Crimes", which opened in Paris on June 10, 1945. It was screened throughout France until 1946.

12 One or more of the celebrations may well have been staged. Interestingly, *The Liberation of Auschwitz* (1985) by the German filmmaker Irmgard von zur Mühlen, includes poorly staged replicas of such joyous moments by Soviet filmmakers. The Soviets, however, never used this footage in any film during the period.

13 The second scene occurs just after the film's half-way mark when two former collaborators are apprehended.

14 Other shots of the ongoing scene were undoubtedly taken, though not used in the final edit. Cartier-Bresson also snapped pictures following the action. See his photographs in *Scrapbook*, pp. 226, 228-9.

15 Lannoy astutely comments on the impulsive march home by slyly shifting from major to minor keys. Elsewhere, he weaves in popular songs like "Auld Lang Syne" or anthems like "La Marseillaise", changing rhythms and harmonies to portray various emotional states. In instrumentation and style, Lannoy's score anticipates Hanns Eisler's for Alain Resnais's great, but also problematic, film *Nuit et brouillard* (1956) about the camps and their liberation.

16 Leyda erred when he attributed these shots to Cartier-Bresson. See *Films Beget Films*, p. 71.

17 I quote with minor modifications from the translation of the commentary to *Le Retour* held in the Fondation Cartier-Bresson.

18 See her *Le Retour des Déportés: quand les Alliés ouvrirent les portes*, second, enlarged edition (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1985).

19 As per the report in *Le Film Français*, No. 49 (November 9, 1945):1. Curiously, this leading industry journal promised a review of *Le Retour* but never published one. The same source on August 2, 1946, p. 81, mentions Regina Distribution as the distributor of a 900 meter version. How widely *Le Retour*

was seen in France, however, needs further research. See also Didier Epelbaum, *Pas un mot, pas une ligne?* (Paris: Stock, 2005), pp. 1-241, for information on press censorship and the deliberate exclusion of Soviet filmed and written reports.

20 See, for example, "Le Problème juif dans l'après guerre", in *Combat* (May 12, 1945). Too little was still known about the fate of Romani and Sinti peoples, and as I noted earlier, even the author of *Le Retour*'s commentary seems to have been insensitive to their murders.

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Sylvie Lindeperg

THE STRANGE TWENTIETH- CENTURY FAMILY ALBUM*

Cinema and television vs. Auschwitz photographs

For around forty years, photographs have been used to make films about concentration camps and the genocide of the Jews with little concern for their origins, the conditions in which they were taken or the point of view they depict.

After two decades, our perception of these pictures has changed: historical works are concerned with restoring their status as historical sources; part of the corpus of graphic depictions has been compiled, pictures have been labelled and put in context, and reflections have been made on picture-taking practices in the ghettos and camps¹. This historiographic exigency has created a new configuration of memorial, social and symbolic demands imposed upon pictures by our iconomaniac societies.

At the same time, debates and discussions about the *images of the Shoah* have made their way into posterity thanks to Claude Lanzmann's film. They focus on the massacre of Jews in the gas chambers in Polish extermination camps, perpetrated in the utmost secrecy. In fact, there is no known photograph evidencing the killing of these victims inside the gas chambers. Thus, the heart of the process of annihilation appears to be a blind spot. This economy of the invisible and destruction of evidence, intended and organised by the Nazis, explain the importance and singular status given today to two series of photographs taken on the periphery of the event: the four photographs clandestinely taken in August 1944 by members of the *Sonderkommando* at Birkenau, and the series of photographs known as the *Auschwitz*

Album, taken by the Nazis after the arrival of a transport of Hungarian Jews at the end of May 1944.

With *Auschwitz, the Album, the Memory* (Auschwitz, l'album, la mémoire, 1984), Alain Jaubert became the first filmmaker to raise questions about this second set of pictures. His reflections on picture taking and the singularity of the *album* had a sequel four years later, with Harun Farocki's *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* [Images of the World and the Inscription of War]. These two works can be related to the recent BBC production *Auschwitz, the Nazis and the Final Solution* (2005), which explores the knowledge of the photographs and the camps in a radically different way in order to inscribe it in a new economy of the visible².

The history of the album

The Auschwitz Album is an illustrated report containing around two hundred negatives taken at Birkenau after the arrival from the Bilke region of a convoy of Jews³. Collected and labelled –for reasons still unclear– in an ordinary photo album⁴, these pictures ended up in the hands of Lili Jacob (one of the survivors in that convoy⁵) due to a coincidence as miraculous as it is disturbing.

Since 1946, the year that the first copy was made for the Jewish museum in Prague, the photographs from the album have been used separately for works, exhibitions and films. In 1964, on the occasion of the Frankfurt trials of twenty-two Nazi criminals who had acted in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Lili Jacob testified and *her* album led to the identification and sentencing of the SS officer Stefan Baretzki, whose presence at the arrival of the convoy of Hungarians was evidenced by one of the photographs. It was at these same proceedings that the question of the identity of the photographers was raised; the names Bernhard Walter and Ernst Hofmann, two SS officers in the camp's identification service, were mentioned at the hearing.⁶

In 1979, Serge Klarsfeld found out about the plates that were being kept

at the Prague museum, and “with the intuition of a historian” (WIEVIORKA, 2005: 94) he immediately began working on recovering the original album, which he considered as precious as the Dead Sea Scrolls. In fact, as Annette Wieviorka points out, the importance of these photos does not lie so much in each picture taken individually, allowing us to «illustrate that phase of the genocide» or to “prove the guilt of such-and-such SS officer”, but in the effect that the whole set of pictures has as a report that constructs a narrative and allows us to «view a story» (WIEVIORKA, 2005: 94). In 1980 in Miami, Serge Klarsfeld found Lili Jacob (now Lili Meier) and managed to convince her to lend the museum at Yad Vashem her “family album”; that same year, the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation published the first reproduction, whose existence became known to Alain Jaubert thanks to psychoanalyst and Auschwitz survivor Anne-Lise Stern. The appearance of this photographic report –as well as the mysterious story and fate of the album– was perfect material for a film.

This series of snapshots is cut into sequences (WIEVIORKA, 2005: 94) which depict the different stages of the arrival of Hungarian Jews: the trans-

port arriving at the platform, the wait at the ramp, the *selection*, the entry of the *fit* ones into the camp to be taken to work, the selection of personal effects, the inspections of the other line –those declared *not fit*– grouped for a final stop in the forest of Birkenau.

These pictures have a dual quality. Unlike other photographs taken by the Nazis (especially those taken in the Polish ghettos), they do not reveal an anti-Semitic gaze. In this regard, Alain Jaubert points out that the photographer “does not use his camera as if it were a rifle; his view of his subjects is not monstrous” (LINDEPERG, 2000: 188)⁷. These pictures do not depict any act of violence or coercion; they show not so much the actions as the conditions and stages (the arrival of a train; a boxcar with its doors open; the rows of people; the head-shaving, its effects illustrated by a row of women with their heads shaven...).

It is therefore our knowledge of these facts that gives these pictures their concealed violence, permitting us to imagine the gas chamber off-camera, understanding that the old people, women and children we see are about to face their death. In this sense, the photographs from the Auschwitz album give life to a different type of

Picture from the *Auschwitz Album*. Courtesy of the Yad Vashem Museum, Jerusalem



propaganda from the pictures of the ghettos, as they allow for a strategy of literal, decontextualised reading that supports the argument that nothing was really happening on the platform or in Birkenau itself, nothing out of the ordinary in the material and hygienic organisation of the admission to the camps; an interpretative strategy that entails the denial of the genocide.

At the same time, a different interpretation can shed light on the terrible logic of the extermination. Thus, the row of people chosen for the gas chamber, which can be seen in many of the photographs, allows us to get closer to the massacre, since “not entering the camp meant going to the end, to the death”⁸.

Signs and margins

This second reading is the one proposed in Alain Jaubert’s film, whose set of images is made up of photographs from the album, while its soundtrack is a tapestry of voices: the director’s, proposing a reflection on the act of picture taking; Anne Wiazemsky’s, reading a montage of quotations from Charlotte Delbo, Elie Wisel, Miklós Nyiszli, Viktor Frankl, Peter Hellmann, Jean Cayrol and Adelaïde Hautval; the voices of four deported old Jewish women, intimately linked, reacting to the photographs, and anonymous voices who are identified only by their first name and the tattooed numbers presented on a piece of cardboard at the beginning of the film. The four women are not filmed during their reading of the images, which ultimately result in the film creating a «testimony without

witnesses», as suggested by Anne-Lise Stern, one of the four protagonists of this polyphonic choir⁹.

Alain Jaubert’s commentary and his montage work with the snapshots he explores through tracking shots and zooms privilege the search for signs and the reflection on the margins of the photograph. In a style similar to that of the photographer in *Blow Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966), Jaubert uses frames and enlargements of the photographs in order to construct a narrative, to propose an intriguing mise-en-scène of the event; except that, unlike the search undertaken by Antonioni’s character, his observation of the photographs does not reveal the crime scene at all, but the double discourse of absence in the image and the close presence of what is off camera. For Alain Jaubert, the idea was precisely “to understand how those photographs, which do not reflect the most brutal reality of the camps at all, nevertheless open a door to decoding the photograph in its margins. [...] Because it is in the margins where the horror takes place, it is before and after that verbal and physical violence occurs, and it is after that the extermination inferred from the separation in rows takes place. Certain details allow us to glimpse the reality of the extermination: for instance, when looking at these pictures, train carriages are often visible side by side, bearing the letters SNCF [the French National Railways] and DB [Deutschbahn], Hungarian carriages and Czech carriages. And suddenly we are struck by a dizzying thought: if an

SNCF train is arriving at Auschwitz transporting deported Hungarians, this means that trains were circulating all over the Greater Reich and across the whole of Europe. The small letters on the train carriage, sometimes written in chalk, bear witness to the existence of a formidable stationmaster, a formidable chief logistics officer called Eichmann. This is how Auschwitz appears, in the signs and in the margins of the photograph, as the biggest station in Europe” (LINDEPERG, 2000).

The voice of the narrator who questions the status of photography and the context the pictures were taken in meets the choir of deported women who comment on the images, interpret them, and uncover subtle signs (the frayed clothes of the deported, their unpaired shoes, the washing line that identifies the gypsy camp...). Sometimes they reject the pictures, and they often complete them as they too acknowledge the invisibility of the dead and what is off camera. This fugue in four voices is also organised around the central motif of extermination, the *crematorium*, a nearby building containing the gas chambers and crematory ovens, an inaccessible place in the mise-en-scène of death, brought closer by the story of a deported *Sonderkommando*, by the sight and smell of the chimneys, because they recall the disappearance of the near ones and the not so near (the whole gypsy colony exterminated in one morning). Gauguin confirms that if something is not in the frame it does not mean it is not there; it is just off canvas (HUPPERT, 1990: 151).



Thus, the image changes status: rather than a piece of evidence, it appears as a trigger for the gaze, a crystalliser of recollections, a memory operator. In return, the mismatch between memories and photographs produces an implicit reflection on the status of the evidence. Lucidly, the former deportees question the differences between their own experience and the photographs they are looking at, but also on the fragility of memories, on their migration and interference with the passage of time. Again, as Alain Jaubert points out: "After so many years, these deported women had read many books, they had recomposed their past for themselves, they had seen films [...]. It is the moment when even the strongest certainties –some deportees were very close to the black spot of the camp, that is, the gas chamber and the crematory ovens– start to crumble in their memories under the weight of denial. So the idea was to bring these former deportees face to face with their own memories, with this background of denial, and show not only that their memories might not match up with the photographs, but also that photographs cannot translate reality" (LINDEPERG, 2000).

By interrogating the instantaneity of the act of picture taking and its relationship with destruction, Alain Jaubert's film once again calls into question the idea of the time of the event. The essential force of the images of Auschwitz have is the way they capture the gazes and faces of those who are about to vanish, and offer the "last moment in these people's lives, right before their deaths. [...] In a photo-

graph, an instant is frozen in which there are people, when we know they are looking at something, often at the photographer. Rather like those Renaissance paintings in which the reflection of the workshop window can be seen in the brightest corner of the canvas, we imagine we could enter the eyes of the character and see what he was seeing at that very moment, the historical event or the non-event; in short, the instant. And obviously we are disappointed because the photograph does not have that power to record the moment; it merely captures the most superficial layers, but does not penetrate into the mind, and when we enter the gaze of the people, we enter the heart of the photograph. But these hearts are interesting, and that is why I have filmed highly detailed shots that are blurred, because we find ourselves in the heart of the image. These points of light, these photons imprinted on the film, offer us a message that is undecipherable, that might make no sense, but that is nothing more than the faces of women, men and children that have been frozen this way, for the last time before being disintegrated, either immediately afterwards or a little later" (LINDEPERG, 2000).

The question of instantaneity is explored further in the commentary of one of the deportees: when recalling the law of the camp, she underlines the obliteration of the duration and perspective of time, the total power of the instant, the relentless twists of fate that literally mock/play from one second to the next. This time crisis also has its origin in the

black hole of death, where both narration and duration are absent; as Michel Deguy wrote, for the Jews thrown into the gas chambers «when they thought there were entering a work camp, there was no time for the unbelievable to happen» (HUPPERT, 1990: 41).

"A thought in images"¹⁰

Alain Jaubert's reflection on the photographs from the Auschwitz album finds its echo and sequel in Harun Farocki's *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* (*Images of the World and the Inscription of War*). In its manner of repeating and shooting, frame and misframe, the central motif of this work consists of interrogating and reopening the boundaries of interpretation of the aerial photographs of Auschwitz taken in April 1944 by American bomber pilots flying over Silesia with the aim of locating the IG Farben factories in Monowitz. The worrying proximity between the acts of preservation and destruction, the relationship between the violence of war and the technological recording and reconnaissance devices and the instability of the meaning ascribed to an image according to the context of interpretation constitute the main themes in Farocki's film. From this perspective, the filmmaker refers to numerous snapshots from the Auschwitz album. He also points out the singular nature of photographic reporting and the materiality of the album whose pages he leafs through. While describing the implacable process of *selection* (*Aussortierung*), Farocki points to the effects of the euphe-

Pictures from the *Auschwitz Album*, from left to right, photographs 189, 183, 185, 113, 7, and 65 of the album. Courtesy of the Yad Vashem Museum, Jerusalem



mism of the labels on the photographs. He clarifies the hidden meaning of the images by relating them to other sources: the drawings made by the deportee Alfred Kantor; the report by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, two inmates who escaped from Auschwitz, whose testimony provided the allies with precise knowledge of the extermination process in this death camp. Farocki's film thus strongly emphasises the necessary "interplay between image and text in the writing of history" (FAROCKI, 2002: 37), and proposes a new articulation between photography and testimony. The knowledge constituted by the witnesses is treated as a means of reinterpreting and deciphering the elements captured in the image. While Jaubert privileges the aspect of counterpoint, the Berlin filmmaker instead underlines the journey of the visible; the experience of the eyewitnesses allows us to recognise and therefore see what is in the photograph but could not be read or interpreted. The placement of one image in relation with the others, but especially the combination of seeing and knowing, allows us to capture the unconsidered elements of the photograph at the moment it was taken. The multiplication of views and perspectives on the event (pictures taken automatically from bomber planes at 23,000 feet, reports on escapes from Auschwitz, photographs taken by the victims just outside the gas chambers) allows us to access this tragic observa-

tion: everything was there, "written as if in the book of God" and visible to the eye; everything remained, waiting for interpretation and for a willing interpreter. This new reading appears as the result of a reunion between historical knowledge, the domain of the memory, the social imaginary and popular culture (the success of the serial *Holocaust*), which condition the exhumation of the photographs, the questions raised about them and the way of deciphering them. But it also assumes a demand for instantaneity and a political will, as Farocki suggests by positioning his film in the tradition of Günther Anders, calling for "reality to begin". In 1983, supporting the ban on nuclear arms sites in West Germany, Anders reminds us of the Allies' decision not to bomb Auschwitz. In this sense, *Images of the World* appears as a work shaped by the political urgency of the present.

Harun Farocki lingers on certain photographs from the album, wondering about the context in they were taken in, the chance for the person in the photograph to "face the camera", his fragility before the photographer's armed eye. Under the sign of the exchange of gazes, the camera lingers on the picture shown on this page.

The composition of this snapshot (which also appears in Jaubert's film) highlights the contiguity of two scenes from two universes that are clearly distinguished and separated in time: the background where the fate of a depor-

tee is decided in the *selection* process; the gaze directed at the photographer by the young woman in the foreground and the movement of her body that keeps her in the world of *before* for a second, far from the implacable machine of destruction.

Enlarging and framing the image, Farocki offers the following commentary on it: "A woman has arrived in Auschwitz, and the camera captures her in motion. The photographer has set up his camera and when this woman passed in front of him, he shoots – the same way he would look at her on a street, because she is attractive. [...] The woman assents to turn her head, just enough to capture this photographic gaze and look into the eyes of the man looking at her. If this had happened on a boulevard, her eyes would evade a man watching and fall on a shop window, and with this furtive look, she seeks to transport herself to a world of boulevards, women and shop windows, far from here. The camp, run by the SS, will destroy her, and the photographer who immortalises her beauty is part of that same SS. Preservation and destruction – how can the two things be combined?"

The idea of a combination and contiguity of opposites is found again in Farocki's comment on the ambivalence of the concept of *Aufklärung* considered «in the sense of (intellectual) *Lights*, but also in the military and policing sense of *reconnaissance*» (BLÜMLINGER, 2002: 14), a reconnaissance that carries the seeds of

Pictures from Harun Farocki's film *Bilder der Welt uns Inschrift des Krieges*, in which the photograph "Birkenau, Poland, Geza Lajtos from Budapest during a selection on the ramp in front of an SS physician" from the *Auschwitz Album* is framed, Yad Vashem Photo Archive



destruction inside it. Again, this reflection is connected with Alain Jaubert's, when he evokes in his film the polysemy of the "light of Auschwitz": impressed upon the film in order to reach us, like stars that have already died, messages from the persecuted; more metaphorically, the "revelation" confirming that the philosophy of the Enlightenment had in no way eliminated Evil in the heart of Humanity¹¹.

In *Images of the World*, the time of the film also serves as a dark room for the development of History, thanks to the deployment of a montage which is infinitely complex and subtle. Beginning with the constant of an invisibility of the event, the filmmaker concludes by revealing the imprint as if on a photographic plate; he thus it makes visible, thanks to the collection of signs and of scattered traces which come to declare the film before the final resolution. The enigmatic reprise of the "Canada" photographs is a milestone in the journey of Vrba, an inmate in the section of the camp who was in charge of sorting the deportees' personal effects; the numbers and the registers return to Wetzler, who worked in records; the coded messages prepare the revolt for members of the *Sonderkommando* which succeeded in October 1944 in partially destroying the Birkenau crematorium. This movement to action made by the victims for whom "reality began" was photographed from the air, producing "an image out of these numbers".

In Farocki's and Jaubert's films, the slow discovery of the pictures, the path they have taken to reach us and the long history of their readability are all invitations to meditate on the complex status of photography, the strength and the fragility, the absence at the heart of the visible, and the political motivation of the gaze, the dimension that exists off-camera or the absence at the heart of the visible.

This is quite a different approach from the one proposed by the series *Auschwitz, the Nazis and the Final*

*Solution*¹², which places historical knowledge at the service of an omniscient discourse that fills in the gaps and reduces the time intervals.

Although the reconstruction strategy serves to support archive images, at the same time it denies their intrinsic force and value

The tyranny of the visible

This programme by Laurence Rees, written in close collaboration with historian Ian Kershaw, combines filmed testimonies, archive still shots and photographs, fictional scenes performed by comedians, views of Auschwitz-Birkenau shot in colour: a mixture of images that allow us to reconstruct certain facilities in the camp.

This combination of different levels of the visible responds to a didactic approach: in the eyes of the production team, it should bring an awareness of the latest historiographic advances to the general public. This awareness is extended to the history of the images; unlike the *misuse* of archives that was so frequent in documentaries made in the first decades after the war (LIDEPERG, 2007), the photographs and shots are in this case perfectly dated, *labelled* and sometimes clarified by the shooting conditions themselves. The image of the cremation of bodies in Birkenau thus became the object of the following comment: "This photo, taken by a *Sonderkommando* risking his life, shows dead bodies lying near the crematory pits that started to be used in 1944". The pictures in the Auschwitz album, magnified in many parts of the film, are restored to their context too: "As a general rule, it is forbidden to take photographs in Auschwitz. But an SS photographed the arrival of this convoy coming from Hungary. No one knows why he took these photos, but they constitute a valuable visual testimony of what happened there". And since the director,

when recalling *Doctor Mengele's* sinister experiments, chose to include some shots of the Auschwitz twins advancing behind a tangle of barbed wires, the narrator specifies that these are shots filmed by Soviet troops after the liberation of the camp.

This concern for scientific rigour goes hand in hand with the concern for the debates and controversies over the question of the unimaginable and the *unrepresentable*. The conception of the fictional sequences subtly reveals the boundaries that the team has imposed on itself. The main purpose of the fictional scenes is to give life to the texts from the period: hearings, letters, administrative processes... because the reconstruction results in some dramatic scenes (executions by firing squad, the *Sonderkommando* uprising at the Sobibor, the raping of German women by Soviet soldiers), the filmmaker imposed the *ethical* boundary of not depicting the victims or the corpses; he chose what he considered the *right distance*, sometimes misframing the actors at the height of their legs, placing the camera on the ground, using shadows and tricks of light in order to make certain details obscure.

Although the reconstruction strategy serves to support archive images, at the same time it denies their intrinsic force and value. In the episode devoted to the killings in the summer of 1941 on Soviet territory, the director presents the filmed sequence of an execution of *Einsatzgruppen* and decides to burden this scene with a fictitious reverse shot showing the actor who plays Himmler witnessing the show. For the production team, the dual concern for visibility and historical accuracy –the *SS Reichsführer* attended an execution near Minsk on the 15th of August 1941–authorises this reverse shot, which results in a flattening of the different layers of images and a loss of historicity of the filmed document¹³.

The lack of reliance on archive images, which have to be *completed*, repeats itself in the use of filmed tes-

timonies. While an old political deportee at Auschwitz, Jerzy Bielecki, tells of having seen “a junior SS officer walking around the pit with a pistol in his hand”, his image vanishes from the screen to give way to a fictional scene produced to illustrate his words. Likewise, a shot *licked* by the flames of a fire covers the testimony of a member of the *Sonderkommando* at Birkenau while he recalls the exhumation of bodies in Auschwitz and the open-air cremations. The testimony, cut down mercilessly, is incapable of igniting the imagination of the spectator, whose vision is being saturated by a combination of redundant images.

The incessant shifting from one level of the visible to the other is evident in the use of the pictures from the Auschwitz album. In the fifth episode of

the series, several dozen photographs of the convoy, with musical accompaniment, are put in motion through rapid tracking shots and zooms that close up on the faces of the women and children. These shots overlap, always at high speed, with colour shots of Birkenau, and the testimony of an escaping convoy of Hungarian Jews and of two former members of the *Sonderkommando*.

In *Auschwitz, the Nazis...*, the articulation of testimony and photography does not emphasise so much the collusion or counterpoint than an economy of exchange whereby word and image are supposed to mutually validate, bear witness to and justify each other. The constant shifting between the archive document and the image in the present does not inspire a debate, much less a crisis; it

functions as an accumulation of evidence that validates the historical discourse.

As for the colour shots, their debt to *Shoah* (1985) is obvious; however, they reduce this cinematic technique to the dimension of a cliché, like the postcards in the Auschwitz museum sold to tourists as a souvenir with the sunset over the barbed wires of Birkenau. Taking note of the destruction of remains, Claude Lanzmann constructed his film on the basis of emptiness, of disappearance, and redefined the relationship between place and word, between land surveying and testimony. In the TV film *Auschwitz, the Nazis and the Final Solution* colour shots of the landscape offer the design of the places on which the scenery is to be placed; if they outline the emptiness it is only to better fill it when recreating the buildings and death facilities by means of digital techniques. From this perspective, off-camera shot of the gas chamber becomes a *full shot*, a recreated space where the spectator-visitor walks through as if it were a video game. And with this *mise-en-scène* of death that will not be their own death, they see how the door closes, leaving a tiny ray of light in the corner of the eye as the only bright spot...

This tyranny of the visible and this aesthetics of the overfilled appear to be a symptom of the new industries of programmes. In *Auschwitz, The Nazis and the Final Solution*, the intention to educate and the knowledge about the image do not go hand in hand with the desire to construct the spectator's gaze. The visual saturation and the rapidity of the edition –which becomes a kind of channel-hopping within the programme– prevent the images from existing and happening, flattening the time perspectives that distinguish each category of the visible.

This confirms Marie-José Mondzain's diagnosis (2007: 91) that “in the violence of visual flows, time is what suffers the greatest damage...” the time of an image, the time of a gaze, the time of the thought.

Pictures from the film *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985)



Notes

* The title of this article was inspired by a comment made by Alain Jaubert for his film *Auschwitz, the Album, the Memory*.

** Editor's note: this essay was published in July 2011 in *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, n. 12, under the Spanish title "El extraño album de familia del siglo XX". The English version has been translated from the French by Lucía Nieto Carbonell, and revised by Martin Boyd in 2013. *L'Atalante* is grateful to the Yad Vashem museum to allow us the use of *The Auschwitz Album* images that accompany the text, available at <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/intro.asp>.

1 See Clément Chéroux (2001); Marie-Anna Matard Bonucci and Edouard Lynch (1995); Janina Struk (2004); Teresa Swiebocka (1993); Barbie Zelizer (1998).

2 In these three films we find sequences and commentaries on the photographs taken clandestinely by the members of the *Sonderkommando* in Birkenau.

3 The deported Jews came from the Bilke region in the Carpathians (an area that had belonged to Czechoslovakia between the two World Wars before Hungary annexed it in 1939).

4 A 33x25 cm hard cover album, with corners reinforced with metal rivets, consisting of 56 pages. See Serge Klarsfeld (2005) in the new French edition published on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camps, and Annette Wieviorka (2005: 89-96).

5 Jacob might have found the album in Dora-Nordhausen, to which she was transferred in May 1945. See S. Klarsfeld and A. Wieviorka, *ibid*.

6 The matter has not been completely closed; see Klarsfeld (2005).

7 Alain Jaubert also explains his film in Philippe Mesnard (2000: 307-313).

8 Taken from the film.

9 The other three were Violette Jacquet, Louise Alcan and Janine Joffé.

10 The expression is by Christa Blümlinger (2002).

11 "Light in the metaphorical sense of revelation. The final solution constituted a major trauma that made humanity aware of the fact that Kant, Hegel and all the philosophy of the Enlightenment had not freed us from evil, from the beast, and that culture did not protect us from the most atrocious sav-

agery. I think of Steiner's paradox when he said that once his hard day of extermination was over, the camp director at Auschwitz would return home and listen to a Schubert quintet. This is the revelation of Auschwitz, its blinding light. In fact, I am playing with the polysemy of the word *light*: it refers to the revelation and also to the light that is printed on these negatives which, having been kept in the Auschwitz album and then suddenly made public, come to us after the fact, just as the light of the stars takes a long time to reach us. This is the complex message these people sent right before they died" (LINDEPERG, 2000: 190).

12 This TV film was broadcast in January 2005: in its unabridged version on the Histoire channel under the title *Auschwitz, les nazis, la "Solution finale"* and in its abridged version (two parts) on TF1 under the title *Auschwitz, la "Solution finale"*.

13 The exhibited document is the short sequence filmed by Reinhard Wiener, a member of the *Einsatzgruppen*, which depicts the execution of a group of Jews in a pit in Liepaja. In the interests of accuracy, the comment specifies the purpose of the execution Himmler attended: "The sight must have been similar to this execution, filmed around the same time on the sand-dunes of Liepaja".

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"The photographs are a means of making 'real' (or 'more real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore."

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Rebeca Romero Escrivá

MIGRATIONS: *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* AND THE AIMS OF THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION*

"The lost cause of cinema"

Many relationships can be established between photography and cinema. To begin with, since cinema is a direct descendant of photography, they share formative principles: the medium, their photochemical nature, the optical elements, the camera and even the same visual language for the composition and illumination of scenes. Even the spatio-temporal dimension provided by cinema, as its main difference from photography, needs twenty-four frames per second to generate the illusion of movement for the spectator. In other words, the cinematic experience would not exist without projection techniques (sequences of images) and the psychodynamics of sight (a quality of the human eye of retaining the images in the mind long enough so that the next image can fuse the separation between it and the last). From this basic

and extremely well-known principle we may conclude that we will never fully appreciate the real debt the filmic medium owes to photography without stopping the continuum of images on the screen –which would be to alter their cinematic nature. It is hard for the spectator to retain an image in his memory because the next one erases the previous one. In this sense, it could be argued that photography *cuts* a story rather than tell it. Cutting means more than capturing an instant; figuratively, it means tearing a story apart. The cut in the story is not objective since it is chosen by the photographer. In fact, due to the violence of the cut and its apparent neutrality, the photograph is likely to absorb meanings that could alter the photographer's original intention. Although the permeability of the image is a quality shared with cinema, the static nature of photographic ima-

ges contributes to the retention of the scene depicted to the spectator, who has time to contemplate it as if it were a painting. Paradoxically, cinema will animate and breathe life into the photographic image, although, as a single frame, that image is rapidly replaced. Garrett Stewart referred to this quality when he suggested that “photography might be called the lost cause of cinema, gone in projection and too soon forgotten” (STEWART, 1999). For Edward Said, a lost cause is associated with a hopeless cause, “something you support or believe in that can no longer be believed in except as something without hope of achievement” (SAID, 2002: 527). Spectators rely on the image they find credible, the one that mimics the reality they think they know or have known, although the filmmaker has overlapped a discourse, a story that might differ from the original. John Berger said that the raw materials of a photograph are light and time; light because of its power to construct space, and time because it freezes the moment (BERGER, 1982: 85). Nevertheless, although photography is considered a testimony of the moment, it offers only a fragment, a *cut* and therefore incomplete (or selective) vision of reality. For Berger, the meaning of a photograph is the connection between the picture and the history it shows.

The aim of this article is to analyse the debt cinema owes photography in films set in the depression of the 1930s, where a deliberate imitation of the composition and aesthetics of the photographs from the Farm Security Administration (FSA) becomes evident, in order to lend verisimilitude to the historical context they represent. I will begin with a well-known film from the time, *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940), in which the quality of imitation



Figure 1. America's Own Refugees: The Story behind *The Grapes of Wrath*, from *Look* magazine on the 29th of August 1939. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USZ 62-129101/ LC-USZ 62-129102]

is phenomenological and discursive, since photography is used for its descriptive and evaluative qualities; and I will end with a contemporary film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2000), in which the use of photography responds to an iconographic criterion that separates the FSA photographs from the original purpose for which they were taken. My starting point is Alan Trachtenberg's idea that photographs taken with public objectives should be studied in terms of the *external dialogue* they have engaged in with their times, and the context in which they circulate and/or circulated (TRACHTENBERG: 1990), be it printed culture or (we might add) cinema. In fact, the media contexts in which the FSA photographs were found was not confined to their circulation in the magazines *Fortune*, *Look* or *Life*, which fall within the genre of photo-journalism, but includes hybrid works by photographers and journalists: *You*

Have Seen Their Faces (1936), by Margaret Bourke-White with texts by Erskine Caldwell, about poverty in the American South; *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1939), by Dorothea Lange with texts by Paul S. Taylor; or *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, by Walker Evans with texts by James Agee (1941). The circle of influences or concomitances between photographers and writers became even greater from the moment a novel like John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*—published on the 14th of April 1939, though originally conceived during a trip with the photographer Horace Bristol in 1937 to document the immigrant camps in California for *Life* magazine—influenced the scenes photographed by the FSA immediately thereafter¹. Only a few months after the appearance of *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Look* magazine published an eight-page

report titled *America's Own Refugees: The Story behind The Grapes of Wrath*, in which FSA photographs were combined with quotations from Steinbeck's novel (see Figure 1). The idea was to show the real background of a book that had been receiving such an enthusiastic response from the American public². One year later, on the 15th of March 1940, the year when Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for his acclaimed work, Ford's film *The Grapes of Wrath* premiered in the United States. The film took the exchange between reality and fiction even further than *Look* by adapting Steinbeck's novel and the FSA's photographic aesthetics.

Chronicles of the Depression

On the 4th of March 1933 Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as president in the midst of a terrifying social and economic panorama: “Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government

of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return [...]. Our greatest primary task is to put people to work"³. Outside the Capitol, after admitting the ills that plagued the nation in his inaugural speech, Roosevelt pointed out the need to face them. He suggested that unemployment could be solved "if we face it wisely and courageously". In his speech, the visual language of the future president "echoes a larger cultural shift in Depression-era modes of knowledge and representation. Note Roosevelt does not ask Americans to *confront* the problems of the depression, but to *face* them implying a literal as well as metaphorical visual engagement. [...] Roosevelt's visual rhetoric curiously prefigures the decade's interest in the relationship between *seeing* and *knowing*" (FINNEGAN, 2003: xx)⁴. Curiously, this is precisely what the photographers of the FSA (originally known as the Resettlement Administration) did between 1935 and 1943 with the subjects they photographed: face them or confront them statically with the camera lens, exposing their poverty and human dignity plainly and openly, with no apparent expression on the faces of the photographed individuals who stoically posed for the camera. Funded by the US government in the context of the president's New Deal policy, the project aimed at remodelling

the rural sector. In order to achieve this, hired photographers (including Arthur Rothstein, Carl Mydans, Walker Evans, Ben Shahn and Dorothea Lange, and later on Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, Jack Delano, John Vachon and John Collier), under the direction of sociologist Roy Stryker, made a record of the wretched existence that the country's rural poor were being plunged to, documenting the life of a specific family for a period of time, in order to see the effects of Roosevelt's economic recovery programme: "The realism was deliberate, calculated, and highly stylized. [...] Stryker and his staff created a powerful portrait that communicated rural suffering in terms that an urban middle class would readily understand" (CURTIS, 1989: 6)⁵. On the 18th of April 1938, at the Grand Central Palace in New York, at the same time as the opening of the First International Photographic Exhibition, another, much simpler one was taking place, with a lower number of visitors: *How American People Live*, whose title evokes Jacob Riis' work *How the Other Half Lives*. This time what was being shown and denounced was not the wretched living conditions of immigrants

in New York slums, but the migration of the rural population: people driving dilapidated old cars down the road in search of food, lodging and employment after having left their lands⁶. In 1938, the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* was still a year away, but the press had been documenting the social problems faced by farmers and rural workers for some time. In fact, in the summer of 1936, a year before he made his trip with photographer Horace Bristol, Steinbeck covered the different facets of the conflict working as a journalist for *The San Francisco News*, commissioned by associate editor George West to write a series of seven reports –published between the 5th and the 12th of October– that told the drama of the sharecroppers who came with their families from the Midwest region devastated by droughts and dust storms to California to harvest seasonal crops. The photographer hired to illustrate Steinbeck's chronicles was Dorothea Lange. They both went separately –though they might have met up more than once– to the California fields and saw first-hand the malnourished condition of the families of dispossessed who travelled in their batte-

Figure 2. Left: photograph by Dorothea Lange taken in August 1936 and used in 1938 for the cover of John Steinbeck's *Their Blood is Strong* [right]: Drought refugees from Oklahoma camping by the roadside. They hope to work in the cotton fields. The official at the border (California-Arizona) inspection service said that on this day, August 17, 1936, twenty-three car loads and truck loads of migrant families out of the drought counties of Oklahoma and Arkansas had passed through that station entering California up to 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-DIG-fsa-8b38480]



red vehicles from Nebraska, Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas, only to end up being exploited in exchange for a paltry wage of twenty-five cents an hour: "At this season of the year, when California's great crops are coming into harvest, the heavy grapes, the prunes, the apples and lettuce and the rapidly maturing cotton, our highways swarm with the migrant workers, that shifting group of nomadic, poverty-stricken harvesters driven by hunger and the threat of hunger from crop to crop, from harvest to harvest, up and down the state and into Oregon to some extent, and into Washington a little. But it is California which has and needs the majority of these new gypsies. It is a short study of these wanderers that these articles will undertake. There are at least 150,000 homeless migrants wandering up and down the state, and that is an army large enough to make it important to every person in the state" (STEINBECK, 1996: 991). The journalistic document resulting from Steinbeck and Lange's work, *The Harvest Gypsies*, from which the previous quotation is taken, could be considered a prequel to *The Grapes of Wrath*, since during the first trip to California Steinbeck not only met the immigrants who would later become the Joad family, but also bore witness to President Roosevelt's reform programme in his visit to Weedpatch, the only reception camp in California for migrant workers from Kern County

back then, located in Arvin (another one was later built in Marysville)⁷. Weedpatch was run by Tom Collins (see Figure 3), one of the two people to whom Steinbeck dedicated *The Grapes of Wrath* – "To Carol [his wife], who willed it; to Tom, who lived it" – and who inspired him to create the character of Jim Rawley at the Wheatpatch camp (nearly a copy of the real name), the place where the Joads arrive when fleeing from their creditors. Collins, who devoted his life to social work, not only helped Steinbeck in his journalistic research, but also became the technical advisor for John Ford's film version of *The Grapes of Wrath* later on. In fact, some of the scenes were shot at the camp in Arvin and its surroundings, although it is also true that a replica of the camp and of the battered hut settlements was built at the Fox Pico Boulevard studios.

From the book to the screen

On the 26th of December 1942 James Agee wrote that, despite his respect for John Ford "as a technician and as a serious man", he regretted "ninety-nine feet in every hundred of *The Grapes of Wrath*" (AGEE, 2005: 35). His opinion is undoubtedly due to the mitigation of the intensity of the original literary work. Nunnally Johnson's script omitted the reflections in the novel about the need for an organised uprising and softened the bitter image of the American socioeconomic panorama. John Ford's film is harsh, but Steinbeck's novel offers a much more straightforward and violent view of the Great Depression and its ending appears to leave the characters with no future. Johnson's adaptation introduced some changes to avoid censorship and offer the audience a less tumultuous ending. The most important of these changes is the inversion of the chronological order of the story. Steinbeck first pre-

sents the Joads living in a federal camp in good conditions for workers, and we witness the process of impoverishment and the break-up of the Joad family who, after migrating to California to be exploited as harvesters, end up scraping by – with no perspective of ever being able to find their home again – as starving vagrants in search of a place to take shelter from the rain. On their way, their grandparents die, babies are stillborn and Tom and his brother Al go their separate ways. However, the ending of the film does not achieve the same dramatic quality as the novel⁸. In the book, after Tom leaves to prevent his family from having to cover up his crime, the reader witnesses the process of family breakdown. The chapter where Rosasharn gives birth to a stillborn child while the men fruitlessly try to prevent a flood in the pouring rain to save their boxcars is utterly horrific. Starving and soaked to the skin, they remain in the flooded boxcar for two days, until Ma decides to leave their few remaining belongings in search of a dry place in order to prevent the convalescent Rosasharn from falling ill. After a forced march along the road, they take shelter from the rain in an abandoned barn, where they meet a little boy who lends them a dry comfort so that Rosasharn can warm up. Lying next to the boy is his father, who has not eaten anything in six days (STEINBECK, 1996: 691):

"Yeah! Says he wasn' hungry, or he jus' et. Give me the food. Now he's too weak. Can't hardly move."

The pounding of the rain decreased to a soothing swish on the roof. The gaunt man moved his lips. Ma knelt beside him and put her ear close. His lips moved again.

"Sure," Ma said. "You jus' be easy. He'll be awright. You jus' wait'll I get them wet clo'es off'n my girl."

Ma went back to the girl. "Now slip 'em off," she said. She held the comfort up to screen her from view. And when she was naked, Ma folded the comfort about her.

The boy was at her side again explaining, "I didn' know. He said he et, or he wasn' hungry. Las' night I went an' bust

Figure 3. Tom Collins, manager of Kern migrant camp, California, with migrant mother and child, by Dorothea Lange. / Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF34-009879-C].





Figure 4. Left: picture from the shooting of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Right: Photograph by Dorothea Lange (May 1937): *Former Texas Tenant Farmers Displaced by Power Farming*. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF34-T01-017265-C]

a winda an' stoled some bread. Made 'im
chew 'er down. But he puked it all up, an'
then he was weaker. Got to have soup or
milk. You folks got money to git milk?"

Ma said, "Hush. Don' worry. We'll figger somepin out."

Suddenly the boy cried, "He's dyin', I tell you! He' starvin' to death, I tell you."

"Hush," said Ma. She looked at Pa and Uncle John standing helplessly gazing at the sick man. She looked at Rose of Sharon huddled in the comfort. Ma's eyes passed Rose of Sharon's eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl's breath came short and gasping.

She said "Yes."

Ma smiled. [...]

Rose of Sharon whispered, "Will–will you all–go out?" the rain whisked lightly on the roof. [...]

For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. "You got to," she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. "There!" she said. "There." Her hand moved behind his head and supported it.

In the novel, the characters manage to survive thanks to the unity of the family and the solidarity of others. The final *quid pro quo* is hair-raising: the boy saving Rosasharn's life by giving her the comfort, and her breastfeeding his father in return. In the film, however, the situations the characters have to go through are not so extreme. The film was "marked by a strained nostalgia for lost promise, rather than of anticipation of a paradise to be regained. That is why he inevitably emphasized only one element from Steinbeck's novel: the longing for the farmers' simple life which had been lost in the complexities of the modern world" (MILLICHAP, 1983: 33). The presence of the federal camp at the end of the film is

an attempt to imply that President Roosevelt's policies are the solution to the people's problems (it is no coincidence that they chose Grant Mitchell to play the role of boss due to his resemblance with the president). As Scott Eyman puts it, Ford's intention was never to produce a work of social criticism: "The film lacks the sociological sting of the novel, but it compensates by creating a feeling of uni-

versality, making the Joazeiros archetypes of dispossession" (EYMAN, 1999: 225).

The music by prolific composer Alfred Newman also contributed to the neutralisation of the elements of social protest in the plot by adding local colouring and linking the Joads with the family model Ford presented throughout his filmography, like the Morgans in *How Green Was My Valley*, (1941), a film he directed one year after *The Grapes of Wrath*.⁹ This was demonstrated by German composer Hanns Eisler, exiled in New York, when – in the context of the Film Music Project at the New School for Social Research – he composed an alternative soundtrack for some sequences in *The Grapes of*

Figure 5. One of *The Grapes of Wrath* posters distributed in the U.S., highlighting the two main documentary resources of the film: the aesthetic of FSA photography and the novel by Steinbeck.



Wrath. His aim was to counteract the sentimentality of Newman's music – and typical of Hollywood films – and to contribute to the association of the migration of the Joad Family with the painful process of exile¹⁰.

Nevertheless, although neither Johnson's screenplay nor Newman's music emphasized the social content in Steinbeck's novel, Gregg Toland's photography and Richard Day and Mark Lee Kirk's artistic direction did, for they imitated the progressive aesthetics of the New Deal art. Fox studios provided them with a selection of photographs from the FSA's Historical Section conducted by Stryker (including the works of Dorothea Lange) and Pare Lorentz' films made for the RA, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1938) (which had also influenced Steinbeck in the writing of his novel), as well as a wide range of documents linked to soil erosion, dust storms, federal camps and illegal settlements. Steinbeck himself publicly declared his satisfaction when producer Darryl F. Zanuck gave him a pre-release screening of the film. Steinbeck wrote to his agent that Zanuck did much more than keep his word, that the film was "a hard, straight picture in which the actors are submerged so completely that it looks and feels like a documentary film, and certainly it has a hard, truthful ring" (EYMAN, 2000: 226)¹¹.

Portraits of poverty: the FSA

It is evident that Ford chose a hard and truthful photography, as Steinbeck pointed out, that would be as close as possible to the FSA's cold and harsh aesthetics¹². It is well known that, in order to achieve a rougher texture, Toland used no diffusion filters on his camera and the actors did not wear any make-up¹³. Middle shots and long shots were filmed in the morning and at dusk in order to capture the slanting light, whereas close-ups were filmed at noon. Eyman remarks that Eddie Quillan, the actor who played Rosasharn's husband, recalled how precise Ford's instructions were: "At one point, Ford

directed him to 'Get your voice a little on the Southern.' Then, after another rehearsal, 'Make it stronger.' For a reaction shot of a group of men, Ford told them, 'I want everyone's eyes forward'. But Quillan had shifted his eyes downward because it struck him that the line he was reacting to would embarrass his character 'Cut,' said Ford. 'I said everybody's eyes straight ahead'" (EYMAN, 1999: 233). Indeed, the people looking ahead and in a frontal position is one of the distinctive characteristics of the FSA's photographs (see Figure 4), a style adopted from earlier photographers who had also engaged in social criticism, like Lewis Hine or Jacob Riis (ROMERO, 2013: 356-365). It is no accident that the poster released to promote the film contains two obvious marketing ploys; two "mimetic strategies" or "iconic veracity enhancers" (ZUNZUNEGUI and ZUMALDE: 2014), which appeal directly to the spectator's knowledge of the 1940s: firstly, the aesthetic of the FSA photographs, again with the staged reconstruction of the frontal position and gaze towards the camera of the subjects (characteristic features of the forms of documentary discourse); and secondly, John Steinbeck's book (another "mark of authenticity"), which had caused such a sensation (see Figure 5). On the other hand, the use of depth of field Toland chose provides the pictures, as Joseph McBride pointed out, with a feeling of *three-dimensional realism* which, along with the direct use of light, created in the film an effect that is "audacious but never arty" (McBRIDE, 2001: 35).

There are two sequences that are especially evocative of the FSA photographs for their aesthetics and the arrangement of the characters in front of the camera. The first takes place at the beginning of the film in the flashback narrated by Muley (John Qualen) to Tom and Casy (John Carradine) about how the bank took his farm and the new owners knocked down his house, condemning his family to migration (see the still frames in Figure 6). The contrast of the close-up of



Figure 6. Sequence of the flashback told by Muley to Tom and Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The background characters, placed in front of the camera (with "eyes straight ahead"), respond to the ways of representation of the FSA.



the policeman telling Muley they have to leave the place with the undaunted family listening to the conversation in the background responds to the naturalistic aesthetics of the FSA. The second sequence that most resembles the form and content of the photographic portraits of the period is probably the most elaborate scene in the whole film from a documentary point of view (see the still frames in Figure 7). Here we see the Joads arriving at the camp of unemployed labourers in Hooverville, in an elaborate subjective tracking shot that shows us the place they are arriving at through the eyes of the Joads from inside their vehicle, while they drive slowly through a starving crowd, in search for a place to camp. The drama of this long sequence shot is twofold in showing the starving people on the one hand, while on the other making the Joads aware that they are part of this crowd that surrounds them, from which it will be hard for them to escape.

Apart from these two sequences, there are also daylight scenes showing the pilgrimage of the Joads in their overloaded vehicle (first, the journey from Oklahoma to California, with their various stops to rest, buy food or change tyres on the truck; then, their comings and goings from one camp to another in search of work), whose images recollect the pictures taken by Dorothea Lange in *Highway 99*, the inside name used by the crew to refer to the film (see Figure 8).

It should however be noted that from a photographic point of view not all the scenes match up to the scale of those analysed above. The FSA's documentarian Pare Lorentz, in an article published in *McCalls* on April 1940, reproached Johnson, Toland and Ford for the beginning of the film: "Here [Nunnally Johnson] needed to think in terms of skies and brown land, and, most of all, wind. He needed only to have written 'drought' and then left it to the director to re-create the feeling of those dusty



plains tilting from Oklahoma clear up to Canada, with their miserable huts and busted windmills [just what we can see in Lorentz' documentary *The Plow that Breaks the Plains*]. In fact, he only had to have gone to the panhandle of and Texas and western Kansas and the Dakotas and eastern Colorado and say: 'Photograph this: here is where they came from' [...]; [Ford] at least might have started his picture with the Great Plains instead of with scenes that, even though they were from the book, did not give you a feeling of the land. In fact, the scenes where Granpa [Charley Grapewin] and Muley sob over handfuls of dirt and talk about the land are self-conscious, prosy and maudlin" (LORENTZ, 1940). Lorentz' criticism focuses on the fact that "Toland did not capture the dimensions of the South West or the feeling of sky and earth with his camera [...] despite the beauty of his nocturnal effects and the difficult truncated shots". It is precisely the stylised contrasts and long shadows of the nocturnal scenes –the expressionist playing with light and

Figure 7. Frames of the Joads' arrival in Hooverville. The characters who enter the frame as the camera advances reflect the calligraphy or visual morphology of the FSA photographs. Ford resorts here to a depiction with the hallmarks of the documentary style of the period: again, "everyone's eyes forward".



Figure 8. Above: photographs by Dorothea Lange (1935-1937). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF347-002470-E / LC-DIG-fsa-8b38482 / LC-DIG-fsa-8b29930 / LC-DIG-fsa-8b29843]. Below: pictures from different scenes in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

shadow that Toland carried out in the studio— that prompted Lorentz to talk about the lack of coherence and unity in the film's appearance, because they contrasted with the FSA-style naturalistic daylight scenes, which anticipated Italian neorealism, and which Lorentz did appreciate: "But stick around. Once the Joad family starts for California, you will see a tough, brutal, uncompromising picture [...]. There is a peculiar newsreel quality to all the latter part of the picture. Here is movie making" (LORENTZ, 1940).

Epilogue: from *Highway 99* to *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* The FSA aesthetics

Apart from *The Grapes of Wrath*, from the visual point of view, there are other fiction films that owe a lot to the FSA's photographic aesthetics, which they imitate through photography as a testimony of the era. One example for this is found in contemporary cinema. *O Brother! Where Art Thou?*, by Joel and Ethan Coen, set in Mississippi in the times of the Great Depression, com-

bines elements that suggest a rewriting of classical Hollywood cinema¹⁴. The Coens make use of images that evoke the FSA's aesthetics, even while they focus their attention on reviewing the human miseries of three histrionic fugitives: "The images and music call to mind the 'documentary' impulse so prevalent in the 1930s, and clearly situate the film initially within the same heritage as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans' Farm Securities Administration photographs, the Lomax's field recording project¹⁵ and the socially-conscious docu-dramas like *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (1932) and fictional fare like Preston Sturges' satire, *Sullivan's Travels* (1941)" (CLINE, 2005). There are various images that call to mind the FSA photographs (see the comparative still frames in Figure 9). In fact, the film begins with a photographic metaphor since it starts in black and white and slowly shifts into colour, and it ends the other way around, that is, shifting from colour to black and white. The first imitation of the FSA aesthetics is found at the beginning as well, with

prisoners in the background engaged in forced labour, recalling Walker Evans' picture known as *Members of a Prison Work Gang* (1935). A little later, when the three criminals escape and try to hop on a moving train, the image of the labourers looking directly at the camera without saying a word as they watch the fugitives plays with the same frontality that Ford demanded from his actors. Likewise, throughout the Coens' film we see shacks, sheds, farmers ploughing the soil, gas stations and other places typical of the era that evoke those portrayed by the FSA. Finally, at the end of the film, there is an explicit reference to the well-known photograph by Russell Lee *Hidalgo County, Texas* (1939), which shows a couple listening to the radio while sitting in their armchairs.

Why do the Coens evoke the FSA's photographs to present a comedy, if the spirit and intention that motivated the FSA to take the pictures has completely vanished? There is no room in these pages for the discussion this question deserves, but I would venture



to suggest that in this way the Coens can present their audience with a realistic portrait of the Depression within which to place their protagonists. The Coens' ability lies in inserting the frames that recall the aforementioned FSA photographs without adulterating the comedic code. The language of art, therefore, must have gone beyond the purposes of the FSA photographers. What they started transcends the goals that moved them. If their work had been a document without artistic or documentary merit, it would have remained anchored in its time, but we are witnesses to the fact that both now and then, the photographs are capable of absorbing different meanings and are still alive in another medium with diverse and renewed aspirations.¹⁶

Figure 9. Right column: photographs from different sequences in the Coens' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Left column, from top to bottom, FSA photographs: Walker Evans, *Members of a prison work gang* (1936) Walker Evans Collection, MOMA; Walker Evans, *Bud Fields and his family at home* (1935); *House, Hale County* (1935); Dorothea Lange: *Sharecropper cultivating cotton with team. Near Shreveport, Louisiana* (1937); Russell Lee: *Tenant purchase clients at home, Hidalgo County, Texas* (1939). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-DIG-ppmsc-00234/LC-USF34-017162-C /LC-DIG-fsa-8b37079]

Notes

- * Editor's Note: This essay was originally published in July 2011 under the Spanish title "Migraciones: *Las uvas de la ira* y los objetivos de la Farm Security Administration". The English version (translated by Lucía Nieto Carbonell and revised by Martin Boyd) was updated by the author in September 2013.
- 1 In the summer of 1939, only a few months after Steinbeck's novel was published, an FSA photographer, Russell Lee, asked permission from Roy Stryker to digress a little from his original assignment in Texas to take photographs of a family of *real Joads*: "I've just finished reading *The Grapes of Wrath*, and it's one of the best books I ever read... I'm going to... try to take as many graphically expressive pictures as I can." Lee portrayed Elmer Thomas' family (a couple of Okies with children) near Muskogee, Oklahoma, while they were packing their belongings and loading them in their old van, saying goodbye to their friends and family and leaving for California. See letter from Russell Lee to Roy Stryker on the 11th of May 1939, in Roy Emerson Stryker Papers, series 1, reel 2, Photographic Archive, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, United States (qtd. in FINNEGAN, 2003: 2).
 - 2 The report was illustrated by fifteen photographs (most of them by the FSA, except for some taken by Earl Thiessen, a staff photographer for *Look* magazine), and was divided into two parts. The first, titled "Why John Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath*", included pictures of farmers and immigrants, accompanied by quotations taken directly from the novel as photo captions; both the text and the images traced the route taken by the Joads. The second part, "California's Answer to *The Grapes of Wrath*", included pictures of immigrants in camps and a text written by the then governor of California, Culbert L. Olson, in which he tried to offer an answer to the problem: more federal intervention, and the building of more FSA government camps for immigrant workers.
 - 3 See Franklin D. Roosevelt: "First Inaugural Address (1933)" (ANDREWS; ZAREFSKY, 1989: 436).
 - 4 In his speech, Franklin referred to the need to *face* and *recognize* the problems, a visual inflection, as Cara A. Finnegan points out. The verb *to face* becomes a recurrent element in his speech: "We *face* common difficulties"; "a host of unemployed citizens *face* the grim problem of existence"; "If we *face* it wisely and courageously"; "*face* the arduous days that lie before us". See Franklin D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address, 1933" (ANDREWS & ZAREFSKY, 1989: 436).
 - 5 The photographers were merely one of the FSA initiatives to publicise the work the agency was doing. In fact, the FSA's Information Division had five sections devoted to raising awareness of their work. Apart from the photographers directed by Stryker in the Historical Section, there were sections for documentation (led by acclaimed director Pare Lorentz), radio, publications and an editorial section that printed daily bulletins. In this way, the government confronted the political controversies arising from the rejection of the measures implemented under the New Deal, which was promoting social policies that challenged traditional American notions of individualism.
 - 6 It is worth mentioning that before focusing on funding the acquisition of small family farms for those farmers who had been forced to leave their lands due to natural disasters (like sandstorms and the recurrent drought) or to various economic needs, the FSA implemented a series of more wide-reaching policies (within what was then the Resettlement Administration), such as the Greenbelt projects, which provided affordable accommodation to poor citizens from slums in order to reduce overcrowding and the unsanitary conditions in the cities. In the field of agriculture, the RA's restoration and resettlement programmes included: 1) aid to pay leasings, the acquisition of farm tools and food for farmers who wanted to stay on their farms; 2) resettlement on new lands (especially for young farmer couples) that were more fertile or favourable for cultivation; 3) the creation of rural communities, sponsored by the federal government, but managed by agricultural cooperatives. This third point is reflected in the final part of John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and has been a central theme of various films of the time set in the Depression, like *Our Daily Bread* (King Vidor, 1934).
 - 7 The association between Steinbeck's work and Lange's could still be seen in *Their Blood is Strong* (1938), a pamphlet published by the Simon J. Lubin Society in 1938, which included the seven reports by Steinbeck in *The San Francisco News*, and whose cover was illustrated by one of the portraits the photographer took in August 1938, *Oklahoma Drought Refugees, Blythe, California*, where a woman breastfeeds her son while sitting in the shade (see Figure 2).
 - 8 It is said that the last shot that Ford intended to use for his ending was the one that takes place right after Tom's (Henry Fonda) clandestine farewell, with the image that offers a glimpse of his silhouette in the distance against the sky, climbing up a hillside at dawn. Producer Darryl F. Zanuck added the daylight scenes that follow, in which the Joads are seen picking up their belongings from the federal camp to go in search of work in a cotton field and Ma Joad (Jane Darwell) gives her famous speech inside her vehicle (taken from an episode from the second third of the novel), closing the final version of the film: "We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cause we're the people".
 - 9 Although the soundtrack was composed by Alfred Newman (who had previously worked for Ford in *Young Mr. Lincoln*, 1939), the film's main theme, "Red River Valley", was a musical piece by James Kerrigan, performed on the accordion by Dan Borzage (brother of director Frank Borzage), a member of Ford's Stock Company, who had lived up many of his films since *The Iron Horse* (1924).
 - 10 Between the years 1940 and 1942 Hanns Eisler carried out practical and theoretical research in New York on the different uses and possibilities of music in films: "Is it really necessary to continue the current Hollywood practice of rewriting *original* soundtracks composed with the crumbs from Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Ravel, Richard Strauss and Stravinsky's tables? Isn't it possible to compose brand new musical material? Wouldn't that be even more useful and effective?" (VIEJO, 2004) Eisler answered all these questions with his alternative soundtrack for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Breixo Viejo's analysis of Eisler's unusual compositions in *Música moderna para un nuevo cine: Eisler, Adorno y el Film Music Project* (VIEJO, 2008), demonstrates how an intelligent use of music could intensify the aesthetics and ideological meaning of some sequences in Ford's film.

11 From among the whole network of cultural resonances generated by the novel beyond the cinema, it is worth mentioning the influence *The Grapes of Wrath* had on musicians of the time, like Woody Guthrie, who in 1937 climbed on top of a freight train with his guitar and travelled alongside vagrants and labourers to the West to contribute his particular musical vision. When he arrived in California, while working in a peach tree orchard, he composed songs he later compiled in the 1940 album *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Two of those songs were inspired by *The Grapes of Wrath*: "Blowin' Down the Road" and "Tom Joad", which summarised in a few verses the plot of Steinbeck's novel, as reflected in this verse that closes the ballad: "Tom run back where his mother was asleep; / He woke her up out of bed. / An' he kissed goodbye to the mother that he loved, / He said what Preacher Casey said. 'Ever'body might be just one big soul, / Well it looks that a-way to me. / Everywhere that you look, in the day or night, / That's where I'm a-gonna be, Ma, / Wherever little children are hungry and cry, / Wherever people ain't free. / Wherever men are fightin' for their rights, / That's where I'm a-gonna be, Ma". ("The Ballad of Tom Joad" can be heard at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKWGAGPy_kw_1987>.) When Guthrie saw Ford's film version of the novel, he encouraged the public to go see it in his newspaper column. Other singers and songwriters were subsequently inspired by the novel or its adaptation to the screen: Pink Floyd released the song "Sorrow" on its album *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, the first line of which, "Sweet smell of a great sorrow lies over the land", was taken from the beginning of the novel. In 1991, Camel released the album *Dust and Dreams*; and in 1995, Bruce Springsteen drew from Ford's film to write the lyrics to "The Ghost of Tom Joad" (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uJEoeql_sY>) which includes the passage quoted from Guthrie's ballad: "Now Tom said 'Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy / Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries / Where there's a fight 'gainst the blood and hatred in the air / Look for me Mom I'll be there / Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand / Or decent job or a helpin' hand / Wherever

somebody's strugglin' to be free / Look in their eyes, Mom, you'll see me."

12 Otto Brower led a second shooting unit that filmed background material. Although little of this footage survived in the final version of the film, it is worth mentioning that Brower took the same route that the 350,000 immigrants took every year through Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, which means there was an explicit intention of documentary realism in the production of the film.

13 *The Grapes of Wrath* was the first collaboration between John Ford and Gregg Toland, who a year later was director of photography in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941). Right after *The Grapes of Wrath* they worked together again in *The Long Voyage Home* (1940) and later in the documentary on the Second World War *December 7th* (1943).

14 The Coens' rewriting of classical Hollywood cinema could lead to a specific essay on the topic, for which Stanley Cavell has already provided a good deal of brilliant material (CAVELL, 2010: 119-143). It is most evident in the decision to bring a non-existent film to the screen, i.e., in its tribute to Preston Sturges' movie *Sullivan's Travels* (1941). It is not only that their film shares title with the one that Sullivan (Joel McCrea) –the protagonist in Sturges' film– intended to make. McCrea plays the role of a Hollywood director who wants to adapt a novel by Sinclair Beckstein (an allusion to the investigative journalism of Upton Sinclair and John Steinbeck). It is also the fact that the Coens are faithful to Sullivan's determination not to betray the comic spirit, as seen in the protagonist's final decision to shoot a film that would raise the audience's spirits and make them forget their problems for a moment, before reviewing the human misery caused by the Depression (a decision he makes after an eventful journey on which he poses as a vagrant in order to experience the real hardships of the poor): "I don't wanna make *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*... I wanna make a comedy... There's a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that's all some people have? It isn't much, but it's better than nothing in this cockeyed caravan". The reference in *Sullivan's Travels* to *The Grapes of Wrath* is clear, especially because it was made a year after the success of Ford's film

and because Sturges' plot parodies a director who says he wants to make a film whose title is homonymous to the novel he wants to adapt, as in *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is also about the troubles faced by the poor. This is expressed by Sullivan in the initial discussion he has with the producers who are to fund his project, before they change their minds: "I want this picture to be a commentary on modern conditions. I want this picture to be a document... I want to hold a mirror up to life. I want this to be a picture of dignity, a true canvas of the suffering of humanity... I wanted to make you something outstanding, something you could be proud of, something that would realize the potentialities of film as the sociological and artistic medium that it is". The paradox posited by the Coens consists in creating Sullivan's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, but as a Homeric comedy, setting the film in the Great Depression and using the collective imaginary of the FSA photographs preserved in the memory of American society, as we see in Figure 9.

15 Ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax devoted part of his career to recording popular songs sung by black slaves in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. The Coens' put them in the mouths of the prisoners at the beginning of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Lomax worked on the relationship between sociology and the musical corpus through cantometrics, a system he invented to analyse songs, and brought musicians like the aforementioned Woody Guthrie into the public eye.

16 For more information on the secularisation of the original meaning of photography following its circulation in different media, see "Riis, Capa, Rosenthal. Traducciones cinematográficas de la fotografía" (ROMERO, 2009: 124-135). A detailed analysis on the topic of this essay, focusing on the depiction of human affliction, can also be found in "La imagen del dolor en el inmigrante: *Las uvas de la ira*, de Steinbeck a Ford" (ROMERO: 2011: 31-42).

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THE SUSPENSION OF CINEMATIC *MOMENTUM**

Overwhelmed as we are by a supreme iconisation of the digital, it may be worthwhile, based on this a priori mundane observation, to dust off some nostalgic issues that might suggest an excess of revisionism by revisiting the question of the suspension of photographic *momentum* in the filmic construct.

Valid examples can certainly be found in the history of cinema to illustrate this analysis, to substitute those options I have actually chosen. The need, however, to capture from different angles the meanings of still image or *frozen* image as an unnatural image, deprived of movement within the filmic discourse, has made me choose *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* (Ken Jacobs, 1969) and *Tren de Sombras* [Train of Shadows] (José Luis Guerin, 1997).

The technological advantages derived from digitalisation in its three-dimensional evolutionary projection

might end up burying analogue tools and media once and for all, and banishing certain forms of visual production that were once irreplaceable. These new logics push us towards the need to rescue that "strict materiality of cinema" which Santos Zunzunegui observes in the studies of American theorist Noël Burch (see prologue in *El tragaluz del infinito* [BURCH, 2008: 10]); a redemption that can be extended to the forgotten footage used by Jacobs and Guerin to rescue that beloved prostitute that is the analogue image in its original sense, to which cinema owes its *raison d'être*.

Tom Tom the Piper's Son and *Tren de Sombras* take us back to the origins of cinema from its utmost avant-garde periphery, to the foundational character of a language from the sequencing of the photographic image; at the same time, they proclaim the ability of the projec-

tor to give life to that photograph, to give "life to those shadows" that Noël Burch finds in early cinema, a prelude to the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR) that served to standardise a way of making and watching cinema. Both proposals deconstruct movement in order to construct a reflection that operates on filmic time through an optical effect, stopping the film to show an extraordinary visual anthropology in the frozen image; the photographic image as a record of an unchanging time, both a perpetrator and a victim of the revival of lost memory. The expression of movement (in the sense of change, a synonym of crisis, conflict or drama) constitutes the essence of cinema, but it is also its annulment. In a deductive syllogism derived from these premises, I understand the detention or suspension of cinematic *momentum* to entail a phenomenological change in the interpretation of the resulting image.

Based on the experimental form (Jacobs), and on the essay as a hybrid that prolongs the principles established by the fake documentary (Guerin), the two filmmakers manage to conceptualise the origins and evolution of the projector while maintaining a lucid dialogue with the moving image. Jacobs and Guerin excavate the genealogy of the grammar generated by constructing an exposition that is only accessible and decipherable through the abduction of the awareness of the viewer, who is invited

to turn from passive spectator to participant, to close the expository cycle through full immersion, a seduction authorised by the poetic drive the signifiers acquire after the discursive re-

organisation they perform. This is a cinema that is activated by the power of suggestion, an implicit universe with a high concentration of rhetorical figures and symbols where the expressive

***Tom Tom the Piper's Son and Tren de Sombras* take us back to the origins of cinema from its utmost avant-garde periphery, to the foundational character of a language from the sequencing of the photographic image**

is more common than the explanatory.

Apart from the already fertile meanings contained in the metadiscourse engendered by found footage and essay films, I would like to underline the central role the suspension of cinematic *momentum* acquires in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* and *Tren de Sombras*. These films use frame freezing as a trick that shows us that the perception of the image is not a visual but a cultural fact (the image is a result of knowing how to

and time. It is precisely this mechanical operation (stopping the Moviola) that Guerin uses to offer us with a new interpretation of the found images. A hidden narrative that we decipher with a new way of seeing and which John Berger (1977) would associate with a sign of authorship in the field of photography by rewriting the principle through a process of deconstruction; by reorienting the point of view and the information contained in the pristine image they are working with.

Jacobs literally *stirs* the found footage (as an audiovisual construction technique that acts through the appropriation and intervention of pre-existing material; through filmic recycling) with each shot in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* by Billy Bitzer (1903) in order to give a different dimension to the film. The definitive impact of this action is directly imposed on the nature of Renaissance representation, transcending the flatness of the primitive image, the heir of the nineteenth-century photographic universe and of the theatre (group compositions, distance from the photographed object, uniformity of vertical illumination, frontality of the point of view, depersonification of characters...).

Jacobs' *indeterminate cinema* or *paracinema* proposes a cinema based on apostasy, a break with or transgression of the canons that ended up homogenising the cinematographic image in the twentieth century. With technical manipulation

as a rhetorical weapon (editing and trickery) Jacobs rewrites the filmic text by codifying it on multiple levels of signification. In this sense, a connection with Méliès' cinema can be observed;



Evidence of the filmic device

look). Jacobs applies the composite cut with the selection and manipulation of information through a reframing that gives a new meaning to the image by introducing the concepts of movement

a link established with that *first cinema* that used tricks as a primitive device, as an optical effect that sought to generate fascination through the discovery of a magical element and thus achieve illusionism in the *mise-en-scène* of the narrative (BURCH, 1990). In Jacobs' *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*, frame freezing has a twofold intention however: to the magical effect of trickery, he adds the action of stripping the original image of its primary message by stopping time, by suspending the cinematic *momentum*. In this way, Jacobs seeks to awaken a new experience in the spectator, who is offered consecutive viewings of the same visual composition, in which we can access different readings captured in the frozen frame (Jacobs also resorts to repetition or looping to force the gaze). All the elements and visual details (*cinemas* for Pasolini), especially the great visual density and saturation contained in the shots in Bitzer's film, are stripped bare.

Let us fix our gaze more closely on the tricks played by Jacobs in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*. For this film, we can turn to some theoretical considerations that Santos Zunzunegui (1989) uses to redefine the phenomenological *corpus* of the photographic image in *Pensar la imagen*. Through a technical microanalysis of the frozen frames we

observe a remarkable ideological distancing from the most traditional theoretical positions that pivot around the photographic moment, its character of instantaneity, of portraying the immediate, of photography in the sense of

process has its foundations in a multi-scaled concept; the scale introduces and suggests a change that obviously does not go unnoticed by the spectator. The reframing therefore provides a new grammatical element in the re-

Guerin builds a structure that is organised into various levels of plot and reflection; here the accident, as a device that provides a meaning that is capable of rewriting the message, has a prominent position due to one of the different expectations that spectators have in their implicit agreement with the documentary form

"iconic expression that crystallises a visual instant" (ZUNZUNEGUI, 1989: 131). In the frozen frames we observe an image that contains a much more complex past tense, an extended tense expressed with an image in which we recognise the expressivity of the characters (personification as an element that takes us to IMR and breaks the distance between object and subject). This

construction of the discourse. These decisive archetypes of editing that Jacobs applies to the original film allow us to single out part of the information contained in a wider shot that contained too much information to be processed by the human eye in such a short period of time.

The still image is presented as a microstory (an element of the cultural postmodernity that Jacobs' work falls within) resulting from the suspension of the cinematic *momentum* (memorable emphasis of this action, flanked by that flicker that draws our attention to the filmic origin of the photograph, which is taken from a still frame as a unit or as a part of a larger construct). It is a suspension of movement that is ultimately a suspension of time, of the kinetic dynamism that José Luis Brea (2002) identifies with the image produced with technology, an election qualified by a formal decision that is not at all arbitrary. And here is a significant fact that stands out in this meditative process: certain still frames achieve a higher level of signification, which is perceived without the sequencing of the images, isolating them from the

A privileged instant captured by frame freezing



rest of the filmic investive. A temporality is articulated in the implicit time or zero time pre-established in the individual images with information that has gone unnoticed after a first viewing or superficial reading, but which is unveiled with the ineffable and manipulating aid of technology.

The room for speculation is arranged, a sumptuous banquet where new ingredients are offered to delight our senses with the discovery of hidden information that went unnoticed during our first viewing of Billy Bitzer's film.

Jacobs' interventionism –the manipulation of the moving image, the alteration of its temporality or the transformation of reframing and change of scale– brings forward the materiality of the medium he works with (in this case, the filmic medium), its vulnerability and mutability (actions that will be linked with the ideological positions found in video art with electronic images and later with digital images). The image resulting from these practices is but the result of a recording of light subjected to chemical processes liable to produce accidental variations that escape their creator's control. The subjective reality contained in the image presents the specificity of the medium that portrays its mimesis in the real world.

Located in an alternative wasteland (a location that responds to a shrewd examination of the cinematic medium), Guerin approaches the representation of reality by evoking a cinema of the everyday (linked of course with the diary-film style of Lithuanian Jonas Mekas). Guerin seeks to portray the closest reality, a cinema that is heir to the Lumière's film-document, which Burch does not hesitate to place outside the scope of what we know as institutional or classic cinema: "The pleasure Lumière himself and his spectators yesterday and today obtained and obtain from his films does indeed emanate from an *analogical effect* (produced by photography whatever one's intentions), but from one which is non-linear and acentric, which does not locate the spectator subject at the centre of an



Reframing of the essential

imaginary space; that is why I believe the pleasure –and also the knowledge– he produced is of quite another kind from the pleasure of the Institution to come. And yet, it can also be argued that these Lumière films and the practices deriving from them are at the root of what can be isolated as the *documentary ideology...*" (BURCH, 1990: 33).

In this filmic horizon we look to the

Photographs that exude the marks and stains of ageing, chronicles of the inexorable passage of time on the celluloid

signs left by chance to locate a subplot or microstory within the main narrative. Guerin builds a structure that is organised into various levels of plot and reflection; here the accident (as a device that provides a meaning that is capable of rewriting the message) has a prominent position due to one of the different expectations that spectators have in their implicit agreement

with the documentary form. In *Tren de Sombras* we can distinguish a clear and brilliant meditative use of that naturalist and "improvised quality" that Bill Nichols recognises in documentary cinema. This brings us closer to models that avoid artifice or fictionalisation in the writing of the filmic text despite the persuasive dialogue with the fiction or false reality found in *Tren de Sombras*.

At the beginning of the film, before the opening credits, Guerin inserts a declarative text that determines the ideas developed throughout the film. This statement of intentions tries to outline faint but guiding clues that will help to unveil the plot and guide the gaze of the spectator, who at the same time is invited to engage in an exercise of reflection and to look beyond the images:

"In the early morning of 8 November 1930, Parisian lawyer Gérard Fleury set off to find the light with which he wanted to end his pastoral film about the area around Lake Le Thuit. On that same day, he died under circumstances that have never been explained. A little earlier he had made one of his modest family productions, which turned out to be his very last film. Irreversibly damaged by seven decades of humidity and inadequate preservation, we have proceeded to restore it.

Gazes that go on forever, that are directed at the other, induce us to participate in the story, to share and respond to the image with our imagination

We thank the Ives Brothers and Mirelle Fleury, as well as the Languest, Gaultier and Ferri families of Le Thuit, for their invaluable aid in restoring these old family film scenes: rudimentary but vital images that recall the infancy of cinema”.

These sublime lines superficially condensing the plot offer a synopsis of the phenomenology of the origins of cinema: the light, a *sine qua non* condition for the formalisation of the representational act from plastic arts (the genesis of colours) to photography and cinema (photosensitivity of the medium); from landscape photography, associated with Renaissance representational models, to the family portrait and later the homemade films we consider to be the natural continuation of the Lumières’ films; the *accident* as the epicentre where the synergies that rewrite filmic discourse originate, a furtive event that reveals hidden readings of images to our gaze; the referentiality to physiological affections, to the materiality of film as the sensitive *mould* that Gilles Deleuze (1997: 24) uses to define the analogue medium (it is worth mentioning the wonderful visual references to Brakhage’s visual syncretism in *Tren de Sombras*, to a cinema whose main rhetorical and aesthetic source emanates from the materiality of the components, materials and processes with which the images are nurtured).

The *Brakhagesque* images that conclude the opening credits are followed by portraits of the lawyer Gérard Fleury (photographs that exude the marks and stains of ageing, chronicles of the inexorable passage of time on the celluloid), the operator of the cinematic device he will use to film the microuniverse that surrounds him. It is obvious he belongs to a certain social class of the world portrayed, an owner of the means of visual production, although this is another matter worthy of a deon-

tological treatise of its own on the origins of cinema and its relation with the bourgeoisie.

The analogy with Jacobs’ offering is evident. Although the message contained in *Tom Tom the Piper’s Son* has a higher metaphorical codification, Jacobs and Guerin coincide in presenting raw footage, in offering the audience a first viewing to construct a new statement on the basis of that appropriation. This creative act that emerges from the recombination of pre-existing material allows a new visual exploration of the images with the suspension of cinematic *momentum*. When the projector stops, only photography remains, a photography to which Guerin returns – after giving life to it through the incorporation of time in the sequences that take place inside the house, especially in the portrait room– to alter it with reframing and scaling (overcoming the visual field with which photography limits the world). Frame freezing, like photography, depicts an instant of rea-

lity, a cut or a part of a whole. It constitutes an appearance of the real world to which it belongs or belonged.

Tren de Sombras is structured by a new form of editing consisting of various mechanical techniques Guerin never fails to display (detection of the Moviola, inversion or delay of speed, reframing, screen partition, transparencies, incorporation of the sound of the projector...). In this editing style we can recognise a new use of frame freezing as an element that generates a filmic sense that launches a new discursive dialectics, and that even produces new compositions and new shots depending on the dramatic development of the narrative.

The gestures, the gazes into off-camera space (imaginary space/imaginary story), any sign, however trivial (the singular instant or “any instant” captured by cinema [DELEUZE, 1997: 6]) that we perceive in the human faces seem to acquire a surprising transcendence and to be elevated to a privileged

A protagonist that had gone unnoticed



category; the instant is immortalised in *Tren de Sombras* to capture the sentimental link between two characters. The gazes we discover in the frozen frame are directed into an unsettling off-camera space. Gazes that go on forever, that are directed at the other, induce us to participate in the story, to share and respond to the image with our imagination. Guerin implores the spectator to develop a mental editing that completes the technical editing. The gaze that searches for Fleury is searching for us.

Freeze framing captures the emotion, immortalises the impression of the moment, and it is then that this indeterminate instant grows in meaning to go beyond the photographic mould of a "light impression" –Bazin as quoted in Deleuze (1997: 24)– and thus arrive at a photographic image as a time mould, an impression of time lapse. Everything is interrupted to show the impression of the moment. The emotional point. The suspension of cinematic *momentum* becomes for Guerin a device that ultimately activates a subsequent progression of events. The memory offers a new, subjective interpretation of the image by looking at/remembering the events of the past in Marienbad (*L'année dernière à Marienbad* [Alan Resnais, 1961]) for a second time.

As a conclusion I would like to underline once again our fondness for the filmic image derived from trick photography, a grammatical device that entails diverse mental processes implicit in the action of remembering. With the suspension of movement and by extension the suspension of time, the idea of the photographic portrait situates us in the recovery of lost memory by remembering what has disappeared or what was forgotten; it is a resurrection activated by the evocative power of cinema and photography to revive ancestors, a remembrance we access through the desecration the original image. In this context we can hear how the echo of *Tren de Sombras* cries out for a clear authorship, a voice that continues the lines drawn in the valleys of *Innisfree*

(José Luis Guerin, 1990), a film in which we find those very same temporal connections between past and present, between reality and fiction.

Notes

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THE *CAMERA LUCIDA* (AND THE DIGITAL CAMERA): THE RE- MEDIATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN COMPUTER GENERATED ANIMATION*

Marta Martín Núñez

The *Winter Garden* photograph is the motivation behind Barthes' words in *Camera Lucida*. It is a portrait of his mother when she was only five years old, which he found while organising photographs after her death. For Barthes, these "were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being" (BARTHES, 1981: 71). With this simple example, Barthes eloquently explains the power of photography: it is the testimony of the "that-has-been" and is no longer, and of what will never be again.

But nowadays, digital images, or "computer generated images" in the words of Román Gubern (2003: 133), are the symbol of a "a new post-analogue phase" and are more and more common in the contemporary iconosphere. They are

images generated in a digital environment from mathematical calculations of the physical parameters of reality and cinematic reality, such as volume, the influence of light and shadow, materials, texture, atmosphere, movement, or the camera lens. The computer becomes a work station that allows us to create and preview objects that have never existed before, where "there are no limits but the computer itself, and any object or scenario can be created" (FERNÁNDEZ CASADO and NOHALES ESCRIBANO, 1999: 286); and where, unlike earlier image capture mechanisms (such as photography), there is no real referent. Computer graphics are not a representation of a pre-existing reality; they simply generate images as ones and zeros in a computer environment. But the fact that the image is no longer the testimony to a physical reality does not mean it does not contain traces of other media.



This is how we can understand computer generated images as a hybrid of different languages. A digital image can be defined as a *hyperimage* if it allows conceptual access to images of different natures, like cinema, painting, animation, typography, and obviously photography, as connections that establish links with other media. Likewise, these links with other media function as intertexts, and therefore the meaning of the digital image depends to a greater or lesser extent on the knowledge of these earlier media forms. Thus, in the heart of the digital image other earlier visual traditions seamlessly converge and are updated.

In order to explain the logic behind the *hyperimage* described here, it is necessary to offer a brief outline of the process of re-mediation¹ (a theory developed by Bolter and Grusin in their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* [1999]), which can be understood as the formal logic through which new media reshapes earlier media forms, making use of a dual and apparently contradictory strategy: immediacy and hypermediacy. According to this theory, computer generated animation multiplies the references to earlier me-

dia forms (hypermediacy), with the aim of drawing attention to the medium itself, while at the same time trying to erase any evidence of a mediation (in order to achieve immediacy) so as to leave the spectator in the sole presence of what is represented. These strategies constitute what the authors call “the double logic of remediation”, which is justified by the idea that “our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (BOLTER and GRUSIN, 1999: 5).

Re-mediation—which is also considered by Spanish theorists like Román Gubern (2003), Josep M. Català (2005) or Gómez Isla (2004), with different nuances—proves that the immediacy and hypermediacy strategies are simply two sides of the same coin: the need the spectator has to access what is real. Bolter and Grusin propose various levels of re-mediation, and the computer generated image is placed at the most aggressive level, where media of different origins are blended into an integrated image and where, as Gómez Isla argues (2004: 546), the image constructs its critical discourse as a medium

of production in the erasure of the seams between the different traditions that integrate a single image, as a digital polygraph.

What motivates this article is the complexity of the digital image, and in an effort to make my ideas tangible with extreme cases, I will analyse short advertisements created using computer animation. These will serve to explain the re-mediation processes that make the existence of *hyperimages* possible, and how the concept of truth, historically associated with photography, plays a central role in their construction. In this sense, Martin Lister’s argument that the meaning of new technologies will not be understood unless they are related to photographic culture (LISTER, 1995: 2) acquires special significance.

Photography as the essence of truth

The idea of photography as an objective medium originated from the fact that “for the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man” (BAZIN, 2005: 13), marking a turning point in the development of artistic technologies. Until that moment, all the arts had

been founded on the presence of man, and only in photography may we benefit from his absence (BAZIN, 2005: 13). Its relative technological automaticity thus made photography, for the society that witnessed its birth, a transparent medium that represents reality objectively. Therefore, the essential phenomenon of photography lies in a psychological fact: the full satisfaction “of our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part” (BAZIN, 2005: 11). Automaticity and mechanicity are therefore configured as processes that allow the exclusion of man from the photographic act and thus of any trace of subjectivity in the images, allowing a mimetic representation of reality that constituted a breakthrough in the history of representation.

In this way, the technical characteristics of the medium, which configure it as a process with an unprecedented level

of automaticity, lead to the idea of the objectivity of photographic images; and this objectivity was transformed into truth, boosted by the historical and social context in which the medium developed. Thus, on the basis of its apparent mechanical objectivity, photography became the medium for representing truth. This belief was born with photography itself and the scientific context in which it was created, as “positivism and the camera grew up together” (ROBINS, 1997: 54). Positivism is characterised by a desire to record reality for the purpose of organising it and thereby establish absolute truth and control over the world. Therefore, “for the positivist, photography represented a privileged means for understanding the ‘truth’ about the world, its nature and its properties” (ROBINS, 1997: 54). As a result, “the photographic procedure, like these scientific procedures, seems to provide a guaranteed way of overcoming subjectivity and getting at the real truth” (MITCHELL, 1992: 28).

However, as Javier Marzal points out, “photography cannot be considered in a simplistic way, as a mimesis of reality. [...] This is why photography is defined as an impression of reality in which a mediation takes place, that is, a transformation of reality” (MARZAL, 2007: 61). The characteristics of objectivity and truth that were attributed to the medium at first are thus questioned in light of new theories that deconstruct the virtually automatic association of photography with the concept of realism (MARZAL, 2007: 58). Photographer and theorist Joan Fontcuberta expresses this question clearly when he positions himself on the opposite extreme and argues that all photography is a manipulation: “but ultimately, the choice of one from among various possibilities reflects a small dose of ‘manipulation’:

In the heart of the digital image other earlier visual traditions seamlessly converge and are updated

framing is a manipulation, focusing is a manipulation, choosing the moment to shoot is a manipulation... The sum of all these steps is expressed in the resulting image, an outright ‘manipulation’. Creating means manipulating, and the very term ‘manipulated photograph’ constitutes a flagrant tautology” (FONTCUBERTA, 1997: 125).

According to the arguments put forward by Fontcuberta from the perspective of professional practice and theoretical reflection, the mechanical conception of photography as a technology that captures an image without the intervention of the photographer proves inadequate to explain the process of creation of photographic images, since a photograph involves a much more complex process than the mere capture of an image through optical, chemical and mechanical mechanisms. In this sense, Lister insists that “instead of focusing attention upon the photograph as the product of a specific mechanical and chemical technology, we need to

consider its technological, semiotic, and social hybrid-ness; the way in which its meanings and power are the result of a mixture and compound of forces and not a singular, essential and inherent quality” (LISTER, 1997: 26).

The *camera lucida* (and the digital camera)

Digital technology is rapidly achieving the status of a new essentialised medium, “[b]ut this time, not one which guarantees access to reality but one which celebrates that impossibility and offers to construct virtual ones instead” (LISTER, 1995: 11). Computer generated animation constitutes a digital representation that constructs virtual worlds like those referred to by Lister, especially when it is used in advertising and, beyond any doubt, *celebrates* the im-

possibility of guaranteeing access to reality. Despite this, computer generated images reproduce photographic culture by

hybridising it from within. But what aspects of photography are re-mediated in computer generated animation?

I will take as a case study the famous Coca-Cola ad *Happiness Factory*, a mega-production by the French production company Psyop, which depicts the journey of a bottle through a vending machine. Amidst the caricatures that live inside the machine, the spot presents two elements that stand out for their photorealism. These elements are, on the one hand, the bottle and coin, and on the other, the setting. Obviously, this aesthetic choice is not accidental, since photorealism invests these elements with specific connotations that contribute significantly to communicating the values of the ad. The bottle and the coin have a photorealistic design which, in a different context, the eye would not be able to distinguish from a photograph. Its shape, the quality of materials and textures, the lighting and its animation respond to the logic of its real physical appearance, as can be seen



when the bottle goes down the ramp, and simulate perfectly the photographic image and the physical behaviour of the objects referenced. The reason for this is precisely to establish a continuity between the world inside the machine and the outer world, as these elements are the points of connection between the two. If they were caricatured, like the characters, the ad would lose its credibility because the whole journey through the machine would recall animation films based on fantasy.

In the same sense, the setting, like the bottle and the coin, is designed in a photorealistic way. If real characters had been used instead of caricatures, the spectator's eye would not doubt that the setting could be real. The landscapes are so physically credible they could have been photographed. Only in those shots where elements of the setting are shown in the foreground, like the grass and the flowers, can the eye perceive something artificial in the landscape. Nevertheless, the lighting, fog, snowflakes and clouds construct a perfectly real atmosphere. In addition to the landscape, the devices integrated into it, which are used to move the bottle from one stage to the next, have a photorealistic appearance as well, although at times it is mixed with some non-realistic figurative element typical of cartoons, like the hands that pick up the bottle to transport it from the mountainous landscape to the penguin landscape. These details invest the setting with a cartoonish touch, which is necessary so that it does not clash with the characters.

There are various parameters that combine to give the image this photorealistic appearance. The choice of textures is the first step to achieve this finish. In the ad, the landscape textures are not completely flat, but have plenty of tiny details drawn three-dimensionally. This endows them with a more realistic finish than if the texture had been completely flat, as is the case of the characters, which have a cartoonish appearance. On the other hand, the colours used for the models have a tone, saturation and brightness that make them stand out expressively: the grass is an intense green, the snow is blue and the clouds in the final scene are orange. For this reason, lighting is used to enhance the colours and the details of the textures, with plenty of luminosity so that the details of all the elements in the background can be observed. This aesthetic approach contributes to the generation of a photorealistic image a long way from images typical of children's cartoons, which are characterised by bright colours with no distinction of distance. Thus, the presence of these photorealistic elements in the midst of the caricatured characters endows the image with verisimilitude, making the spectator believe that the journey through the machine might have actually happened, which is precisely what makes this journey exceptional. The photorealistic element gives meaning to the look the protagonist gives the machine at the end of the ad.

This analysis leads us inevitably to search for the characteristics of photo-

graphy that are re-mediated in the very essence of the digital medium. In order to do so, we need to return to the eloquent explanation provided by Barthes in his *Camera Lucida* on the essence of photography. His reflections are motivated by a desire: to know what photography is. In this respect, he tells us: "I was overcome by an 'ontological' desire: I wanted to learn at all costs what Photography was 'in itself', by what essential feature it was to be distinguished from the community of images" (BARTHES, 1981: 3). This is how he embarks on a subjective adventure, with little scientific rigour but plenty of pragmatic value, to try to define or explain, somehow, the feelings this expressive medium awakens in him and which in some way constitute a manifestation of the features of photography that are re-mediated today in digital images like the ones in the ad analysed above. His reflections are thus expressed in a document written in June 1979, just before the rise of digital media, and so its reinterpretation in the digital era applied to re-mediation in the digital image allows us to recover the essence of what a photograph means.

Barthes points out that the attraction that photographic images awaken in him does not lie in fascination or interest, but in adventure: "the principle of adventure allows me to make Photography exist. Conversely, without adventure, no photograph [...] I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an animation. The photograph itself is in no way animated [...] but it animates

me: this is what creates every adventure" (BARTHES, 1981: 19). Thus, we can think of the photographic image as an image that reaches the receiver, *animating* him like an adventure, because the image that is interpreted is one he can recognise, the sign of a reality that is familiar to him and that therefore can even be read as a mirror with memory, a testimony. Proof of this is the use the general public makes of photography: from pocket cameras to digital cameras or the cameras built into mobile phones, its main use is still testimony. This feature, deep-rooted in Western visual culture, is one of those that are most powerfully re-mediated in the digital image, which, despite being freed of the obligation to be a sign of reality, needs *anchors* to appeal to the public: the spectator needs familiar and recognisable elements in order to explore the image. And the photographic code provides them very efficiently. Thus, when it is used it awakens feelings, wounds in the spectator, which are held for him in the image. As Barthes points out, "as *Spectator* I was interested in Photography only for 'sentimental' reasons; I wanted to explore it not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think." In this way, the presence of photography in computer generated animation animates the spectator, making him a participant in an adventure that awakens a feeling that reminds him that he is alive, by putting him in contact with images that constitute an impression of reality and that ultima-

tely inspire the human ability par excellence: thought.

But "[t]he Photograph does not necessarily say *what is no longer*, but only and for certain *what has been* [...]" the essence of photography consists in confirming what it represents" (BARTHES, 1981: 85). The photograph represents what has been there and is not anymore. And by introducing photographic features in images, computer generated animation seeks to convey this idea. Thus, what also becomes evident is temporality as one of the fundamental aspects of photography, because essentially a photo means capturing a unique moment. Thus, for Barthes "what the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (BARTHES, 1981: 4), while Sontag suggests that "all photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability" (SONTAG, 1978: 15). Photographing something means capturing an instant that dies with the photograph, because it will never come back: "photography is a past-tense medium. It says 'that was there' not what is there" (MIRZOEFF, 1999: 74). As a result, in the act of photographing, the photographed object or subject is captured in only one moment and (im)mortalised in a snapshot. The photograph proves that this moment is unique and unrepeatable and therefore is born and dies with the photographic act itself. How-

ever, printing it on paper is a way of keeping it alive forever, since by making it eternal it can never die, thereby keeping one's own and the collective memory from forgetting it. Photographs thus acquire a special importance because "both our notion of reality and the es-

sence of our individual identity depend on memory. We are but memory. Photography is therefore a fundamental activity engaged in to define ourselves, which opens a dual gateway to self-affirmation and knowledge" (FONT-CUBERTA, 1997: 56). Turning a photograph into memory means turning it into part of our history and thus the photographic image acquires a special sentimental value which the cold and artificial digital image hybridises within it to awaken profound feelings in the spectator.

The feelings awoken by photographs are therefore based on the idea that the photograph is proof of the 'that-has-been', which means it can never lie: "photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature tendentious, never as to its existence" (BARTHES, 1981: 87). Thus, the highest value attributed to the photograph is that—even though its content might be a lie—the photographed instant has existed and printed in paper. It is precisely this value that is absent from synthetic photoreality, which does not need the photographic fact to have existed since it can be created without a real referent. That is, an image is created that is photorealistic aesthetically—the image of reality as perceived through image capture photochemical technology—but not essentially; in other words, no photographic instant ever existed. Bolter and Grusin argue that if perfect photoreality could be achieved by means of computers, photographs could be created without natural light. Thus, an image could be synthesised to satisfy the spectator's desire for immediacy without the need for the objects to have existed or to have been together at some point, which is precisely the condition that defines the photography Barthes talks about. This means that "[c]omplete success in computer photorealism would make nonsense of the term photorealism, because no one could any longer believe in a causal connection between the image and the world" (BOLTER and GRUSIN, 1999: 106). For Barthes, "[e]



ever, printing it on paper is a way of keeping it alive forever, since by making it eternal it can never die, thereby keeping one's own and the collective memory from forgetting it. Photographs thus acquire a special importance because "both our notion of reality and the es-

very photograph is a certificate of presence. This certificate is the new gene² which its invention has introduced into the family of images" (BARTHES, 1981: 87). And though we know that this gene is a mere construction, the value of the photographic instant is precisely the main re-mediated feature in the digital image, because it anchors computer generated images in a point of reality that serves as a basis for spectators to enjoy synthetic images. As Lister points out, "we may then begin to see the *extent* to which the *new image technologies* are in an *active* relation, of some *dependence* and continuity, with a 150-year-old photographic culture" (LISTER, 1995: 8).

Notes

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¹ I prefer to remark the process of repetition by separating the prefix with a hyphen.

² Translator's note: The English text of the Barthes quote does use "embarrassment", but this appears to be a mistranslation of the French word *gêne*, which can mean both "embarrassment" and "gene". The problem is, if it is left as "embarrassment", the reference to the "gene" in the next sentence makes no sense.

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"I raised the camera, pretended to study a focus which did not include them, and waited and watched closely, sure that I would finally catch the revealing expression, one that would sum it all up, life that is rhythmized by movement but which a stiff image destroys, taking time in cross section, if we do not choose the essential imperceptible fraction of it."

Blow Up. Julio Cortázar

CINEMA AND PHOTOGRAPHY: THE POETICS OF *PUNCTUM* IN CHRIS MARKER'S *LA JETÉE* (1962)*

Javier Marzal Felici

Photography in cinema

Little do we need to explore our filmic memory to find numerous films in which the photographic image appears as an essential element in the narrative plot, usually as an object –a photograph– that prompts a character to recall a past moment, happy or unhappy. In filmic melodrama, for example, most flashbacks involve brief and fleeting memories of the protagonists, usually provoked by looking at a photograph or an object belonging to the missing character. D. W. Griffith knew he had taken the flashback technique from naturalist literature and was aware of its capability to create suspense by offering a momentarily suspension of the narrative flow. It can be asserted that the imagery of the flashback is part of an expressive system that seeks an emotive response from the spectator: this time alteration process is intimately linked to a close

up of the character or the photograph as object, images that serve as a starting point for numerous flashbacks (TURIM, 1989; MARZAL, 1998).

It is a photograph found in a suitcase by a militiaman's granddaughter that launches the central story of the film *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1994). In *Blow Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966), the protagonist of the film –based on Julio Cortázar's short story *The Devil's Drool*– is obsessed with a photograph taken in a public park in London, which seems to have captured a man's murder. In *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), Jeffries –immobilised because of an accident– scrutinises the world around him through his camera, until he uncovers the murder of a woman in his own backyard. In *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), Leonard Shelby, who suffers from traumatic amnesia, uses a Polaroid camera to cons-

trict his short-term memory, so that he can investigate the death of his wife, who was brutally raped and murdered. In *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, 2001), the protagonist makes a scrapbook with discarded photographs she collects from photo booths in train stations, and uses a Kodak Instamatic camera to send her travel photographs to her parents. Thus, we find many films where the photograph appears as a fundamental element of the plot.

In the following pages, I propose to reflect on the relationship between photography and cinema, not so much on the physical presence of photographs in films (recurrent and nearly obsessive throughout the history of cinema), but on the relationship between the photographic and the cinematographic mediums, from an expressive, narrative, vital and experiential point of view. To do so, I will focus especially to the peculiar science-fiction film *La je-*

basically pointed out that “photography has freed the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness” and, unlike painting, ‘photography and the cinema on the other hand are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism’ (BAZIN, 1990: 26). In this way Bazin establishes some sort of homology between photography and cinema, compared with the traditional plastic arts. Indeed, photography and cinema (especially the photochemical forms) have a common base: the capacity to record the world automatically, without the (apparent) intervention of man. Photographic and cinema film mechanically records light impressions, and this recording is fixed on a stable medium. The interdependence



Shot 01. A view of the jetty (*La jetée*) at Orly

Indeed, photography and cinema (especially the photochemical forms) have a common base: the capacity to record the world automatically, without the (apparent) intervention of man

tée (Chris Marker, 1962), without doubt one of the most fascinating directors of the twentieth century. It is a film constructed on the basis of photographs or still frames, a hypnotic and captivating story that can help us explore the complex relationship between photography and cinema.

A review of Bazin, Benjamin, Sontag and the ontology of photographic image

But first things first. In a brief but substantial text from 1945, critic, historian and cinema theorist André Bazin reflected on the nature of photography in relation to painting and cinema. He

between the two forms of expression is therefore indisputable (even today with digital images). Years earlier, in a fundamental essay, Walter Benjamin held photography responsible as the medium that had caused the loss of the *aura* of the work of art (the aim of its singular and unrepeatable nature) in the new era of technical reproducibility that began with the invention of photography back in 1839 (BENJAMIN, 1968). Thus, in mass society, technical reproducibility has produced a subversion of the very concept of art, to the extent that it is impossible to recognise the singularity of artistic artefacts, as their cult value is questioned to the de-

triment of their exhibition value. Photography thus precipitated a shift in the conception of art, now transformed into a commodity, to the point that it is extremely difficult to recognise its *strictly artistic value* (MARZAL, 2007).

Beyond constituting a historical landmark in the visual arts, photography was presented from the beginning as *index*, as *evidence of that-has-been*, i.e., photography has implanted an ingrained voyeurism that standardises the signification of all events. Thus, photographs are a pseudopresence and a sign of absence, supplying “the token presence of the dispersed relatives” (SONTAG, 1975: 6). In short, photography is a form of expression that has ended up transforming our view of the world. Thus, for Sontag, “to collect photographs is to collect the world”;¹ in other words, photography is associated with an attitude of contemporary man, who tries to shape the world according to his own design, thereby reifying it in the very act of picture taking: “To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed” (SONTAG, 1975: 10). On this point it should be added that cinema constituted a new kind of *tour de force*, culminating the bourgeois realist project that photography had started fifty-five years earlier, also restoring movement and thereby offering a more faithful reproduction of the world



Shots 02-03. On Sundays, parents bring their children to watch the planes

Shot 04. A woman's face is engraved in the child's memory

Shot 05. The woman witnesses the death of a man at Orly

(even though this restoration is absolutely *illusionistic*).

In this context, we might well wonder how such a fascinating and effective story (Chris Marker's *La jetée*) can be constructed, from the narrative point of view, (apparently) *only* with photographs that resemble still frames taken from a motion picture. This is undoubtedly a remarkable and strange film, remembered especially for having served as an inspiration for *12 Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), which only preserves the most superficial elements of its source of inspiration. This was not the only film in which Marker used photographs to construct the sequences: other notable cases are *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1966) and *Le souvenir d'un avenir* (2003).

The singular case of Chris Marker's cinema

The works of the complex and unclassifiable filmmaker Chris Marker (pseudonym for Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve) usually fall within the documentary genre. With an education in philosophy, Marker started his career as a director with *Olympia 52* (1952) and *Les statues meurent aussi* (1958) with Alain Resnais, a film that denounces Western colonialism in Africa, which was censored as were other documentaries (*¡Cuba, sí!* [1961], *Nuit et brouillard* [1955] with Resnais, etc.).

His documentary films present a very subjective and personal treatment of the topics he deals with. As a small sample, the following plots could be cited: *Le joli mai* (1962), a film close to the genre of direct cinema, set in the context of the end of the Algerian war; *Le mystère Koumiko* (1965), a documentary on the Olympic Games in Tokyo 1964, following the reflections and thoughts of Kumiko Muraoka, a friend of the film's assistant directors; *Dimanche à Pékin* (1956), a film that depicts a trip to China in which the director shows the relationship between traditional culture and the fight against capitalism; *Lettre de Sibérie* (1957), a film in which Marker offers

an epistolary illustration of a trip to past and present Siberia; *¡Cuba, sí!*, an examination of the Cuban Revolution, depicting the deep social and political changes at a time of severe harassment by the international community (this film was censored in France for two years); *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires*, a film in which a photographer and two friends use an album containing photographs taken in different corners of the world to talk about photography, human progress, cultural differences, etc.; *La sixième face du Pentagone* (1967), following the protest against US policy on the Vietnam War; *L'ambassade* (1974), a film that evokes and reflects on the then recent *coup d'état* in Chile through the discussions of a group of men and women, a political theme he returns to in *La spirale* (1975); *Le fond de l'air est rouge*, (1977), a documentary that offers a reflection on various conflicts such as Vietnam, May '68, Prague, Chile, etc., which are put in a dialectic relation; etc. It is impossible to summarise Marker's vast documentary filmography, but this short list offers a general vision of the richness and variety of his work.

From the eighties onward, Chris Marker started to use video as a medium, producing works that fall within the field of video art, video installations and CD-ROM. Notable among the main works he directed is *Sans soleil* (1982), in which a woman reads letters from her friend, a camera man who travels all over the world, comparing images of Japan and poor countries like Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde in Africa. In an audiovisual collage, the voice-over of the woman composes a narrative with her filmmaker friend's memories, thereby constructing a sort of fictitious memory. In *Level 5* (1996), Marker tells the story of Laura, a woman who wants to complete an unfinished video game begun by her deceased lover based on the Battle of Okinawa, a terrible episode of the Second World War that has been wiped from the collective memory. *Le souvenir d'un avenir* is the third film by Chris Marker made entirely with pho-

tographs by Denise Bellon, which Marker uses to track the future to come, the Second World War and the post-war colonial conflicts. On the other hand, outstanding among his multimedia productions is *Zapping Zone: Proposals for an Imaginary Television* (1990-1997), a video installation combining photographs, excerpts from his films, images from some of his works for television, computer programmes, etc., as a kind of metaphor for channel-hopping as a form of image consumption by the

deographic and hypermedia works), we can identify a desire to construct a line of thinking based on *laterality*, which continuously seeks –in the dialectic clash between word and image– to *crush* the spectators' intelligence and awaken their emotions; in short, to provoke a reflection, first and foremost, on the very nature of film writing. In this respect, I think it is worth noting the relationship Santos Zunzunegui observes between Marker's works and those of two great melancholic filmmakers, Orson Welles

The poetic capacity of his writing is supported to a great extent by this sort of audiovisual *bricolage* resulting from the reflective combination of the most varied cultural sources that feed his work: photography, painting, video, comics, poetry, philosophical thought, literature, music, etc.

contemporary spectator. Finally, *Im-memory* (1997) presents an interactive multimedia installation, originally exhibited at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, made up of photographs, sequences from his films, videos, etc., on CD-ROM, as fragments of a heterogeneous memory which each spectator has the chance to construct in his or her own way.

As Santos Zunzunegui reminds us (ORTEGA and WEINRICHTER, 2005: 165-166), André Bazin remarked in 1958 that "Chris Marker brings to his films an absolutely new notion of montage that I will call 'horizontal', as opposed to traditional montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to shot. Here, a given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said". Thus, Marker's audiovisual writing, even in his first documentary films (which fall within the paradigm of linear discourse, as opposed to the hypertextuality of his vi-

and Jean-Luc Godard. Indeed, like Chris Marker's, Welles' filmography can be viewed as a combination and synthesis of cinema with other arts like theatre, radio or music. And like Godard, Marker does not seem to be "willing to consider the arrival of new technologies onto the cinematographic field without confronting them" (ZUNZUNEGUI: 168). As Zunzunegui suggests, while this confrontation between Godard and the new technologies involves a *tomb for the eyes* –that is, using video as a funeral instrument that allows him to construct his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), Marker embraces the new technologies, without any trace of melancholy, since they allow him to work more efficiently as a *bricoleur multimedia*, a practice he pursued since he began working in the world of cinema. In a way, the poetic capacity of his writing is supported to a great extent by this sort of audiovisual *bricolage* resulting

Shots 06-10. The outbreak of World War III leads to destruction of Paris





Shots 11-13. Scientists develop a device for time travelling

Shots 14-15. Time travelling causes disappointment or madness in time travellers

from the reflective combination of the most varied cultural sources that feed his work: photography, painting, video, comics, poetry, philosophical thought, literature, music, etc. Marker's films thus transcend the traditional distinction between documentary and fiction, rhetorical effects for the creation of meaning which intermingle completely with his cinematic works.

I offer these lines to serve to introduce the reader to the complex work of the singular filmmaker Chris Marker, whose contextualisation is essential to understand the film analysed here. The reader can obtain a very general idea of Chris Marker's highly varied work from Bamchade Pourvali (1983), Margarita Ledo (2005), and especially from the complete collective study edited by Ortega and Weinrichter (2006), *Mystère Marker. Pasajes en la obra de Chris Marker*.

Borges-esque architecture in *La jetée*

La jetée is considered Marker's only purely fictional film [shot 1]. The film, which is twenty-seven minutes long, tells the story of a man marked by the childhood experience of witnessing the death of a man on the jetty at Orly Airport. A powerful and captivating voice-over tells us the terrible story of the protagonist who as an adult, after the Third World War, is chosen by scientists to travel in time and to bring back energy resources for the survival of humankind, which is now condemned to live underground because life above ground is impossible due to ra-

dioactivity. To make these journeys in time, scientists choose individuals with an ability to remember powerful images. The protagonist goes back in time, where he meets a woman with whom he falls in love, whom he remembers from his childhood experience on the jetty at Orly. On one of his journeys, he meets humans from the future, who give him an energy source that will solve the problems of humanity after the devastating war. Back in the present, scientists take him off the project. At some point, aided by the men from the future, who can also travel in time, the protagonist goes back to the past to meet his beloved again. There, on the jetty at Orly, the protagonist is shot by a man who has followed him through time, making it possible for him to witness as a child his own death as an adult.

This is a story with a clear touch of the work of Jorge Luis Borges, notable for the use of a simple and concise writing style in which the principle of economy seems to dominate. The powerful voice-over, nearly hypnotic, is utterly without embellishment or affectation. Like Borges' writing, in *La jetée* the story told by the narrator offers only essential information: it could be said that the essential is illuminated because it is not muddled with any other detail. We hear the sounds of plane engines while we see the image of the jetty at Orly, and then we hear Trevor Duncan's music, based on Russian Holy Saturday liturgical chants, solemn and mysterious. The voice-over starts the hypnotic story: "This is the



story of a man marked by an image from his childhood. The violent scene, whose meaning he would not grasp until much later, took place on the great jetty at Orly, a few years before the start of the Third World War". This is followed by the image of a bell tower and of the jetty, and the sound of the loudspeakers at Orly Airport, where his

good story by Borges, after a series of vicissitudes that articulate a winding tale [shots 11-15], the narrator leads us to the dénouement of the story, closing a circle that takes us back to the beginning of the film: "Back on the jetty at Orly, on this hot Sunday before the war, where he could now stay, he realized that the child he had once been must

in *La jetée* it is easy to hear the echoes of the hypnotic voice of the narrator in *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961), or the poetic images of naked bodies showered by radioactive rain in *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959); but especially from *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), the references to which are clearly explicit. In

Another characteristically Borges-esque feature can be easily recognised in *La jetée*: the intertextual nature of every artistic text, how every work is always the result of a rewriting that follows a tradition from pre-existing texts with which it enters into a dialogue

parents have taken the protagonist as a child, as it was customary to do on Sundays in those years. Engraved in his memory is the face of a woman, disturbed by the murder of a man, whose death creates a moment of confusion in the jetty [shots 02-05]. "Moments to remember are just like other moments. They are only made memorable by the scars they leave. The face he had seen was to be the only peacetime image to survive the war. Had he really seen it? Or had he invented the tender gesture to shield him from the madness to come? The sudden noise, the woman's gesture, the crumpling body, the cries of the crowd". In only three minutes, the narrator has outlined the main plot and has incited something between curiosity and fascination for the story in the audience [Shots 06-10]. Like any

be there too, watching the planes. But first he looked for the woman's face, at the end of the jetty. He ran towards her. But when he saw the man from the underground camp he realized that one cannot escape time, and that this haunted moment, given him to see as a child, was the moment of his own death". The narrator's voice is accompanied by a series of still images that accentuate the suspense, among which the powerful image of the woman witnessing the death of the protagonist stands out [shots 36-41].

Another characteristically Borges-esque feature can be easily recognised in *La jetée*: the intertextual nature of every artistic text, how every work is always the result of a rewriting that follows a tradition from pre-existing texts with which it enters into a dialogue. Thus,

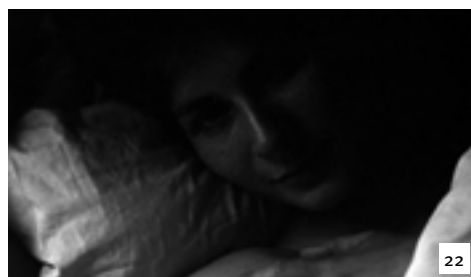
deed, Marker has always confessed his fascination for Hitchcock's films and it therefore seems inevitable to establish a relation between the protagonist's beloved/lover in *La jetée* and Madeleine, the protagonist in *Vertigo*, the object of Scottie's desire.

Photography and poeticity in Chris Marker's *La jetée*

The references to *Vertigo* are also quite evident in *La jetée* in many other respects. Both films offer a reflection on time, love and memory, essential ingredients of melancholy. From a narrative point of view, *La jetée* (the jetty, the place that marks the departure and arrival point for the protagonist's journey) follows a circular structure (even the wavy hair of the woman reminds us of Madeleine, a name with Proust

Shots 36-41. The protagonist returns to the jetty (*La jetée*) at Orly





tian reminiscences, and with a relationship could also be identified with the Möbius strip of Saul Bass' credits in Hitchcock's film), connecting past and future (which is the present for the protagonist) [shot 16]. And a reference to the sequoia forest from the famous sequence in *Vertigo* is also present in *La jetée*: on one of his first encounters while time travelling, the protagonist is walking with the woman in the park, and he uses the cross-section of a sequoia trunk to explain he comes from the future [shot 21]. Moreover, the protagonist of *La Jetée*, like Scottie, is obsessed with the image of a woman, specifically the face of a woman. This fetishistic obsession of the protagonist (like Madeleine for Scottie) is the source of the only motion shot in the film (a seven-second shot, located at minute 18:46), in which the woman is lying in bed, opens her eyes and looks straight at the protagonist (at the camera, and therefore at us) [shot 22]. It is worth remembering that in Marker's plot scientists find out that time travel only works with people who have the capability of *remembering strong images*, and thus the transcendence of memory is one of the main themes in the film.

This is precisely one of the main aspects that link *La jetée* with my reflection on photography as a form of expression. As mentioned above, the film is also –or above all– a reflection on the nature of the photographic image. Regarding photography, Barthes pointed out that “the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency, matte and somehow stupid, the *This* (this photograph, and not Photography), in short, what

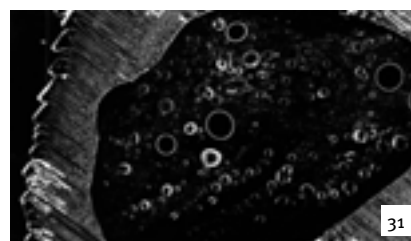
Lacan calls the *Tuche*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression” (BARTHES, 1980: 15). Thus, for Barthes the photograph produces an experience of disorder and discomfort, provoking a strong contradiction between our own subjectivity and what it seems to refer to mechanically (the real referent). In the story in *La jetée*, we find a continuity of still images, bound together by the seductive voice of the narrator; photographs that are utterly disturbing, sharp and captivating. It is a collection of images that could fall within the territory of the Barthesian concept of *punctum*. Unlike *studium*, *punctum* is associated with the experience of observing intimate photographs, a fascination that cannot usually be explained with words: it is a sort of *rapture* (like the one suffered by the protagonist of Iván Zulueta's *Arrebato*, 1980) which can only be experienced. It is not for nothing that *La jetée*, as an album of photographs of a fascinating story, could be said to allow us to understand the act of *looking at photographs* as an experience that is very close to death: “In Photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric; and in the case of animated being, their life as well, except in the case of photographing corpses; and even so: if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is

Shot 16. A woman's hairdo recalls Madeleine's in *Vertigo*

Shot 21. They stop in front of a sequoia trunk, where he says he comes from the future

Shot 22. The only shot with movement; the woman looking straight at the camera

Shots 31-35. The protagonist manages to travel to the future



alive" (BARTHES, 1980: 123). In this way, the photograph confirms the end of a time that has passed, the impossibility of going back or recovering the lost referent. These are the parameters of the Barthesian *punctum*, but also of the aesthetic proposal of Chris Marker's *La jetée*.

We can thus see that the ontological ambiguity of the photographic image is a fundamental key to understanding the extraordinary metaphorical and poetic power of *La jetée*. Indeed, the indeterminacy or entropy of meanings is shown in multiple ways in the film: the names of the main characters are omitted (the absence of names facilitates even further the projection of the spectator into the story), there is absolutely no reasoned explanation offered as to how time travelling is possible or any information on the technology that

makes it possible [shots 31-35], and the protagonist's journeys back in time and his appearances do not seem to arouse of the slightest surprise, fear or shock in the woman.

But what is also particularly remarkable is the fact that numerous images –shots or photographs– are close-ups of people (the legs of the child on the railing of the jetty at Orly [shot 3], and close-ups, medium shots and American shots of the woman; the girl in the foreground when the protagonist returns to the jetty at Orly as an adult [shot 36]; etc.), close-ups of objects (lifeless statues, the boat on the lake, the cat looking at the camera –Marker has a weakness for cats–, stuffed ('eternal') animals in the natural history museum visited by the couple, a metaphor for death) [shots 23-30] or long shots of spaces and places (the views

of Paris in ruins after the devastating war, the cemetery, a room where the lovers meet, the images of the network of passages where the survivors of the war live), which are simply intriguing. Several shots are linked through cross-dissolves [shots 17-20], through a *lateral montage*, as Bazin would define it, which allows the construction of images with a high density of meaning (BENSMAÏA, 1988), weaving a denser, more opaque and complex sequence of images than what we are used to.

Ellipsis, spaces between shots (still images) and silences –in short, the narrative indeterminacy of *La jetée* (ODIN, 1981: 147-171)– allow the composition of a story with clear dreamlike qualities, pure entropy that imprints mystery on the film and prompts us to consider the possibility that everything has been dreamed or imagined by the protagonist (or by us, the spectators). This indeterminacy alluded to above is the manifestation of *poeticity* in its most clear and explicit expression: in cinema, what is not shown or narrated (ellipsis, off-camera space [GÓMEZ TARÍN, 2006]), is as important as what is explicit. *La jetée* is undoubtedly a film that penetrates deep beneath our skin and invites us to absorb the images and words that evoke all its sounds and photographs and make them our own. In this way, *La jetée* constitutes a lucid reflection on time, space, representation and the human psyche (CHAMARRETTE, 2008), but is above all a masterly reflection on the very nature of cinema. In this sense, Marker's work, and especially *La jetée*, can today be considered an effective antidote against the trivialisation of images that surrounds us.

Shots 23-30. The couple visits a museum of *eternal* animals





Shots 17-20. The continuous fade contributes to making the story more dense and poetic

Notes

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¹ Sontag would seem to coincide with the lucid analysis by Italo Calvino in his short story "The Adventure of a Photographer" in *Difficult Loves* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984), which tells of an amateur photographer who ends up being swallowed by his obsession with photography. The protagonist loses his sense of reality and at the end of his life is completely isolated from the world because of his search for photographic plenitude, which for him consists of photographing photographs.

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Shelley Rice

ARIADNE'S THREAD: ON THE BEACHES THAT ARE AGNÈS VARDA*

The Beaches of Agnès, Agnès Varda's autobiographical film released in 2008, begins with the artist walking backwards on a beach in Belgium that was a central backdrop of her childhood. It ends with Agnès sitting in her courtyard on the Rue Daguerre in Paris, holding a screen on her lap. Upon the screen is an image of herself surrounded by 80 colorful brooms, gifts given by friends to mark her 80th birthday. As we regard the photo on her lap, it becomes animated, and begins to recede into space behind the frame. In the end it is not Agnès but her image that moves backwards, as the artist muses: "It all happened yesterday, and it's already in the past. Sensation combines with an image, which rests. I remember as long as I am alive". Seen together, these two scenes encapsulate the relationship between the still and the moving image in Varda's beauti-

ful film. The animated body, in two or three dimensions, moves as long as it is able, but ultimately it will be the fixed image that stays with us.

Varda said as much in 1984, responding to questions about the relationship between photography and cinema in *Photogenies*, no. 5: "La photographie ne cesse de m'enseigner comment faire du cinema. Et le cinema me rappelle a tout instant qu'il filme pour rien le mouvement puisque toute image devient souvenir et que tout souvenir se fige et se fixe. Dans toute photographie, il y a la suspension d'un mouvement qui finalement est un refus du mouvement. Le mouvement y est en creux. Dans tout film, il y a la volonte de capter la vie mouvant et de refuser l'immobile. Mais l'image fixe est en creux dans le film comme la menace d'une panne de moteur, comme la mort qui guette". The still image, with its power to fix

itself into a souvenir, to encapsulate in form an iconic truth, is like the specter constantly threatening the mobility of cinema. In some cases, she says, a photograph can embody in one image the whole of a film's message. Varda saw a still from the Louis Delluc's *The Woman from Nowhere*, a picture of a woman with a long shadow alone on a country road; its effect was so powerful she never felt the need to see the entire film. Similarly, people she meets on the streets of Paris in her documentary short *Daguerre Beach* remember specific pictures, feelings and characters from *Daguerreotypes* but never the full narrative. Agnès is a filmmaker, but she began as a photographer, and she understands the strengths and limitations of her media, the ways in which they work both together and at cross-purposes. "Pour moi", she wrote in the same issue of *Photogenies*, "cinema et photographie vont de pair dans ma tête comme un frère et une sœur ennemis [...] après l'inceste".

Walking backwards on a beach, or in another location important to the artist's biography, is a trope that repeats itself at regular intervals throughout the film, signifying Varda's regression into her own past. Although the narrative begins with her childhood

En algunos casos, nos dice Varda, una fotografía puede llegar a condensar en una sola imagen todo el mensaje del film

and ends with her 80th birthday party, there is nothing linear about its trajectory. Recreating the erratic processes of memory and imagination, the work ricochets between the past and the present, transcriptions and reenactments, documentaries and dreams, life and art.

All of these various states are presented not in fixed relationships but as equivalent realities that often bleed into and inform each other. The film may be an autobiographical self-portrait, but its revelations are often simultaneously disruptions. During the first scene on the Belgian beach Varda announces that she would like to be filmed through spotty mirrors or, better yet, with her scarf hiding her face as it blows in the wind. "Even when we dump it all out we don't reveal much", Jane Birkin laughingly announces as she empties the contents of her handbag on the sidewalk in a short clip seen midway through the film. It is clear that Varda sees her art works – cinema, photos, visual images and installations, even family photographs – as the contents of her bag-of-tricks, her own personal *marque au puce*. She allows these prized possessions, gleaned from a lifetime of experience, to speak for her, to represent her in much the same way

Agnès en la playa, in her Director's Chair on the Beach. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris



that Guillaume the Cat speaks for Chris Marker in several scenes.

This is, in other words, autobiography seen through a glass, darkly. The viewer understands this early on, when mirrors are placed on the beach by young assistants as Agnès announces that she will play the role of an old woman telling her life story. The mirrors are deliberately positioned to reflect the North Sea and the sky rather than the people most of the time; like Robert Smithson's *Slide Works*, they dislocate the landscape and reflect it back on those who pass through their ethereal surfaces, whether they be young film technicians, trapeze artists, children reenacting faded family photographs

or contemporary surfers en route to the waves. In various ways the glass illuminates Agnès' diverse cast of characters, those who have animated her life. The wood of the mirrors reminds Varda of her parents, her siblings and their childhood home; in response to her musings the scene shifts through old family photographs and then lurches forward to a hilarious recent encounter with the man who lived in the house in Brussels that was occupied by the filmmaker and her family before World War 2. Past and present are juxtaposed seemingly randomly; there is a patchwork quilt quality to the fluidity of memory, with time periods often differentiated mainly through color: old

photographs and early films are black and white, while contemporary scenes or reenactments are announced in Technicolor. There is clear linearity in the narrative, but the forward movement of chronology is layered and complex, composed of reminiscences, fantasies, recurrent images and dreams. "Memories are like flies", she announces at one point, "swarming through the air". This swarming effect is built into the structure of the film which is, as she states several times, like a picture puzzle whose diverse fragments need to be assembled around a center.

That center, of course, is the parallel evolution of Varda's life and her art, and their continual interface through the medium of time. The barriers between personal and professional life are non-existent within the context of this film; art grows out of life and then jumps back into it. The courtyard at Rue Daguerre is simulated as a film set, and tons of sand invade the real streets to create an urban beach that links her home and work spaces in Paris. Scenes that actually happened during the artist's childhood are recreated much later within cinematic narratives; youthful daydreams (Varda wanted to join the circus, and sit in the belly of Jonah's Whale) become actuated in her later years through the medium of film. Thinking back to her first job as a retoucher of damaged photographs, she sees in their decay the beauty of the mildewed ceiling in her home that has figured prominently in several of her films. When she remembers a picture of a potato taken early in her career, her mind careens forward not only to scenes of potato pickers from *The Gleaners and I* but also to her recent installation (and performance, as a talking potato) at the Venice Biennale. Dreams are the stuff of life, Varda seems to be saying, and images recur and reproduce themselves through time, their changing contexts mirroring not only personal trajectories but also the upheavals of the historical world. Algerian Independence, the Vietnam War, Abortion Rights, the Black Panthers and Iraq

Above: Photo of Agnès with Brooms. Below: Photo of Agnès with Cat. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris



play their parts here, in both life and art, participants in Varda's journey as surely as the marine landscapes that mark her path.

The artist explains right away, at the very beginning of the film, why seascapes are so significant to her: "If we opened people up we would find landscapes. If we opened me up, we would find beaches". The symbiotic connection between people and places is a constant in Varda's work; her characters are deeply rooted in the landscapes within which they act. Given the importance of locations to her, it is perhaps not surprising that places are often used as structuring devices in her narratives. Cleo walks through real Parisian streets and spaces from 5:00 to 7:00; *The Vagabond* is punctuated by 13 panning shots of roadsides as Mona hitches rides across the country. Varda's trajectory through time has played itself out on beaches, in Belgium and France, in Los Angeles and Corsica and Cuba. These seascapes are the recurring stage sets of her autobiography, marking its chapter breaks; as her life evolves, the beaches change. The family moves from Brussels to Sete; she later becomes a student in Paris, at the Ecole du Louvre. This long-ago movement in time is reenacted by the octogenarian Agnès as she pilots a small boat from Sete to Paris. En route, she passes a young woman reading on the banks of the Seine who "represents" the student Varda, two temporal manifestations of the same persona passing (literally) like ships in the night. These two Agnèses are soon joined by a third: the young actress France Dougnac, who in Varda's early film *Naussica* played a young art student reading on the banks of the Seine who is robbed and outsmarted by the young beatnik Gerard Depardieu.

This simultaneity, the eternal return and recurrence of time, is perhaps the central motif of Varda's autobiographical work, the thread that links the Beaches that are Agnès. Like body and soul, or film and photo, these seascapes vacillate between temporality and eternity within the context of the film. In an in-

terview with her young friend Bastide included in *Daguerre Beach*, Varda discusses the metaphoric meaning of sand in her work. "Sand is an hourglass," she says, "sand is time, sand is the beach, sand is the sea," she chants. Continually morphing, this fluid substance embodies the temporality of cinema, with its animated shifts and dislocations, its fluidity of movement and meaning. A film scholar who has worked as the archivist for Varda and her deceased husband Jacques Demy, Bastide mentions that he appreciates Agnès' work because it is mythological, because there is a Thread of Ariadne that links all of her creations. Varda, who loves ancient art and literature, thoughtfully agrees,

and mentions that for her the sea is *The Odyssey*, the stage set for Ulysses, who has been a starring character in both her photographs and her films.

In this case cinema followed photography. Her short film *Ulysses* – whose theme is the intractability of memory and our capacity to see the past anew – grew out of her obsession with a black and white picture she had taken years before. A "directorial" photograph of a nude man and a child posed on a beach, the still image is given a history in this narrative work. There are interviews, discussions and reminiscences with and about old friends, all of them attempting to resituate the image in space and time by reconstituting its context. Ulti-

Photo of Agnès with Mirrors on the Beach. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris





Left: Photo of Daguerre Beach. Right: Photo of Agnès with circus performers. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris

mately, however, this search for a Barthesian “studium” is complicated, since the people involved in the making of the picture don’t always remember it. Memory embalmed in form, the mysterious photograph is unloosed from the actual event it depicts. Isolated and immobile, it transcends history to become an open-ended field of dreams. Like the sea, it has two faces, only one of them mired in time. “Time has passed”, Varda says in the film as she sails through Paris and her life. “Except on beaches, which are timeless.”

This duality, between time and timelessness, echoes Varda’s obsession with mortality and immortality, visualized in the parade of pictures of those who have departed the earth. Agnès has spent her life photographing and

filming beloved friends and colleagues, those whose friendship and assistance have brightened her passage on the planet. Still alive and active at 80, she is left with an archive full of ghostly images; her *oeuvre*, to some degree, has become a sacred altar. While proudly displaying a recent exhibition of black and white photographs of theatrical personages in a beautiful chapel in Avignon, the artist breaks down in tears. Caught between her pride in her artistic achievement and her horror that the still photographs are specters of impending deaths (“a catastrophe that has already occurred”, Roland Barthes would say in *Camera Lucida*), she sees the past and the present superimposed. The futility of trying to visually reconstitute the dearly beloved overwhelms her. Before

they were living people, animated players on the stage of life; now their still photographic traces are all that remain, silently inhabiting the same space.

The most cherished of the dead is, of course, her beloved husband Jacques Demy, whose presence and artistic genius permeate the film. On some level this autobiography echoes the structure of a family album, highlighting relatives and friends who have struck the rich emotional chords of a life well lived. Varda’s immediate family – her two grown children, her grandchildren – has always played a large role in her art as well as her life. Here they function as an anchor for her, the “sum of her happiness”, a “peaceful island” of protection in the vast and unpredictable sea of life. They are always with her, dancing on the beach in her imagination. She “sees” them when she is at home in Paris, even as she “sees” Demy’s face in the trees outside her window. The Beaches that are Agnès are landscapes of the mind, and there the past and the present, the near and far coexist, visualized through the magic of the camera. During the film, she explains this magic simply, as “la lumière qui (est arrivée) quelque part et qui est retenue par des images plus ou moins sombres ou colorées”. Unlike the dead, those rays of light are still with us; like memories, they rest when the physical traces of cherished lives recede from sight.

Toward the end of *Beaches*, Agnès takes us on a tour of her recent exhibi-

Photo of Agnès in Boat with Eiffel Tower. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris



tion at the Fondation Cartier in Paris. Thrilled to have suddenly been transformed from an old filmmaker into a young plastic artist, she tells the story of a glass shack, covered with colorful rolls of film, shimmering in the light of the gallery. The original film was a failure, she says. But once gleaned and metamorphosed, the rolls make a splendid installation, with the screen actors immobilized to become wall art. Sitting in the cabana, she explains: "Quand je suis là, J'ai l'impression que j'habite le cinéma, que c'est ma maison, il me semble que j'y ai toujours habité". As she wanders through the gallery at the age of 80, happily moving among her avant-garde art works, it's hard not to notice that she begins to walk forward once again, into the future.

Notes

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Shelley Rice was born in New York City, U.S.A. in 1950. A critic and historian of photography and multi-media art since 1973, she is a Professor of Art History and Photography Studies at New York University. Her writings have appeared in a range of publications like *Art Journal*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice*, *French Studies* and *Etudes Photographiques*, and her books include *Parisian Views*, *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun*, *Maya Deren*, *Cindy Sherman*, and *The Book of 101 Books. The Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century* (Roth Horowitz, LLC: 2001). In 2010, Professor Rice was named a Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture.

Photo of Family Dancing on the Beach. Agnès Varda/Cine-Tamaris



DIA LO GUE



Agnès Varda (Belgium, 1928) is one of the greatest filmmakers in film history. She is known as the “Grandmother of French New Wave”, but she actually belonged to Left Bank Group together with Chris Marker, Alain Resnais and Marguerite Duras. After studying art history, she started working as an official photographer for the Théâtre National Populaire in Paris, but soon began making films. Since her film *Cleo from 5 to 7* (Cléo de 5 à 7, 1962), with its modern aimless wandering, Varda hasn’t stopped experimenting and positioning herself at the ideological and aesthetical vanguard of film. She made the leap from fiction to documentary with *Daguerréotypes* (1975), using her interest in photography by portraying the everyday life of the shopkeepers in her neighbourhood. In her own words “the immobility of this neighbourhood took the form of filmed photographs. By holding a post to the end of the film, they themselves

Montage of texts and interviews created by Christa Blümlinger (Université Vincennes-Saint-Denis) and reviewed by the filmmaker Agnès Varda in 2009*

Agnès Varda. From Photography to Cinema and Vice Versa

become portraits fixed in time, but some of the heads move, there is the hint of a gesture, they're breathing! They are vibrant daguerreotypes" (VARDA. 1994: 143-144). It is a double play between still and moving image, which is also present in *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (Una chante, l'autre pas, 1976), a benchmark film for the feminist movement. She has never hesitated to put herself, and her environment, in the foreground. The magnificent *The Beaches of Agnès* (Les plages d'Agnès, 2008) rounds out this other side of her work.

After inviting her to take part in the *Dialogue* section of *L'Atalante*, we couldn't think of anyone more qualified to speak about the relationship between photography

and cinema. As the filmmaker isn't currently granting interviews on this subject because she believes that her filmography should speak for itself, in 2009, a German publication *Viva Photofilm* published a montage in which Christa Blümlinger took existing texts and combined them with images, under the supervision of the director herself. The result was titled *Filmfotomontage* and the English translation is presented for the first time below. Here at *L'Atalante*, we have decided that in this occasion, it will be Agnès Varda's reflections and experiences that will engage in a dialogue with the images.

Paula de Felipe Martínez

I. STARTING OUT: PAINTING-PHOTOGRAPHY-CINEMA

I had finished my first year at the École du Louvre, because I loved painting with all my heart, especially the old masters, but also, making a big leap, contemporary painting. [...] I never really liked the painters of the nineteenth century, although I've been to the exhibitions of Delacroix, Courbert... Despite spending three years at the École du Louvre, auditing classes and not doing very well in the exams, I didn't have any interest in filing index cards in some provincial museum; I told myself that being a photographer wouldn't be a bad idea, because you handled objects, cameras and lenses, and could learn how to work in the laboratory, you know, it was an craftsman's trade that gave you the chance to see things. At first, with some mo-

desty, I started learning with two elderly photographers (who later died), specialists in the works of painters and sculptors. I accompanied them to the artists' houses and to the Rodin Museum. It was a real learning experience, as you had to do it, it was full-time, and there were afternoon courses at the École de Vaugirard to pass the exam for the CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence), which was still compulsory to practice then. [...] Because of a number of circumstances, because I was a student in Sète and one of my neighbours, Andrée, married Jean Vilar, I made my debut when [Jean Vilar] created the festival in Avignon [...]. I had to help out with some tasks in order to get food and lodging during the festival. [...] The photos at the first festival were atrocious, completely blurred, it's incredible. I didn't get good photos because I should have got them to pose a little, there wasn't enough light on the stage. Year after year I did all the archives of photographs for those

Agnès Varda: *Ulysse* (1982)



festivals in Avignon, and when the National Theatre was created in Paris in 1951, [...] I continued taking photos and I got better at it. It was a very fascinating experience, because [of] the work we were doing there, Vilar's desire to go against all the fashions, against everything that was done back then, his idea that the theatre could be popular, accessible and of great quality, [...] all these things that now seem obvious were considered extraordinary in 1951. [...]

I worked for the National Theatre and for Vilar for almost ten years. [...] I was very young, really I was, and it was great that such responsibility was given to a young girl. I did everything: the photos of the stage, the photos included in the programs, the actors' portraits for the hall, press photos, articles and also a lot of archive shots that Vilar asked me to take, apart from corners of the stage,

the constructions, bare sets, that is, they were real archives, not like the ones made by newspaper photographers, who would come one day just to take the important shots. And I had huge headaches on each show: the photos for *The Prince of Hamburg* had to have a romantic touch, the photos for *Mother Courage* needed to be distanced, for *Arturo Ui* the photos had to be the gangster film style, things like that. [...]

It all happened like this. Later, the magazines that had published the photos of the National Theatre they liked hired me; then, they sent me travelling and finally I became a real photojournalist. [...]

Things happen in a mysterious way. I went on to portraits, which tend to be a little immobile, when what I wanted was to get closer to life, to the mystery of sus-



pended movement. I never had a calling to be a filmmaker, but in this life there is a wild staging, a rough positioning into place. Photographs of five people in one spot, or even what we see from this window here, with a snowy background; in one glance the forms and lines are registered to perfection. I mean, just before, they are a bit compressed, restricted, a moment later, the placement of the elements is fantastic. [...] I am inspired by the movements that occur and achieve a moment of beauty only then to come undone. There is a fragility in the images of life and an emotion that can't be suspended, except, sometimes, by a photo, but that can be re-invented by cinema.

I had the need to make a film, I think, because I told to myself: "It would be beautiful to find a form that could simultaneously be photography, sound and the distance between them, their separation". [...] I had lived far away from so-called Parisian and intellectual life, I barely read the newspapers; I didn't really know who was who and who did what. I found myself much closer to craftsmen, sculptors, painters, people who, in general, pay little attention to current affairs.

When I started working on my first movie in 1954, I wrote it my way, as a type of rough-cut movie, although I had taken photos in a small fishing neighbourhood, *Le Pointe Courte*, whose name became the title of the movie. I photographed every shot, every place, and I had made the drawings of the rest of the shots. It was a completely cut movie, something that I have never done again, shot by shot, image by image, in which moment the dialogue stops, if the dialogue continues in another image. [...] I didn't know anything; I hadn't even seen a camera before. I finished writing the film and I put it in my drawer, I guess like it was a teenager's poem, something that I never thought to publish. [...] It was by luck that I met Carlos Vilardebo, who said to me: "After all, why don't we make a movie?"

[Abstracts from a radio broadcast recorded by *France-Culture*, broadcast on the 27 of March 1978, *Nuits magnétiques*, N° Phonothèque INA: 78C1050N3074; text revised in 2009.]

II. ABOUT SOME FILMS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND A DIAPORAMA

"Hola" to the Cubans Socialism and the chachachá

At Christmastime in 1961, invited by the Cubans, I went with a Rolleiflex, a Leica and the project to take photos and to assemble them into a movie when I got back. I didn't have any of the best or latest cameras, like one of those with an automatic motor that opens the shut-

ter and takes bursts of shots like a machine gun. My only support was a small soft foot and I had to set up the Leica twice, which means there would be a few seconds between every shot. So, instead of reconstructing a continuous movement by filming some images that were very close in time, we couldn't do anything but construct a jolting continuity that gives the film the rhythm of a *chachachá*, a *bolero*, *danzón* or *guaguancó*.

When I got back to Paris with some three thousand photos, I prepared for filming calculating very carefully the duration of the music chosen. After that came the *banc-titre* (filming with a camera suspended vertically over the photographs), image by image according to the number of images to shoot each photograph, or detail or movement.

Talking about Cuba, Chris Marker had filmed *Cuba sí* (1961) a year before my arrival. I benefited from some of his contacts and from my ability to communicate in Spanish with Cubans with their southern character, so different from the socialism of the East. Beni Moré is the best dancer there is in the Red Army Choir. [...] Fidel's portrait that I did seems very allegorical to me: a soldier with sweet eyes and without any weapon.

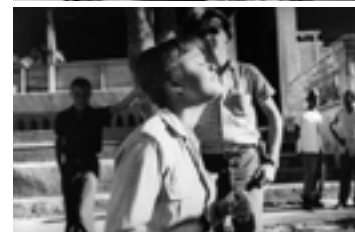
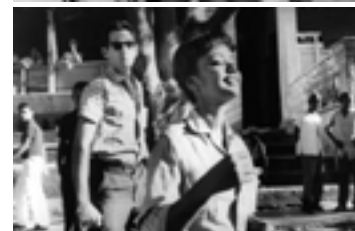
[Abstract from *Varda par Agnès*, Editions Cahiers du cinema, 1994, p. 133, revised by Agnès Varda in 2009.]

Ulysses

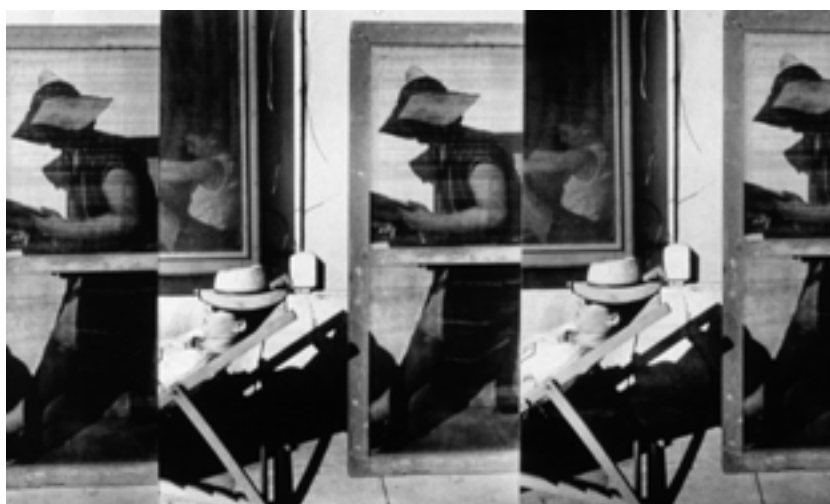
The photograph, the film

While I was preparing the show in Arles I realised that one of my photographs had been in the workshop for twenty years, over the door of a built-in wardrobe. It was clear that it was very important but I wondered why. And that question turned into the theme of a short film.

The small boy, Ulysses, who is sitting in the centre of the image, gave his name to the movie title. A name that is also mythical. [...]



Agnès Varda: *Salut les cubains* (1963)

Agnès Varda: *Ulysse* (1982)

From discoveries to frustrations, thanks to this short film I learned more about myself than through many conversations.

I dedicated it to Bienvenida, a magnificent woman I met in 1950 or 1951. She, her husband and their son Ulysses, who then was two or three years old, had crossed the Spanish border on foot; they were political refugees. We shared the same yard in the Rue Daguerre. Bienvenida, who helped me with everything, learned little by little how to work in a photo laboratory. She was enlarging and developing photos while singing songs from her native Alicante in her powerful voice, as if she was picking olives. I loved her generosity, her exquisite humour and her frankness when she spoke. For example, she never knocked on the door before she entered, and she would say: "A republican doesn't need permission to enter."

[Abstract from *Varda par Agnès*, Editions Cahiers du cinema, 1994, pp. 135-136.]

The diorama in the Théâtre Antique

Determined not to do anything but make films after *Cléo from 5 to 7* (Cléo de 5 à 7, Agnès Varda, 1962), I stopped working as a photographer. Twenty years later, Antoine Cordesse and Lucien Clergue asked me to prepare an evening for the Théâtre Antique in Arles, a mixed diorama with commentary. I needed to immerse myself once again in my old photos, and I even discovered some new photos to develop. I prepared the montage and the mixture with the amazing technicians at the Centre Pompidou, installing a system of drums that contained slides, as well as a system of synchronization to activate the change of slides and to insert the excerpts from the films (sequences in which photography had played an important role).

[Abstract from *Varda par Agnès*, Editions Cahiers du cinema, 1994, pp. 134.]

One minute for one image

Directed by Agnès Varda and presented by the Centre National de la Photographie, this is a series of mini-films about images and the imagination. Every afternoon, on FR3.

Photography on television and in the cinema is often something quick, rapid action and illustration, efficiency and movement, and we sometimes grow weary to the point of intoxication and bedazzlement from those waves of images that are

illustrated and displayed.

We talk about photographs, fixed images that are converted, beyond the representation of their object, into the signs and symbols of our mental world... Warning!... We are not concerned with critical or historical reflections on photography; what we are interested in is that *each image in itself*, made by one person, is seen by another person who *reads* it and proposed to thousands of others spectators, whether *amateurs* or simply curious.

A single photograph each time, in black and white or in colour, contemporary or old, portrait, group, news image, or an image of current fashion... (taken by photographers renowned or not, or even anonymous);

One every day, late enough to enter your mind shortly before you go to sleep. From eighty-nine to ninety seconds (i.e., a parenthesis in which to dream). It's a good length of time to look into a photo, but nobody would dare to say that one could take in a whole image in eighty seconds.

No music accompanying the image, because that would blur the gaze.

A commentary, but not during the first or last ten seconds of the broadcast (nothing at all, rather curious on television, an image to look at in silence, up to twice in ten seconds). The voices come from different people: photography lovers, passers-by, *amateurs*, neighbours, friends, other photographers, celebrities, children...

No stardom: each photo will have its chance and will not be identified until the broadcast is over.

One minute for one image is a series of mini-films about images and the imagination. It is a variation on the gaze and the gazes and it is an opportunity to show photographs that are worth pondering for a while. (Of course, it is also a tribute to the talent of the photographers.)

As an ex-photographer and filmmaker, fascinated with the effects of the word on the image and vice versa, I thought of suggesting *every photo as a place to dream*; it seemed to me that a bit of silence and a voice that communicates its personal impressions would stimulate the imagination of each and every person. When I say *dream*, I refer as much to the emotions as to the horror, the fascination, the charm, the admiration, the pleasure, the nostalgia, the complicity in humour, in short, an active dreaming, *the little film inside every person's head*. I proposed this series:

- to Garance, which had already produced my short *Ulysses* film (twenty minutes about a photo I took in 1954);
- to the Centre National de la Photographie, whose vocation is to promote photography among the widest and diverse public possible;
- to FR3, which is already scheduling a mini-concert every evening.

Evidently, there are millions of people watching at this hour: why not suggest to them to watch only before they turn their televisions off and to take a small journey in photography? Welcome, waking dreamers! Make some room for the imagination, obsession, strong images, the games of mirrors and gazes.¹

[Published in *Photogénies*, n°1 April 1983, no pagination.]

III. THREE ANSWERS TO THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINEMA

In your opinion, in which film or films is photography (photographic activity) best represented?

I really liked *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966). Antonioni showed the ridiculous excess of the photographer from fashion to fashion and at the same time, a serious professional obsessed with his work.

As an ex-photographer and filmmaker, fascinated with the effects of the word on the image and vice versa, I thought of suggesting every photo as a place to dream

The photography, for staging reasons, turned into a *mystery area*. The photographic image concealed secrets, and defended itself from the gaze.

I love photographs that resist; that's why I liked filming the photograph in *Ulysses*, which after 22 minutes of gazes and questions still continues to be a *place to dream* about exploring. The image backs away as the eye gets closer. This is the reason I like films where the photographic image is one of the elements and provides the real emotional material.

For example, in *Olstyn Pologne* (1981), a short film by Vincent Tamišier, or Wim Wender's *Alice in the Cities* (Alice in Den Städtchen, 1974), or even comic works like *Bread and Chocolate* (Pane e cioccolata, Franco Brusati, 1972), where poor Manfredi is taken to a police station because his image appears in the Polaroid snapshot of a Sunday amateur ... and it is revealed –the photo is the proof– that he dared to take a piss on a Swiss tree!

And then, there are films made with photos, such as the admirable *La Jetée* (1962) by Chris Marker, who dares, in the middle of all the still images, to include a moving shot of the face of a woman opening her eyes.

Has photography taught you anything about cinema? Or cinema about photography?

Photography has never stopped teaching me how to make films. And cinema reminds me every moment that the movement is never filmed at all, because every image turns into a memory and every memory is petrified and fixed.

In every photograph there is a suspension of movement which is ultimately a rejection of the movement. The movement is implicit. In every film there is a desire to capture life in motion and to reject still life.

But the fixed image is implicit in a film, like the threat of a motor breakdown, like the death that awaits us.

Photography and cinema: first cousins or sibling rivals?

Cinema and photography refer to one another –they are implicit– in their specific effects. For me, cinema and photography go together, like brother and sister who are rivals... after the incest.

[Published in *Photogénies*, n°5 April 1984, no pagination.]

THE BEACHES OF AGNÈS (LES PLAGES D'AGNÈS, AGNÈS VARDA, 2008)

About *Le Pointe Courte* (Agnès Varda, 1955) and the move from photography to cinema

For the editing stage, Alain Resnais joined the circle of cooperative volunteers. I see his classical face, and his features don't betray the passion and curiosity he feels for art, culture and every surrealistic complexity.

He himself took charge of the filming of a shot that was missing. Yes, in my yard we shot a *raccord* [match cut] of a street in La Pointe Courte [...]

During editing in 1955... a man was often calling Resnais on the phone: it was Chris Marker.

When he came, the only thing we saw of him were his leather jacket, his boots, his gloves and glasses.

He is so discreet that he is represented by a cat called *Guillaume-en-Egypte*. He is the creator of some excellent films and of some comments that are equally good. He is the one I like doing things with; he is my friend and auditor. But I changed his voice.

Why did you make the leap from photography to cinema?

You see, I remember that I needed words. I believed if you put the images on one side and the words on the other, that would be cinema. Of course, I learned later that it is something quite different.

Were you a cinephile?

No, not at all. Until I was twenty-five, I probably hadn't seen more than nine or ten movies. I don't have training in film, I haven't been an assiduous viewer; I imagined it and then I threw myself into it. [...]

[...]

About *La cabane de l'échec*, the installation created for the private exhibition *L'île et Elle* at the Fondation Cartier (2006)

This cabin has a history.

Agnès Varda: *La Pointe courte* (1955)





Agnès Varda: *Ma Cabane de l'échec* (2006)

Once upon a time there were two good-looking and talented actors, who had acted in a movie which turned out to be a flop. Like a hardworking gleaner, I recovered the abandoned copies of this film and we developed the reels. Two good-looking and talented actors found each other again on the walls, pierced through by the light.

What is a film? A light that comes from somewhere and that is held by images of varying degrees of darkness or colour.

When I'm there, I have the impression that I live in film, that it is my house, and it seems to me that it has always been.

[Abstract from the commentary and the dialogue of the movie *The Beaches of Agnès*]

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Notes

* Editor's note: Montage of texts of Agnès Varda created by Christina Blümlinger [Filmfotomontage, Textfragmente, ausgewählt von Christina Blümlinger]. In HAMOS, Gusztáv; PRATSCHKE, Katja; TODE, Thomas (eds.) 2010), *Viva Fotofilm, bewegt/unbewegt* (pp. 81-97). Marburg: Schüren. *L'Atalante* is grateful to the author for selecting the fragments and to the editors of the aforementioned book, as well as to Agnès Varda/Cine Tamaris to allow *L'Atalante* the use of the images that accompany the text. (Editor's note.)

1 Each series of fifteen broadcasts is based on a different personality and constitutes an *imaginary album*. These personalities include, alongside Agnès Varda, Robert Doisneau, Christian Caujolle, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Samia Souma.

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(DIS)AGREEMENTS

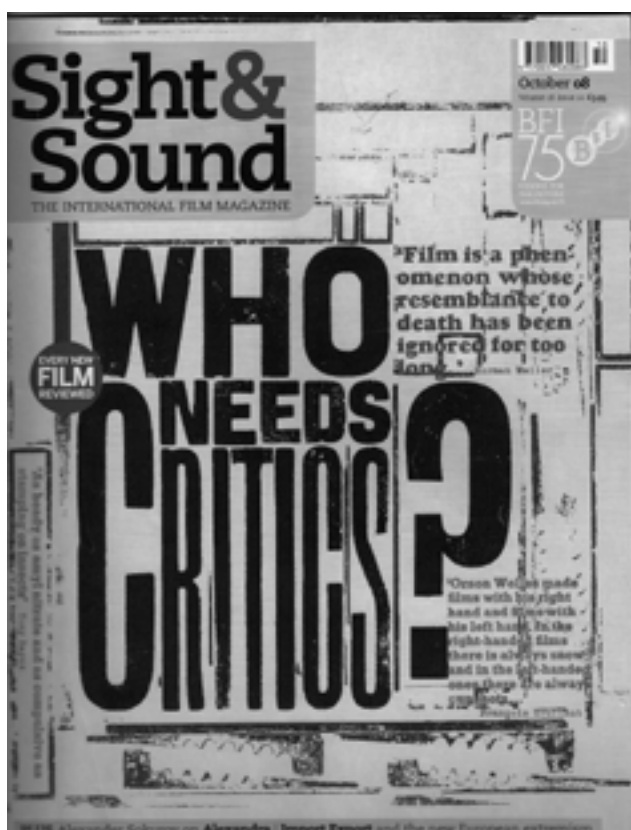
The state of criticism in Spain

Jordi Revert

_introduction

“Looked from a broader perspective, however, all writing about the movies is part of a larger discourse about modernity that dates back to the mid 19th century. It seems to me that this discourse sometimes contributes to progress (making us more aware of feminism and issues of race or social class, for example), but also that it keeps struggling with the same old problems under new forms.” (NAREMORE, 2003: 130).

Criticism is, or should be, a continuous exercise of revision, always debating its functions and boundaries with film analysis and always facing new challenges even though, as mentioned above, old debates return again and again in new forms. It has been thirteen years since Professor James Naremore shared this reflection on writing about film with some colleagues and critics in the context of *Movie Mutations*, the book which, under the coordination of Jonathan Rosenbaum and Adrian Martin, would sketch out an international picture of both the cinema and the film criticism, in constant transformation, an ever-changing scene revealing promising horizons and great challenges to confront. More than a decade later, criticism is experiencing one of its most convulsive moments. The Internet has contributed to diversification, to enrichment of the discourse and to an expansion of the spectrum, but also to a democratization of opinion that often leads to chaos and disinformation.



Cinephilia identifies itself as a school for training new critics, at the expense of an academic environment for theoretical debate over whether to move closer to or further away from journalistic criticism. The multiplication and expansion of festivals all over the world traces a stimulating map in which new trends, films and filmmakers converge; but media space for this map is constantly decreasing, resulting in a high degree of invisibility that leaves few aware of *what is happening*. The proliferation of people all over the world writing about film on websites, in blogs, fanzines and other formats should come as good news; however, *visible* criticism, the kind that should lead the currents of opinion and guide the spectator (if that is one of its functions) shies away from regeneration, often remaining subject to editorial and corporate synergies that make this changing of the guard extremely difficult. These and many other questions raise the inevitable problems in the present and immediate future of criticism. Criticism in Spain is no exception and is not immune to these issues: on the contrary, it adds to them unhealthy incestuous relations that leave little cause for optimism, but rather leave us speaking of resistance or survival within a highly unfavourable context. Fortunately, we can also speak about self-criticism. In 2006, the online film magazine *Miradas.net* started a dossier on criticism with interviews with critics, professors, theorists and writers analyzing the

question. The dominant tone was pessimistic and gave the impression that the battle was lost before it had begun, that criticism in Spain had fallen into an *irreversible coma* (CALVO, 2006). In October 2008, the same month in which the British magazine *Sight & Sound* also dedicated its issue to this topic using the provocative title *Who needs critics?*, the Spanish edition of the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* launched one of its series offering a consideration of the crossroads at which criticism found itself, which continued until 2010 and dealt with questions that were unavoidable in any diagnosis of the current state of critical practice: the boundaries between criticism and analysis, criticism of festivals, the critic as mediator and as programmer, the function of the critic and loaded topics related to what the critic represents, creative criticism and criticism in the digital era. All of this was underpinned by the question that opened the debate, the one which perhaps best encompasses all the others and also serves as our inspiration in this (dis)agreement: where is film criticism headed? And more specifically: where is criticism in Spain headed? In two recent articles¹ Jonathan Rosenbaum and Jean Michel-Frodon called attention to the proliferation of symposiums, publications and debates dealing with *the death or the end* of criticism. In the face of such ominous headlines, both responded with almost utopian optimism, pointing out the transformations and possibilities of the era that we are entering, the same position that professor and critic Adrian Martin expresses in his article: 'The Path of No Return: Creative Critique'. But can this faith in the future of criticism be applied to the Spanish context? Should we extend this hopefulness, or should we qualify it, taking into consideration the specific conditions and/or obstacles faced by critical practice here? This is an invitation to self-criticism and reflection, to become conscious of a future that is already being written and which, in fact, has been written before. Definitely, this is a new opportunity, which is always necessary, to take the pulse of criticism in Spain. ■

Notes

- 1 The two articles that are mentioned are: '¿El fin de la crítica de cine?' by Jonathan Rosenbaum, and 'El amor al trabajo' by Jean-Michel Frodon; both are cited in the bibliography.

_discussion

1. What perception does the public have of criticism in Spain? Does the well-worn cliché that the critic is unnecessary gain force in a context of crisis in which culture is the first victim in the press? To what extent is criticism to blame in this context?

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Daniel Gascó

It depends on what we understand by *the public*. In Spain, as in many other places, there is a negative opinion toward critics that is quite widespread, but I believe this is because the vast majority only have contact with non-specialised media. Mass media, of course, where controversial opinions are spread, with an impact that makes them easy to consume, but which unfortunately do not have serious reflection behind them. If we take only these examples, it isn't hard to come up with a mistaken idea of what is actually a complex and passionate profession.

Critics themselves, of course, must accept a lot of the blame. First of all, the profession just barely exists, or is barely visible, as there are very few physical spaces left for publication. It's a stroke of luck to be able to publish criticism regularly in major media outlets. It is an honour and a responsibility, which I do not always share with my colleagues. I read lazily written texts, evasive criticisms that do not address the films directly, that get lost in personal arguments, in their own laws, in judgments that are easily debunked. For me, there is a respect for the anonymous reader above all. In this sense, I am an optimist. I picture a reader from a certain culture, sensitive to the evocative capacity of the art of the image, willing to read between the lines, understand and not necessarily share my likings and my phobias.

Carlos Losilla

The majority of the public and the industry despise criticism to the point that serious criticism has no influence whatsoever over the success or failure of a film. For whom are we writing then? For people like us, for mirrors of ourselves who need to have their opinions endorsed with an *intellectual* varnish, the status of which I, at least, am not quite sure about, like many other things. Criticism is passion for and experience of cinema, and that is what we do not know how to convey, because we critics are still immersed in inner battles that lead nowhere, although they do provide ego boosts for many. You have to immerse yourself, get to work and shut up, impossible as that might

sound. We need to try. Only through that personal catharsis will it be possible to convey the experience of cinema. Otherwise, we are only lecturing about fashions, trends, sometimes even in universities. As a professor as well as a critic, I do not think I am fit to teach anything to anyone, but rather to engage in dialogue with them, which is similar to criticism, which should also be a dialogue with the spectator and with colleagues. But we have to keep trying to change things. And we have to be tolerant, above all.

Diego Salgado

I find it impossible to answer these kinds of questions by espousing generalisations that would be based on the assumption that I am an expert on the Public, Criticism or Culture. I will talk from my experience as an individual who, for better or worse, had already taken on cinema as a lifelong passion when he was just a child. And as such, I have not observed that criticism or culture have really been of interest to the people around me... He who writes about cinema might be a delicate being, of certain importance inside the engine of the cultural industry. But that industry only generates 3% of Gross Domestic Product in Spain... and 0.000003% of the Daily Intellectual Product of ordinary mortals.

What should be considered is whether so much institutional culture was necessary in times of plenty, so many subsidised essays, so much supplementing of current trends, so much feedback without any interest in escaping from a ghetto in which we can eventually become comfortable. If the crisis sweeps all this away, it will be because it hasn't produced any real fruit that we could cling to when we hit hard times. I have the habit of reading everything I can get my hands on that has to do with cinema, and I can state that, along with texts that have ennobled criticism and encouraged people to take part in it, I have read a lot of stuff which, simply put, will soon be studied only as the archaeological remains of a time enshrined in bubbles, including the cultural bubble; and as we all know, under the surface bubbles are filled with nothing.

2. To what extent has the Internet transformed criticism in Spain? Is the figure of the online critic gaining force compared to critic in print publications? How does the arrival of Web 2.0 and affinity systems (such as *Filmaffinity*) affect the practice of criticism?

Daniel Gascó

The Internet constitutes a huge alternative. Everyone seems to be transformed online, taking on a different identity and having a go at other professions. I find very interesting websites, but also people who write atrocious criticism; in the worst cases, high-handed opinions written in a deceptively scholarly sounding language. Obviously, everyone can express their opinions; that is the democracy offered by the Internet. But in this ocean of websites and endless references, the same old problem rises. Before giving an opinion on criticism, or exercising criticism, it is important to learn how to read it. In the case of the Internet, as well as in print media, it is important to distinguish between what is criticism and what is not, when we are being offered a critical reading of the film in question and when we are not. Online criticism has all the room in the world, but at times this is a trap, and writers simply lose the capacity for synopsis required in print media. *Filmaffinity* has become a popular although exceedingly dubious thermometer of a medium that is open to any opinion, from the most expert to the most deplorable. It has been established that websites like *IMDb* have their polls swollen and distorted by people from production companies.

Carlos Losilla

The Internet is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provides the opportunity for collective expression, discussion and debate. On the other, this turns into a madhouse. There are some really good online magazines which provide the critic with a huge advantage: what in print media or in the specialist journal is marked by limitations of length has no such restriction on the Internet; you can write as much as you want, there is no (self-)censorship in that sense. And, curiously, they go beyond the present, allowing a wider margin for reflection. But there is also a great paradox: the medium that seems so popular and democratic, so open to the world, can also be a way of closing ourselves in. This has to be overcome as well; it can be done. The Internet would be the ideal place for the open, transverse multidisciplinary magazine we are waiting for even going beyond cinema, or inserted cinema within a wider cultural universe, to keep

us from losing perspective. That is why it is a question of economics, like everything else. Otherwise, the same brilliant or silly ideas can be expressed on paper as on a computer screen. If anything, the Internet has served to break out of isolation and make contact with critics in other countries, which has favoured friendships and collaborations. Time will tell how we make use of them.

Diego Salgado

As a critic, I am a product of the Internet; I would have never had a chance in specialist print media, which I had always viewed and which had always been described to me as a nepotistic environment where the big fish is followed blindly. Today my position in this environment is marginal, partly because I am far from being Jonathan Rosenbaum and partly because the old-boys network and the ideological serfdom I was talking about are worse than ever. Added to all this in some cases is a lack of professionalism or even of respect for the critic, which I have not seen even on the shabbiest website in the world. So how can we not conclude that the Internet and even a greater vocational awareness have revolutionised critical practice? We are going against absolute freedom when we begin to reflect and write, an unprecedented and boundless way of enjoying culture, an intoxicating freedom that makes manifest, that favours risk-taking and also crashing and burning, when we write a certain number of characters about a film that who knows who valued as worthy (or unworthy) of being written about, with an ambiguous tone if possible, *constructive* for the policy and the accounts of the publication, the editor-in-chief or coordinator, the advertisers, the niche readership that somebody has decided needs to be humoured...

The Internet is the Wild West. It is a place highly prone to the expression of ignorance, brazenness and banality, but also where the history of cinema can be rewritten, idols overthrown, canons and analytical paradigms subverted; a place where it is possible to find consecutive comments on the same post by a Belén Esteban and a Ludwig Wittgenstein. One only needs to start a blog, read *Filmaffinity* or the *IMDb* forums, where reflections abound on numerous films, reflections more insightful than those published in the most prestigious magazines in Spain.



3. To what extent is a generational handover possible? Is there any evidence of defiance, reaction and/or commitment on the part of young critics?

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Daniel Gascó

A handover is necessary; it is a fact of life. The media available to young people to produce criticism are noticeably superior and, moreover, criticism needs to be questioned and renewed. I don't know what you think, but I have the impression that the tools criticism uses have evolved much less than cinema itself. I mean, cinema evolves in such a way that it can turn out to be distressing for a critic who has realised that all of his experience and cultural baggage is not enough. You start to produce criticism when you try to argue from the perspective of that distress and discomfort, and look for another way of understanding cinema. Faced with this situation, some will shut down and simply pull apart what they cannot understand. Against this negative reaction there is a process of illumination, the attempt to bring the reader closer to those works that we ourselves found difficult.

Carlos Losilla

Of course there is a handover, and it is one with a force and radicalism that in some cases are unprecedented. The thing is that the opposite and at the same time identical situation to the current *status quo* might happen. Whereas my generation has been slow to address the complexities of contemporary cinema (some have not even tried), young critics have a serious problem with classic cinema. In this respect I am quite traditional and revolutionary at the same time. On the one hand, at university we are not finding the formula to offer the younger generation a different view of classic cinema, a view that is not a museum view, with its closed compartments and sacred little gods. This happens to me and everyone. What is the solution? This is where non-academic pedagogy comes in; cinemathèques, television, DVD editions. On the other hand, some of the younger generation never dare to go beyond Hitchcock or Ford. Godard cannot be understood without first seeing the films he references in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, for example, just as a different view of the history of cinema is impossible without understanding Godard. Everything is interconnected, and we need a different history of cinema for the new generations to take an interest in Leo McCarey or Mario Monicelli. My fear is that the handover will take place but the situation will remain the same: on the one hand, the great talents who only devote themselves to quick criticism and have no time for reflection, for contemplating deeper texts and organising their thoughts; on the other, academics who ignore the present, buried in a historiography that is more and more decrepit. And the middle ground? That is the figure that has to be consolidated in Spain: a person who thinks, in

words, through cinema and images. A person who evolves through that thinking, who is constantly questioning and never considers anything finished. Reflection on cinema should be in perpetual motion.

Diego Salgado

In theory, in general terms, I believe we could talk about a certain generation gap between writers in their fifties or older, and those in their thirties. I think their interests as critics and writers are different. Could this force a handover? In practice, I witnessed in 2010 how a critic with little vocation, background, style or even a distinctive personality started getting published in *Dirigido Por* and *Cahiers du Cinéma España* merely because he is a close friend of board members of both publications. Could that be considered a generational handover? Can we expect defiance, reaction and/or commitment from someone entering the industry this way, on the red carpet, without having proved anything and owing everything to others, regardless of whether they are twenty or sixty years old?

I think it is more likely for this to happen on the Internet, as long as corrupt cliques like the *professional* contacts established in traditional media have not been formed (in these times of obsessive networking, cronyism is the new source of corruption), as long as there is still hope for defiance and commitment. I am not talking about a generational handover (again, generations do not differ from one another by means of age, but by a minimally ethical and aesthetic will for renewal of the familiar and assimilated that now exists or doesn't exist) but about a new mode of criticism, whose credibility and future depend solely on those of us who write about cinema giving up our need to appear in certain media at all costs, or to live on this *professionally* by making fun of colleagues and undermining the sense of vocation that should always guide our activity.

4. In a panorama where festivals are increasingly abundant, what space is left for covering them in ordinary media? What responsibility does the critic who can cover festivals assume?

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Daniel Gascó

Unfortunately, not much. With the crisis, they don't always give me space to write those kinds of articles, which for me are important, since although I find festival reporting highly fallible, they are exciting as well. In principle, it is the chance to experience and report what is screened at a festival. Surviving that marathon and being able to sum it up is an unrewarding task which nevertheless offers the possibility of getting a broader picture and offering a more global appraisal of current film production. The responsibility is still huge. The critic can also expose all the mistakes that occur in the development of the festival, a task that contributes to improvement of future editions.

Carlos Losilla

Festivals have played an extremely important role in recent years in Spain, or at least some of them: they have allowed us to see films that the distribution companies refuse to show us. However, there are some sales conventions, meetings of peddlers at some of them (not all, fortunately), which I find profoundly irritating. A festival should not be a fair, or a mere accumulation of films. Rigorous criteria are needed in order to make a festival the display window it should be, not packed with masterpieces, but a representation of the cinema that is being made. And this is what reporters and specialist magazines should uncover: not whether a certain film was good or bad or worthy of being included in the festival. That is the critic's responsibility: to uncover the hidden trends marking contemporary cinema, which a festival is obliged to provide. Otherwise, they are merely morose, sluggish witnesses to a few films they do not understand and have no desire to see. That is very common in the Spanish press.

Diego Salgado

The last festival I covered was Sitges in 2010, and I had downloaded half of the programme and taken it with me in my backpack. Another revolution brought by the Internet, which has started to bring into question the role of festivals as detectors and patrons of new film trends, a task which is, moreover, closely tied to interests and fashions: Cannes is just as predictable as the weekly *premières*. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future film festivals will take place on the Internet, with online viewings. That would be a way for national, regional, local or neighbourhood governments – all of whom organise or subsidise thousands of contests – to save money, now that *culture* and *cultural managers* are on the brink of bankruptcy.

And we would also do away with the assorted soiree lovers and intermediaries; enjoying and reflecting on the films would be the focus rather than the accessory. It is shocking to witness the hypocrisy with which Carlos Boyero (a critic who without doubt has some severe critical limitations) is attacked for his arbitrary way of covering festivals. But at least, perhaps because the newspaper pays his accommodation in the city where the festival takes place, he stays there from beginning to end and there is proof that he actually goes to watch the films, and he even confesses that sometimes he leaves in the middle or falls asleep. I am tired of seeing allegedly more prestigious critics, *committed to cinema*, squandering passes, sleeping off hangovers, doing deals, watching one or two films a day (at the most), enjoying as many perks as they can, coming to talk about their books, and then signing reports on a whole festival, taking part in votes and prize decisions, having only attended three days out of eleven, spending half of that time going out for a drink, dinner or sleeping around. The most important is not the *media routine* to cover festivals, but providing a coherent discourse beyond rhetorical devices, which are sometimes smoke curtains about films that have not been watched but heard of.



5. Is criticism in Spain turning into gutter journalism, more in tune with commercial needs than with reflection and debate? If so, is a gap opening between criticism and analysis conducted in a more academic context, thereby confirming the duality between criticism/Jekyll and analysis/Hyde alluded to by Imanol Zumalde Arregi (ZUMALDE ARREGI, 2009)?

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Daniel Gascó

I find it hard to believe that the least interesting criticism has the highest, most visible position, but that is the impression sometimes. I cannot agree with Imanol, because I do not see a line dividing criticism and analysis; I cannot understand one without the other. For questions of space and genre, a critical review might not contain an analysis as such, an explicit, developed analysis, but it is the driving force behind every idea that constitutes good criticism. I do observe a gap between opinion and criticism; I mean, some people give their opinion but never produce criticism. They take themselves seriously and situate themselves in a position above the work they are supposed to be criticising. They are critic-stars; the film is what matters least. There is another gap between information and criticism. People who are incapable of elaborating a real critical review dedicate themselves to informing, to providing data, to filling up the space that should speak of the relationship you established with the work, which is what makes your criticism genuine, what makes it yours and (almost) nobody else's.

Carlos Losilla

Good criticism is like a mini-analysis, without detailed arguments or the contribution of an appraisal, with intuition and epiphany sometimes contained in a couple of words. I could say *a film with fine abstract textures* and thereby imply that I could elaborate on this, prove my point with specific shots, or exploring different parts of the film to highlight it wherever I can, which is another way of understanding analysis. Going back to the role of critics: to construct a canon with their knowledge and experience, and based on this to allow themselves the capacity to judge, the responsibility to separate the wheat from the chaff. It isn't easy, and there's nothing wrong with dissensions, debates or different canons. The trouble is in Spain –as intolerant as it always is– this is not accepted. On the other hand, there can be as much reflection in a journalistic review as in a detailed analysis. The difference is in the way of expressing it. It is a matter of style and form. We need new ways of writing about cinema that can overcome these dichotomies and are malleable enough to be turned into criticism or analysis at any given moment. But it is true that film criticism is becoming less criticism and more information, publicity or simply insults. Both criticism and analysis should be literature and therefore autobiography, albeit covert.

Diego Salgado

The media I contribute to include *Cahiers du Cinéma España* and *FanDigital*, which are diametrically opposed in their aspirations and readership. Writing for one or the other does not oblige you to engage more or less in reflection or debate. It is up to the critic to decide whether to jump through the hoops and adapt to the expectations dictated by publisher politics, which are never inclined to much reflection or debate, but to an *impassive gesture* that provides the best profile to the boss, the advertiser, the reader or the critic's own image.

On the other hand, it is a cliché to associate gutter journalism with a commercial context and analysis with a (formally) academic environment. There is no cinema more invisible than commercial cinema, abused both by *Fotogramas* magazine through ambiguous clichés that won't upset the production giant of the moment and by *Cahiers* magazine on the basis of prejudgements. And no cinema is more profitable in certain elitist environments than *radical* and *committed* cinema, acclaimed with hackneyed phrases that fall somewhere between florid praise and propaganda that contain no criticism whatsoever, and protected by a cinematic reality stripped of both the ability and the desire to make a lasting impact because of a network of subsidies, sponsorships and ideological nepotism as perverse as the Hollywood distribution and marketing strategies.

To engage in film analysis free from commercial, editorial or academic submission, starting a blog would be enough; for better or worse, with everything you have, from your unconditional and nonnegotiable love for cinema and writing, and without worrying whether people are reading what you write, whether you're developing a career, whether you become known or not. Any debate –and most do it for reasons that are all too human– that sidesteps these obvious truths, to preach about the earthly and the divine, will be full of lies. ■

Loving criticism

Jordi Revert

We talk about criticism and we talk about film. We talk about film and we talk about love and life. So why do we not likewise associate –or not as much as we would like to– criticism with love, criticism with life, which emanates from each intimate experience of the spectator in front of the screen? Nowadays the concept of the screen is more ethereal than ever, as is the concept of the spectator, and the criticism that responds to these screens and these spectators should be adapted to the unavoidable metamorphoses of the practice of watching cinema, which is never too old or too worn out for new transformations and new ways of watching it. But these metamorphoses should always be catalysts, not obstacles or alibis, for the restoration of a certain spirit that is above fashion, trends, conveniences and laziness. It is time to acknowledge how stimulating the current scene actually is, the opportunities to overcome (once again) the endless accusations of parasitism, nepotism, editorial servility and uselessness. Criticism, subjected to continuous debates and revisionisms, has survived judgements before, at least as to its legitimacy and nature. And considering that its nature was never so changeable, nor its possibilities so promising, the logical thing to do would be to silence all questioning with lively enthusiasm, to answer with passion and to turn this into the best seed of criticism.

We have discussed criticism in Spain, we have submitted it to a new analysis and the contrast is clear: the horizon is as fertile as the terrain that we're on now is desolate. But we can't blame the spectator for ignoring the lines written



by critics in their newspaper columns, nor can we sink into resignation to justify and perpetuate the stagnation that is often so convenient for self-ratification. On the contrary, as Carlos Losilla points it out, it comes down simply to immersing ourselves, getting to work and shutting up. And, if possible, to do so bearing in mind the affirmation of Miguel Marías, who suggested that a critic is mainly a cheerleader or nothing at all. (MARÍAS, 2001: 21). That is, a critic's main goal should always be to spread the love for film to any potential reader/spectator to whom the critic's words may come. It is up to critics to repair the damage to their image, because they are the main ones responsible for the mistrust. The intonation of *mea culpa*, the fierce self-criticism that fits nicely into our three-way discussion, is the first and necessary stone on which to build and

win (back) a public perhaps eager to read reviews that share something of the essence of the experience in the darkness of the movie theatre in an (apparently) personal and non-transferable manner. It doesn't matter if the review is written from the small corners of a tabloid or in the ample spaces of a specialist magazine; it is not so important whether it aims to be concise or to expand on its explorations, or whether it is written in a private study or at an editorial desk. What matters is that its raw material is passion and affection for what is being dissected, which is the *sine qua non* condition for the reader to come back, so that the reader may discover that love for criticism that once seemed so much more probable. When cinephilia appears to be established as the new school and the Internet –with all its blessings and curses, both of which are prodigious– is the new medium for expressing it, it will then be necessary to reclaim vocational criticism, with more or fewer means, with a greater or lesser level of experience; as the path we should follow if we want to overcome the obstacles, neither few nor trivial, although often self-imposed. We have the tools to start anew on a path which, in a certain way, is already familiar, but we also know that is easier now than ever to reverse the progress made so far, to demolish instead of building, to stay in ruins instead of raising the scaffolds. This is why the pessimism about a world reluctant to love criticism should be the impulse that drives us to work on transforming this disaffection. The fact that no one loves criticism will be a gift if as a result we can make someone love cinema. And whoever loves cinema, said Truffaut, will love life. Again. ■

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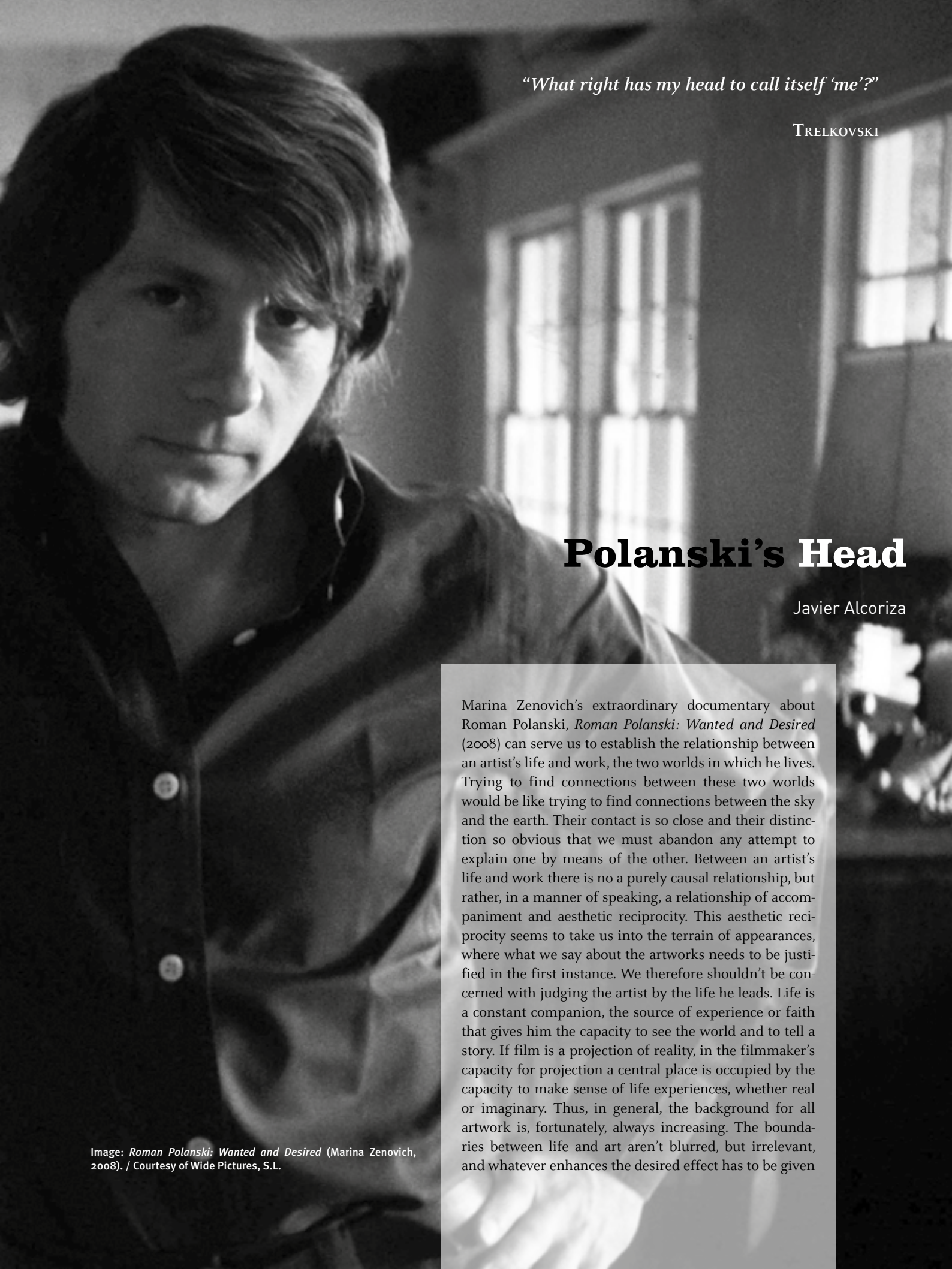
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A black and white photograph of a modern interior space. In the foreground, a person's arm and shoulder are visible, reaching towards the right. The background shows a hallway with a balcony on the left and a bright doorway at the end. The overall mood is contemplative and architectural.

VANISHING POINTS



“What right has my head to call itself ‘me’?”

TRELKOVSKI

Polanski's Head

Javier Alcoriza

Marina Zenovich's extraordinary documentary about Roman Polanski, *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired* (2008) can serve us to establish the relationship between an artist's life and work, the two worlds in which he lives. Trying to find connections between these two worlds would be like trying to find connections between the sky and the earth. Their contact is so close and their distinction so obvious that we must abandon any attempt to explain one by means of the other. Between an artist's life and work there is no a purely causal relationship, but rather, in a manner of speaking, a relationship of accompaniment and aesthetic reciprocity. This aesthetic reciprocity seems to take us into the terrain of appearances, where what we say about the artworks needs to be justified in the first instance. We therefore shouldn't be concerned with judging the artist by the life he leads. Life is a constant companion, the source of experience or faith that gives him the capacity to see the world and to tell a story. If film is a projection of reality, in the filmmaker's capacity for projection a central place is occupied by the capacity to make sense of life experiences, whether real or imaginary. Thus, in general, the background for all artwork is, fortunately, always increasing. The boundaries between life and art aren't blurred, but irrelevant, and whatever enhances the desired effect has to be given

Image: *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired* (Marina Zenovich, 2008). / Courtesy of Wide Pictures, S.L.

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priority, regardless of its origin. In great works of art –and in my opinion Polanski's best films should be considered as such– the pursuit of certain effects is an aspect of the work produced. It is true that the reality projected in his films doesn't have a substratum that can absorb the shocks that we suffer while watching it as spectators, but, fortunately, the question of desired effects has a privileged place; and a privilege that they enjoy is to show is the domain of violence, from *Morderstwo* (1957) to *Bitter Moon* (1992). The domination of violence isn't the domination of evil, but, obviously, the domination of the battle between the good and evil impulses or *angels* of human nature. The obviousness of this affirmation underlines the fact that Polanski's films have not turned violence, in spite of its virtual omnipresence, into the purpose of the stories he tells. The purpose, to highlight the obvious, is to tell a story. The fact that the domination of violence is a common feature of Polanski's films doesn't mean that they are violent in the usual sense of the word; nor does it refer to psychological violence, although this kind of violence is recognisable in some of them. In this respect,

way it is. If you don't show it realistically, that's immoral and harmful. If you don't upset people, that's obscenity" (SANDFORD, 2012: 161).

It is an honesty, however, associated with a certain lack of scruples. I keep coming back to the view that the lack of scruples doesn't have to be understood as a lack of morality when what matter are the desired effects when telling a story as effectively as possible. It could be argued that this moment of amorality is indispensable in art in order to achieve a lasting moral repercussion. Of course, the human world is a moral world, and for the director of *Death and the Maiden* (1994) or *The Pianist* (2002) wouldn't be difficult to agree. The difficulty would lie precisely in assailing our conviction on this point when stories like from these must be told. In assailing this common conviction, the director is putting the spectator, and, at the same time, his own imagination, to the test. The director has no privileged knowledge of the sources of human morality. In reality, he doesn't even have to explore them; he need only follow the current of the facts that affect the human world as a moral world (SANDFORD, 2009: 286). The risk involved in assailing this conviction that the human world is a moral would therefore be that the assailant may succeed. Nevertheless, I don't believe that the spectator of Polanski's films would be persuaded that the human world is an immoral world. The director's virtue is to stay neutral in this conflict, not because he refrains from interfering but because

he has developed the capacity to fight on both sides. Neutrality is not a quality assumed by omission in the director of *Repulsion* (1965). I would argue that it is equivalent to his ability to recover completely for a new film, after having filmed *Repulsion*; or, more to the point, his ability to recover in order to make a film completely different from *Repulsion*. The shift from one genre to another, from *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, or *Pardon Me but Your Teeth Are in My Neck* (1967) to *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), from *Chinatown* (1974) to *The Tenant* (1976) would serve as an indirect test of Polanski's ability to recover from his films. A director's recovery from his films, of artists from their art or, in general, of people from

their work should be considered a sign of vitality. When stories contain a seed of violence that characterizes the human world, such vitality could be understood as an antidote to the inadequacy of every consolation. Consider, for example, the end of *The Pianist*, when the pianist is wandering through the streets of the devastated ghetto. There is a transfusion between the ability to recover and



Roman Polanski: *Wanted and Desired* (Marina Zenovich, 2008). / Courtesy of Wide Pictures, S.L.

I would argue that the physical or psychological expression of violence is secondary to the primary –or *realist*– domination of violence in Polanski's films. I would suggest that this dominance or presence could serve us to highlight, paradoxically, Polanski's honesty as a director: "among his other artistic tenets, broadcast either now in the near future, was that 'You have to show violence the

the inability to surrender in the face of devastation that may illustrate the resistance against giving into desperation as the final point of this story, perhaps the most challenging of the many stories Polanski has tackled.

The performance of Chopin's Scherzo in front of the German soldier, incidentally, would be the perfect occasion to claim that there is an inherent redemptive force in art that suggests the annihilation of moral distinctions. After all, a Nazi could be as good a musician as a Jew, or could express the same passion for art¹. Something similar occurs between the executioner and the victim in *Death and the Maiden*. The passion for music would seem to transcend the boundaries of mere morality. (Is music perhaps the art form that can consummate the absence of distinctions so that executioners repent of torturing their victims? Is the aesthetic revelation produced by Chopin's or Schubert's notes ethically ineffectual? Would this revelation be destroyed by the sound of words? The Jews in *The Pianist* fearfully follow the news on radio and in the press about the Nazi persecution; the victim in *Death and the Maiden* recognizes her executioner by his voice. Might the realm of music be the realm of the spirit where one can escape from violence?) Nevertheless, the music is contained, dominated or tamed by the film. The reality projected carries more weight than the reality transformed by the music; this is not to say that the reality projected doesn't have an evasive quality. Every good film is an escape from reality; however, the cinematic escape doesn't involve, like the musical escape, the negation of all mundane circumstances, but the fixation of our attention on mundane circumstances translatable into the ones we are living. The genuinely democratic dimension of film is reinforced by this parallel, regardless of the use the director seeks to make of it. Polanski would have known how to contain the impulse of musical escapism and to put it to the service of the stories that connect with the world we live in.

I feel it is important to underline that Polanski's commitment to reality is the commitment of the filmmaker, of the artist who has explored the different ways of putting the spectator's imagination into contact with the world around us. Our experience of reality, the director of *Chinatown* or *Tess* (1979) would tell us, is never complete. If the stories have a good plot, if they can't be perceived in any other way but the way they have been told, then they offer a new understanding of experience. Jack Nicholson's face at the end of *Chinatown* or Nastassja Kinski's at the end of

Tess are incomparable with the characters' faces at the beginning of both stories. This transformation seems all the more amazing given Polanski hasn't used the techniques available to him to open the door for us, so to speak, into the protagonist's mind, as was the case in *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*. There is, without any doubt, an advantage that the first two films have over the last two, in that they allow us observe their protagonists' crises with apparent objectivity. In my opinion, this appearance would be Polanski's greatest cinematic achievement. The spectator is waiting to obtain the assurance that what has been seen hasn't been a deception. The suspension of disbelief has to be followed by a renewed act of faith.

On the other hand, the obvious partiality in the use of cinematographic techniques was a characteristic of movies like *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*, and this would reach its apex with Mia Farrow's dream sequence in *Rosemary's Baby*. The centre of gravity of these stories is in the minds of their protagonists. However, it's worth noting that the root of the imbalance they suffer has social

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Roman Polanski: *Wanted and Desired* (Marina Zenovich, 2008). / Courtesy of Wide Pictures, S.L.

than psychological hues. In these cases, and paradigmatically in *Rosemary's Baby*, there seems to be a conspiracy between the other characters to crush the protagonist's capacity for resistance. From a certain point of view, Polanski's sick characters are morally healthier than those around them who end up abusing them. The suspicion in *The Tenant* that Trelkovski isn't a French citizen hints

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at a discrimination that foreshadows a silent persecution led by Mr. Zy (Na-zi?). Ominously, none of Trelovski's neighbours prevents him from jumping out his window for a second time. With this and other feverish stories, Polanski insinuates that the body of society is ill despite its apparent health. The appearance of health marks the beginning of these films and it is the director's art to induce us to doubt it. Real health would be that of an organism on guard against potential threats. Real health allows the individual to maintain the tension with his fellow man and even with his loved ones, as in *Bitter Moon*. There is a danger in the restraint of the British married couple who renew their oaths of wedded bliss, and there is an extreme risk whose consequences are suffered by Mimi and her invalid husband, whose cynicism doesn't stop him from admitting brutally, before committing suicide, that they were too greedy.

Believing we are not immune to the dangers to which Polanski's characters are exposed would be a way of appreciating stories as stifling as *The Tenant*, or as sadistic as *Death and the Maiden*. At this point there is a great temptation to believe that Polanski transferred the ghosts of his personal experience to the screen. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it would be the spectator, not the author, who would come out the winner in this transaction. Not one of Polanski's films conveys the impression that it was autobiographical. Even Marina Zenovich's extraordinary documentary looks like one of Polanski's works. The extremes of Polanski's films are extremes of humanity in general, rather than of the life of the filmmaker himself. *Polanski: Wanted and Desired* confirms the absurdity of reducing the interpretation of his work to the biographical level (or to separate the head from the body to ponder our real identity) [see Figure 1]. I would say that, after seeing the documentary, what is left to be done is to take the opposite approach: to expand the biographical level to the cinematic, since this transformation is associated with the exclusive work of genius. In my opinion, the quality of Polanski's best films depends on that wonderful expansion that transforms the movie screen into a sounding board for real or imaginary experiences where *the show man* has the last word. To try to confine Polanski within his own film would be to do an injustice to cinema as art. Appreciating the meaning of his explorations, as extravagant as they can sometimes be, would be the most honest way of celebrating the quality of his cinematic revelations. ■

Still frames that illustrate the sequence in which Trelovski asks himself "What right has my head to call itself 'me'?" in *The Tenant* (Roman Polanski, 1976)



Notes

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- 1 George Steiner reflects on this question in relation to literature: "We do not know whether the study of the humanities, of the noblest that has been said and thought, can do very much to humanize. We do not know; and surely there is rather something terrible in our doubt whether the study and delight a man finds in Shakespeare make him any less capable of organizing a concentration camp. Recently one of my colleagues, an eminent scholar, asked me with genuine bafflement, why someone trying to establish himself in an English literature faculty should refer so often to concentration camps; why they were in any way relevant. They are profoundly relevant, and before we can go on teaching we must surely ask ourselves: are the humanities humane and, if so, why did they fail before the night?" (STEINER, 1998: 65-66).

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Torture as an inversion of the social order: a commentary on Roman Polanski's *Death and the Maiden*

Efrén Poveda García

Beyond presenting us a story about the reencounter between a torturer and his victim, *Death and the Maiden* (Roman Polanski, 1994) is a film about how the basic convictions on which the social order is based may be ruptured.

Underlying our social order as we conceive it is the idea of a social contract, wherein and whereby different individuals yield their power to another or others who will be responsible for ensuring the security of all. According to Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, this social pact is the hypothetical starting point of any society. It is only through the cession of power or, more precisely, of your right to use your own force freely, that civilization is conceivable. From the point of view of Contractualism, a humane world is a civilized world, a world where each individual enjoys certain rights by virtue of the mere fact of being an individual; rights that are agreed and guaranteed in and by the social contract.

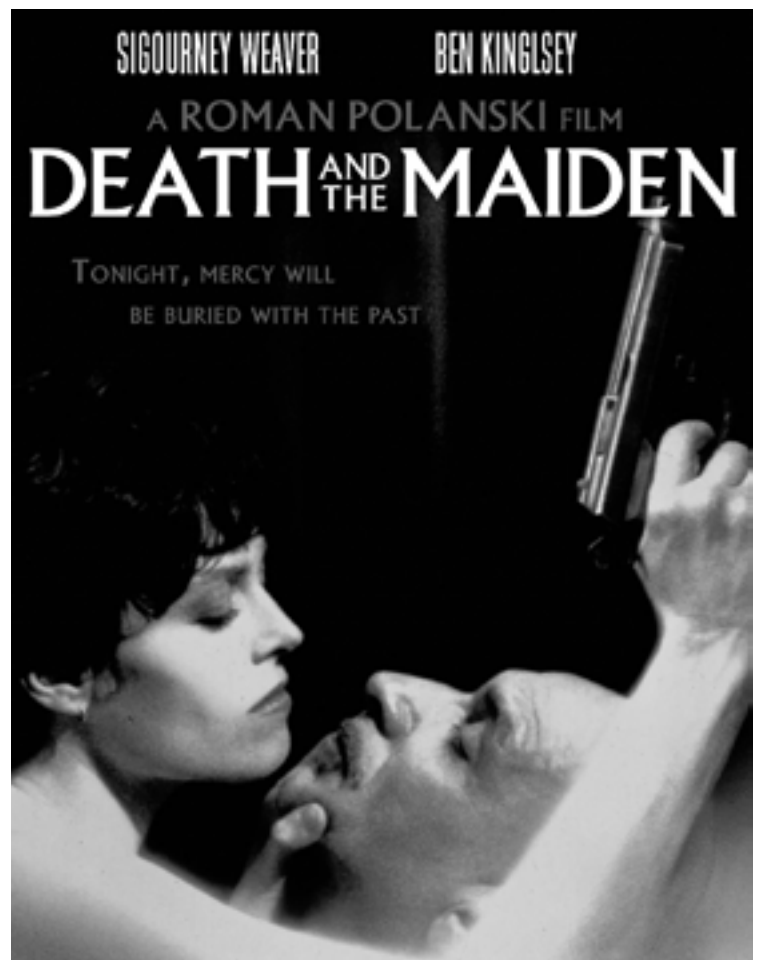
Starting from the well-known notion that man is a wolf to his fellow man, the basic right conceded in the social contract and perhaps that which, as a simple aspiration in the state of nature, acts as a decisive factor in the establishment of the pact, is the right to non-aggression, i.e., my right not to be eaten by other wolves, my right to

expect that my physical integrity will be respected. In the cession of their individual power, the contracting parties have renounced the use of their own force in favour of a new organization of that force that will be contained by certain state institutions. Once the contract is signed there is only one legitimate form of violence: violence committed by the institutions created for that purpose; violence committed with the intention of enforcing the pact. The legitimate violence on which the State holds the monopoly thus acts as a dissuasive factor for anyone who might feel tempted to violate the right to non-aggression. But dissuasion is not its only purpose. Violence is actually put into practice when the pact has been violated, thereby acting as a form of punishment.

What is being regulated in the pact is, therefore, power. Everyone yields part of their power to the State, so that the latter, using everyone's power, can ensure that no particular individual can exercise power over others beyond certain limits. In this sense, the word *power* is deemed to refer to "the effective capacity of persons to extend themselves (their intentions, purposes, expectations, etc.) beyond the limits of their own body, and to be objectified in acts and works that exist for other persons" (MARRADES, 2005:7).

On this social pact is based what Jean Améry would call our *faith in the world*, referring to a series of beliefs that are always accepted a priori by each individual simply by virtue of living in society. There are basically two such beliefs. The first is that no one –unless the affected person wishes otherwise– can commit violence against another individual. This idea is derived from the deterrent or limiting function of the pact. The second is that, if someone does overstep the limits interposed between you and the other person on the basis of the pact, you would receive assistance from other parties to the pact, i.e., from society. This second belief is related to the enforcing or punitive character of legitimate violence.

What we find in *Death and the Maiden* is an inversion of these basic convictions on which every social system that aims for a certain degree of justice is based. We witness a violation of the social pact (the entrapment of Doctor Roberto Miranda [Ben Kingsley] by Paulina Escobar [Sigourney Weaver]) and hear the testimony of another such violation (the revelation that Paulina has suffered abuses in the past at Miranda's hands). This violation is what happens in torture. When an individual uses his force against someone that can't defend himself he is contravening the fundamental laws of the social order, laws that make our world a humane world. This reversal of the established order accepted a priori by each and every one of us has certain consequences for the one who suffers it. This is shown to us in the film through Paulina, who, years after she suffered all manner of abuses



Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994)

and humiliations during a dictatorship in Latin America, now finds herself in her own home with one of her abusers. The film also identifies the motives that can lead one of the parties to this contract to violate it, as Roberto Miranda did.

But in any situation of violence there are not merely the two poles of torturer and victim. Apart from the one that breaks it and the one against whom it is broken, those other parties to the contract in whose hands is the power to restore the violated humanity of the social order –that is, those who receive news of the violence– are just as important. This third party implicated in any process of violence is represented in the film by Gerardo Escobar (Stuart Wilson), Paulina's husband and the lawyer responsible for directing a commission that will judge the crimes committed during the dictatorship.

I have already named all the characters in the movie. It is no coincidence that there are only three of them with three respective positions that are so clearly defined. Below is an analysis of the situation of each of them and the different roles they play.

Paulina Lorca and the loss of trust in the world

If there is anything that Polanski emphasizes in his depiction of Paulina, it is her vulnerability, which is represented by the stormy environment and the isolation of the place where we find her. In the film itself they acknowledge that they are “in the middle of nowhere” and that “there is no one here”. The remoteness and isolation of the house where Paulina lives acts as a metaphor for the place where torture usually takes place, in hidden underground chambers cut off from the outside world.

However, the vulnerability mentioned above is not merely that suffered by the victim at the moment of the torture. This vulnerability will carry on throughout the victim’s life, because her trust in the world has been broken forever.

Just as Jean Améry explains, the first blow is always accompanied by the expectation that help will come. However, this expectation is often unmet. The reparation for the damages suffered by Paulina would have to be awarded by a society that doesn’t recognize those damages and that is represented in the film by Gerardo, her husband, who believes that “in a democracy the midnight knock on the door can be friendly”. However, even though Paulina lives in a democracy, she will always feel her world to be hostile and inhospitable, as long as her painful experience remains unaddressed by the society that in theory should support and help her.

Gerardo Escobar and the position of the bystander

The character of Gerardo exemplifies what is perhaps the most characteristic feature of pain: its non-transferable and incommunicable character. In spite of the important position he occupies in legal terms, Gerardo doesn’t really know anything about torture. This is what allows him to maintain his trust in the world, his belief in the legal and moral order and that for Paulina has fallen to pieces.

There is an impassable distance between Paulina and Gerardo that is highly evident in the last scene in the theatre, when at no point do their eyes meet. This distance is due to the fact that Gerardo’s position is that of a man who can still allow himself to doubt, who can allow himself the luxury of thinking that his wife is delirious, because he understands the torture as an isolated case. In a certain moment of the film, Gerardo realizes that there are many aspects of the torment suffered by his wife that are unknown

to him, because truly acknowledging the suffering of a torture victim would mean accepting that the order has been broken. The difficulty involved in accepting this is what leads people like Gerardo to evade it by pathologising the behaviour of the victims.

Roberto Miranda and the loss of moral identity

If there is anything interesting about the character of Roberto Miranda, it is precisely because he’s not someone who in his daily life could be classified as a villain, in the sense that he doesn’t believe in evil for evil’s sake. Rather, he represents what Jonathan Glover, in his book *Humanity*, calls the *moral slide*.

Roberto Miranda starts his journey with Paulina as a passive collaborator. His mission was to ensure that the victims didn’t die, which could even make him feel that he was doing something good for them. However, this collaboration is what makes possible both the continuation of the torture and the absence of evidence that prevents victims like Paulina from obtaining the recognition they need.

The fact that his collaboration was understood as a professional duty also gave Gerardo impression that Miranda wasn’t doing anything wrong. This is a very interesting point if we consider that most of German society justified their acts during the Second World War on the basis that they formed part of their profession.

The moral slide mentioned above occurs when Miranda decides to go a step further, beyond the limits of passive collaboration. Participation, whether active or passive, facilitates movement into new conduct based on the idea

Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994)



that there is not so great a difference between what one has been doing and what one is going to do now. Once immersed in the dynamics of torture it is much easier to become an active torturer. In a way, the immersion in an atmosphere in which the behaviours whereby ordinary social ties were formed are inverted facilitates the slide into such behaviours.

Miranda himself says that he lost his moral identity in this situation. Glover also uses this concept to explain how soldiers, feeling so far away from the context where they have forged their identity, unleash a series of violent impulses that they have never exhibited until that moment. Something similar happens to Miranda, who, in the physical and psychological remoteness and isolation characteristic of the torture chamber, sees his commitment to morality grow weaker and allows himself to be carried away by feelings that he had never experienced in his daily life. There is a direct reference in the film to this debilitation of morals when Miranda talks of the astonishment of the children of a torturer when they find out what their father has done, i.e., when they learn of his other identity.

If we look closely, Miranda's behaviour with Paulina isn't presented as an isolated case, as an anomaly, but as something that could happen to many people. The rein lies the horror of this side of the story. Miranda is excessively and irritatingly normal. He is full of insecurities. He needs the approval of others. He hides behind set phrases and nervous laughter. He is characterized by his extreme mediocrity. He isn't a wicked monster with a diabolical personality whose life project was to do evil. In fact, if I have spoken about the factors that precipitated Miranda's moral slide, it is precisely for this reason; a Lucifer wouldn't need them. Miranda thus represents what Hannah Arendt called "the banality of evil"; the fact that terribly evil acts could be committed in the absence of reflection, or in what Anders would call "the good conscience of fools".

The positivity of power vs. the negativity of pain

The dissolution of trust in Paulina Lorca's world is symbolised in the film by with the use of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*. Roberto Miranda always raped her to the sound of Franz Peter Schubert's music. Every time Paulina hears this piece of music her isolation and her exposure to reliving the sensations from the past are made even more evident. On the other hand, Roberto Miranda keeps a tape of *Death and the Maiden* in his car and we might easily assume that he continues to listen to it. For him, instead of reminding him of the horrible part of his reality, the music is still enjoyable.

Miranda's world also dissolved in the period when he raped Paulina, but his dissolution went in a different

direction. While Paulina's dissolution occurred in the sense that her own identity was negated, for Roberto Miranda the dissolution permitted him to affirm his identity more and more. The dissolution of Paulina's world consists in feeling the boundaries of the ego invaded, so that the self is effectively annihilated. Miranda's, on the other hand, consists in going beyond the boundaries of the ego to cross over the boundaries of another ego, who thereby has been reduced to a thing, who has ceased to be a person.

Our basic idea of person is of the individual who forms part of a society, by virtue of which that individual holds a series of rights. Of course, the most basic of these rights is the right to non-aggression. The whole society will call to account anyone who offends one of its members. Our idea of person is therefore of a subject for whom are responsible, a subject whose reasons, conditions and preferences should be taken into consideration. What happens in torture is the violation of this idea, the invasion of other person without taking him or her into account. In other words, in torture the other person is used, which contradicts Kant's principle (the basis of our idea of person) that other people cannot be considered a means, but as ends in themselves. It is in this sense that we say that in torture the other person is negated, annihilated or reified.

And if we agree that the torture victim is used, this usage has to obey some goal, which always involves the self-affirmation of the torturer or of the system the torturer represents. Through the torture the torturer expresses his power over the other, a power that could negate the other person completely, i.e., kill the other person. And by exercising this power, the torturer feels expanded, re-affirmed through his invasion of another.

In Miranda's case, this exercise of power is felt as a form of liberation. Feeling tired to his wife, he experiences a desire to control Paulina, a desire which, in his civil world, could never be realized. However, in the situation of remoteness and unreality where he first met Paulina, he could give full rein to his desires. IN this way, the experience that Miranda has of the social pact is, in a certain way, one of containment of the impulses of his ego. The limits by virtue of which every citizen is protected under the social pact are also the limitations that we all experience on ourselves. The idea that one person's freedom ends where another's begins can be understood as a reduction of the freedom of the first. It is very easy at this point to make a dichotomous interpretation which, as is the case in Contractualist philosophies, views unbridled violence as the basic character of the state of nature, which is brought under control in the passage to the state of civilization established by the social contract. I mentioned above that Miranda's world also dissolves, and that is true. The limits he experienced in his civil life vanish to the



Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994)

point that he can let out all those repressed impulses he had bottled up inside him: "In ordinary life, people in general prefer to be told what to do, and military discipline substitutes this with a liberating urge to break the rules. It is an escape from the obligations of everyday life, family ties, community and work" (MARRADES, 2001:86).

In his violation of Paulina Lorca's rights, Roberto Miranda is breaking the basic norms of his everyday life and this makes him feel a sense of pleasure: "And inside I could feel I was starting to like it. [...] I loved it. I was sorry it ended. I was very sorry it ended". Faced with Paulina's distress of annihilation, Miranda felt an internal explosion, the release of that which he had always contained: his own power. If power is understood as the expansion of the self, we will find its greatest realization in the negating possession of the other.

"I was naked in the bright light and you couldn't see me. You couldn't tell me what to do. I owned you. I owned all of them. I fell in love with it. I could hurt you, or I could fuck you, and you couldn't tell me not to. You had to thank me." Miranda's words don't leave room for any doubt. For the first time in his life he could unleash his desires to invade the other without having to answer for it, and part of this kind of invasion consisted precisely in not having to answer for it. This is what Jean Améry refers to, following Georges Bataille, as sadism: "The radical negation of the other [...] at the same time the negation of the social principle and the principle of reality. [...] [The sadist] wants to annul this world, and to negate the other, which in a very specific sense is also presented to him as *hell*, his own absolute sovereignty" (AMÉRY, 2001:88-89).

What Roberto Miranda truly wanted, although he didn't know it, was precisely what he did to Paulina. He negated her world, negated the foundations on which she understood her identity as a subject with certain fundamental rights. From that moment on, Paulina would never be able to recover her trust in the world. In Miranda's hands, Paulina was reified, reduced to flesh, her humanity ignored: "...and inside I could feel I was starting to like it. They laid people out, flesh on the table. And the fluorescent light. You didn't know. It was bright in those rooms. People lying totally helpless. I didn't have to be nice! I didn't have to seduce them!" With the women who were in his power, Miranda could do everything he was forbidden to do in his everyday life. The constant insults hurled at his victims are another example of this. Améry also refers to the destruction of life as a reduction to flesh: "The other is reduced to flesh and in doing so is taken to the threshold of death; in any case, the person is ultimately exiled in the realm of nothingness, beyond the confines of death. In this way, the tormentor and killer realises his own destructive carnality, without being completely lost in it as is the victim: when it suits him, he can stop the torture. In his hands is the power to cause cries of pain and agony; he is lord of flesh and spirit, of life and death. Thus the torture constitutes an absolute inversion of the social order, wherein we can live only if we also acknowledge the life of the other, if we dominate the expansive impulse of the ego, if we mitigate its suffering. But in the world of torture, man lives only on the destruction of the other" (AMÉRY, 2001:98-99).

To negate the life of the other is to negate his character as a person, to consider him a means to the end of self-expansion, the self-expansion which the mediocre Miranda desired and which, in order to be realised, required the breach of the contract that made him a citizen. In this way, he positioned himself as a god, a position of the Almighty in whose hands is the decision as to the suffering and relief of others, and even as to their life and death. For the first time in his life Miranda felt what it was like to have power: "In such circumstances the executioner makes the prisoner feel, while he hits him or electrocutes him, that he cannot expect help from him or from anyone. Through his continuous and obstinate action, the executioner establishes himself as an absolute ruler whose essential quality is self-affirmation through the radical negation of the other. In the executioner's hands is the power to torture or to stop the torture whenever he wants" (MARRADES, 2005:6).

"That is what motivates them: power, control", Paulina tells her husband. And she is right: "I realized I didn't even have to take care of them. I had all the power. I could break anyone. I could make them do or say whatever I wanted. [...] I would let my pants fall so you could hear what I was doing. I liked you knowing what I was going to do." If Miranda collaborated in her torment it wasn't out of ideological convictions, for the good of the State, to get information out of his victims or because he thought that Paulina was guilty of any crime with which she might be charged; it was only because he felt that he could absolutely control the alterity, he felt that he could possess her to the point that this alterity would be negated. This desire for possession of the other that leads to negation of that other (and the consequent over-affirmation of the ego) can be realised in torture, but also in very different contexts. The French-Japanese production *In the Realm of the Senses* (Ai-no korida, Nagisa Oshima, 1976) shows precisely how certain types of love can lead to similar phenomena. In the film, the female protagonist, in her desire to possess her husband totally, ends up killing him. The conclusion that the film seems to invite us to draw is that total possession leads to the annihilation of the other. This annihilation may be material, as in the film *In the Realm of the Senses*, or, for want of a better way of describing it, emotional, as in *Death and the Maiden*. Paulina has been annihilated through being used as an object, as a mere thing over which complete control could be exercised. She is a living corpse. She herself says as much. The inversion of the social order therefore consists in the annihilation of one person as a means of self-expansion for another. Or in other words, in the acquisition by one group of people of unlimited power over another.

Notes

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The Myth and the Legend: in Search of Christopher Columbus in Film

Asela R. Laguna

The most hotly debated of the centenaries of 1492 has now passed, but not the continuous efforts to invent an imaginary version of the mysterious and elusive figure of Christopher Columbus, or to argue the debates and refutations over every aspect of the events and processes that transformed the history of Western Europe and the New World after 1492. Proof of the continued fascination with the character, and with the contemporary relevance of the myth and legend of Columbus are to be found in the recent premiere of Icíar Bollaín's film *Even the Rain* (2011), the negotiations that Richard Branson, the billionaire owner of *Virgin Atlantic*, engaged to obtain T. S. Nowlin's screenplay *Columbus* to make a 3-D movie about the Admiral's life, and other productions such as Anne Thomson and Marc Etkind's television series about his fourth voyage, *Columbus: The Lost Voyage* (2007) and the movies *The Manuscript* (2009) by Dominican director Alan Nadal Piantini and *Christopher Columbus – The Enigma* (2007) by Portugal's Manoel de Oliveira.

While in literature, Christopher Columbus belongs to a long line of mythological, literary or historical characters –like Ulysses, Antigone, Cain, the Wandering Jew, Don Juan, Faust, Dracula or Lope de Aguirre– that have evolved into a robust and diverse literary theme, the same phenomenon has also occurred in film. Columbus, like Jesus, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Spartacus, El Cid, Joan of

Arc, Robin Hood, Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, Romeo and Juliet, Captain Smith and Napoleon, is the subject of an impressive, diverse and international film corpus that spans various cinematic genres. This alliance (history, myth, literature and film) and its associated strategies (historical past as document, evocation, inter-text) date back to the beginnings of film, when directors and producers both in Europe and in the United States turned to the historical, mythological and literary past in search of characters and themes to bring to the screen. The fact that the birth of cinema coincided with the triumphalist celebration of the fourth centenary of Columbus facilitated his early insertion into the world of film. Since then, Columbus' character has worn as many different outfits as there are perspectives on the man, his epoch, discovery and colonization. And these depictions of Columbus as messianic agent, heroic figure, or the opposite, cover all genres, from epic biography, comedy, musical, adventure or documentary, and even animated films.

Culturally, Columbus has always been an important polysemous point of reference. Hence his appearance in many titles of works, even though he may not be the protagonist or a supporting character; this is both a symbolic and a box-office strategy, evident ever since Charlie Chaplin subtitled one of his most important medium-length films *The Immigrant* (1917) as *A Modern Columbus*, in order to associate the Tramp's character with Columbus, as another immigrant to the New World. *Goodbye, Columbus* (1969) by Larry Peerce, based on Philip Roth's novel of the same title, exemplifies a Columbus model in its telling of the story of the adversities faced by a poor Jewish boy from the Bronx in his efforts to win the hearts of the family of his beloved, a rich Jewish girl from Radcliffe. In other cases, for example during the inter-war period and in the fifties, there are films in which, although they do not refer to him by name in their titles, Columbus intervenes along with Moses, Confucius, Napoleon Washington or Lincoln, to question and denounce the rise of totalitarianism, war and dictatorship (*Are We Civilized?*, 1934, by Edwin Carewe; *The Story of Mankind*, 1957, by Irwin Allen). The insertion of Columbus in didactic animated films (*Hysterical High Spots in American History*, 1941) or in musicals (*Where Do We Go From Here?*, by Gregory Ratoff, 1945) reaffirms his essential importance in American culture.

In Spain we find films whose titles reaffirm other aspects, such as the fears of the first sailors or the socio-economic conditions in 1492 –*Al borde del gran viaje* (On the Verge of the Great Voyage, 1940) by Antonio Román; *La marrana* (The Sow, 1992) by José Luis Cuerda– or other historical figures, like *Juana la loca... de vez en cuando* [Joanna the Mad... from Time to Time, José Ramón Larraz, 1983]. In *Alba de América* (Dawn of America, Juan de Orduña, 1951), one of the most classic Spanish films about



The Immigrant (A Modern Columbus) (Charles Chaplin, 1917)

Columbus, the metonymic title prefigures him as the sun, initiator of the dawn of a continent. In Latin America, directors have chosen to focus on the historical processes of conquest, colonisation and neo-colonisation. Whether present or absent, Columbus is always a presence, a shadow, a nightmare, as in the cases of *Orinoko*, *New World* (Diego Rísquez, 1984) or *Macuro* (Hernan Jabes, 2008).

Films about Columbus provide an alternative cultural space for critical exploration of the practices and the multiple perspectives and underlying interpretations behind the film productions focusing on the character. Historically, the first film about Columbus was a short French movie made in 1904, twenty-two minutes and twenty-six seconds long, titled *Christopher Columbus*, a production of the Pathé Brothers directed by Vincent Lorient-Heilbronn (1874-1912). In this film, Vincent Denizot, a tall, hardy, imposing and very dramatic actor, plays the role of the Admiral. In eight sequences that start with the rocking movement aboard the Santa Maria (Rolling on the sea), the film reviews a core history of Columbus comprising, in addition to the mutiny, the disembarkation (where the Indians welcome the newcomers warmly); the celebrations of the Indians (Indian couples and children who embrace Columbus and present a dance); their triumphant entrance into Barcelona (welcoming of Columbus and the Indians by the people); their reception at court (parade in the court; entrance of the dressed-up Indians); Columbus' fall from grace (clerics denounce him to the King, who confronts him); and Columbus in jail (the King visits him but refuses to remove his chains). In this last sequence, Columbus, abandoned and downcast, contrasts his current situation with the triumphant entrance before the King and Queen, the memory of which is projected in the upper right corner of the screen. However, the film doesn't end there. A final sequence is introduced, dedicated to Columbus' glory (Apotheosis), a celebration held centuries later with the participation of soldiers, statesmen, children, and three ladies representing equality, fraternity and liberty. They all pay tribute to Columbus, whose statue can be seen in the background, where we can also see an official coach passing by, decorated in gold.



1492: *The Conquest of Paradise* (Ridley Scott, 1992)

It is significant that the decision was made to start the film with the last stage of the journey, at the moment of the last conflictive incident (mutiny), which is the prelude to the culminating moment. The film's sequential order dismisses questions related to his origin, or the time he spent and his marriage in Portugal, or his years of waiting in Spain, the preparations for the journey, the contribution of the Pinzón brothers and the recruitment of the crew. Here, Columbus is alone, and he alone celebrates the landing in the New World and the triumphant return, just as he stands alone to face the humiliation and ingratitude of the King and Queen. There is no problematisation of his personal life, or of his relations with the Indians with whom he is presented as magnanimous, generous and patient. They in return receive his gifts happily and celebrate his arrival with dancing. Neither Columbus nor his crew show any astonishment in their encounter with the other, and the Indians convey no such surprise either. Queen Isabella is almost absent, and King Fernando is the villain. The end is presented as a tribute and recognition of a mistreated sailor, and as an exaltation of the new colonialism of Imperial France, which exports and propagates the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality. The peoples conquered or about to be conquered should generously welcome the *offerings* that European civilization has to give them, just as the original Amerindians did with Columbus.

There are now many Columbus on film and many challenges to reinvent and construct a story that is worn out, locked into a repetitive and clichéd formula (Columbus/hero; Spaniards/villains; scientific knowledge/ignorance; individualism/oppression; idealism/pragmatism; history/fiction) that is nourished by the Black Legend. What do movies about Columbus tell us about him, about his status as a foreigner, about Europe, Spain and the Indians? How can the director make use of the exceptionalism of the hero and his adverse relationship with his environ-

ment to develop a Columbus that absorbs and captivates the spectator? How can we break the mould and move beyond the stilted Columbus of Washington Irving (the exceptionalist hero-genius interpretation) or of Kirkpatrick Sale (the emblem of all the evils of modern colonialism)? Is it worth questioning the profitability and success of the film projects about Columbus, an individual about whom we know so much, but do not know even more?

The representation of Christopher Columbus: from silent film to sound

The historiography of films about Columbus reveals some interesting facts¹. In silent films and talkies up until the 1940s, producers and directors acclaimed for other films suffered commercial failures in their experiments with Columbus. Such was the case of the French film company Gaumont and prolific director Louis Feuillade (*Christopher Columbus*, 1910), famous for the *Fantômas* series, and of George Kleine (1864-1931), importer of European cinema to the United States, famous for *Quo Vadis?* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1913), *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Gli ultimo giorni di Pompeii, Mario Caserini, Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1913) and *Othello* (Dimitri Buchowetzki, 1922), but whose attempts to distribute Feuillade's film failed to arouse public interest. The Italian campaign to celebrate Columbus Day in New York is the subject of *Columbus Day Conspiracy* (1912), in which William J. Gaynor, mayor of New York City at the time, took part. The first feature film on the topic, *Christophe Colomb* (1916), was a Spanish-French co-production directed by Emile Bourgeois which, despite a one-million peseta budget, elaborate set designs, painstaking efforts to preserve historical authenticity and the use of three cameras for the first time in Spanish filmmaking, also failed to achieve the success expected; the film, in which the French actor Georges Wague played the role of Columbus, had a biographical sequence structured with an introduction and

five chapters (A Queen's Inspiration; Into the Unknown; The work shines eternal; The Zenith of Glory; The Sad Reward). In 1919, David W. Griffith directed the documentary film *The World of Columbus*. In 1923, *Columbus Discovers a New Whirl*, by Australian illustrator Frank A. Nankivell, became the first North American presentation of Columbus in animated silent film, a trend continued by Walter Lantz, the famous owner of the animation studio that created *Woody Woodpecker*, *Andy Panda* and *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*. In the film *Chris Columbus, Jr.* (Walter Lantz, 1934), written by Victor McLeod, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit is a Columbus seeking to prove that the Earth is round and to discover new lands.

The production of *Cristobal Colón o la grandeza de América* [Christopher Columbus or the Greatness of America, 1943], by Spanish exile José Díaz Morales, was the first sound film made in Mexico. Columbus and the greatness of America are the catalysts for a story aimed at exalting *La Raza*, the notion of Hispanic and Spanish identity as elements of alliance between Hispanic peoples at a time when Franco's Spain viewed the works of Spanish republican exiles in Mexico with suspicion. This 135-minute feature film was notable for its lack of technical resources, its modest budget, and the role of Columbus being given to quite a mature actor (Julio Villareal, a Spaniard resident in Mexico since 1903), whose performance displayed a rather arrogant attitude with regard to the Spanish King and Queen and in moments of religious reflection. Its distribution in Spain by Hollywood's Columbia Pictures was emblematic of the transactions that needed to be negotiated to accommodate Francoist censorship. The strategy of voice-over commentary was used to silence everything that could be considered a criticism of the nation and of the Spanish people (such as the intrigues of Francisco de Bobadilla) and to propagate the ideology of the State: at the climactic moment of the landing, the action is interrupted to indicate that "they have arrived at one of those countries that live in sin and that need to be converted to the true religion, that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of Spain". From this sequence it cuts to the scene of Columbus' death in Valladolid.

The trend that started in 1904 of constructing all-encompassing, explicatory epic films that legitimate or promote national projects continued in *Christopher Columbus* (1949, Gainsborough Pictures) by English director David MacDonald, and *Dawn of America* (1951, CIFESA) by Spanish director Juan de Orduña, the two most important productions prior to 1992. The mythologizing depictions of Columbus by Frederic March and Antonio Vilar are part of the classical film iconography that generations of spectators recall fondly, but that future generations would rail against.

Christopher Columbus is a long epic-biography, historically rigorous in terms of set designs and wardrobe, which

recounts episodes that dramatise the challenges faced by the hero in his efforts to explain his plan, persuade and secure the support of the Monarchs, win the solidarity and respect of his crew, and fight against the intrigues of the court and a mutiny during the voyage. And he triumphs, only to be defeated by ingratitude, rumours and plundering of his profits. This firm, decisive and self-confident Columbus, who in March's performance is an elegant, tall, restrained and meticulously coiffured gentleman, falls from grace in the end and vanishes behind the darkness of the proscenium curtain. Rather than a man of the action, he is a dreamer, a rational voice/being crying out in a wilderness of scepticism, greed and villainy.

The genesis and the production of *Dawn of America*, sponsored by the Institute of Hispanic Culture, are testimony to its status as a contestation against the British version by MacDonald. The Spanish government reacted with indignation at the depiction the Catholic Monarchs, the excessive emphasis on court intrigues and the absence of the project of evangelisation. They sought the production of an exemplary and allegorical film that would offer an interpretation that would highlight the important political and historical role of the Monarchs, and insert the great achievement and the national support it received within a providentialist conception of the story. The exaltation of the Discovery would thus serve to exalt patriotic values, and to caricature the enemies of the Spanish regime of the period.

Orduña adhered to a depiction of Columbus as visionary and prophet, supported by knowledge, science, his maritime experience and the secret of Toscanelli's map. The images of the Santa Maria on the open sea, the scene showing some doubtful sailors, frightened and scared by the unknown, and the majestic shots of the sea are effective. And Martin Pinzón, Columbus' ally and defender, is charged with the task of describing his life in retrospect from the birth up to the mutiny. In the moment of triumph and of the encounter, this Columbus, a good Christian and a gentleman, takes possession of the "promised land" to which they have come "as brothers". The images and the final scene (the triumphant return to Barcelona with Indians, the baptism of the Indian, sacred music, the Lord's Prayer) establish the central nature of the evangelising mission and of the Castilian people in the formation and construction of pan-Hispanic identity and unity: "Castile shall carry noble blood to illuminate the noble family of the Spanish dominions. The noble transplant must flourish on those shores and the lineage shall grow in honour and life beyond measure. And across the sea and time, it shall bind us always to a single destiny" under "a single faith in a single language". The film was a financial disaster. Long, slow-moving, predictable and propagandistic; the characters, like wax figures, lacked human freshness and vitality.

The desacralisation of the historical and mythical Columbus: three film examples

In reaction to MacDonald's and Orduña's solemn and propagandistic depictions, others, like the very popular actor and director of the Spanish commercial films, Mariano Ozores (*Cristóbal Colón, de oficio...descrubidor* [Christopher Columbus, Profession: Discoverer, 1982]) and British directors Gerald Thomas (*Carry on Columbus*, 1992) and Peter Barnes (*Bye, Bye Columbus*, 1992), turned to the theme to desacralise the historical and mythical Columbus. The first of these is representative of Spain's period of liberalisation and transition after Franco's death, while the others were failed attempts to debunk the Columbus myth in the context of the celebration and counter-celebration of the quincentenary.



1492: *The Conquest of Paradise* (Ridley Scott, 1992)

Cristóbal Colón, de oficio...descrubidor is a farce and parody of the Columbus depicted in *Dawn of America*. The popular Andrés Pajares plays a simple-minded Columbus who lives in a world of revelry, jibes, jokes and provocative and shocking allusions and images, daring for the time but worn out and irrelevant today. However, it is the only version that constructs an image of the Columbus-hero on his return as a deranged, disoriented and crazed individual whose physical appearance seems more like that of a shipwreck victim than of the triumphant explorer: red-bearded, thin, almost naked and in chains, who on hearing himself announced as a *hero* who has returned with good news of a new world, casts a gaze all around him and drops dead in front of everyone. The truth is that he has returned from a journey

described by the crew as "fatal and infernal". His story, introduced by the Queen, and continued by a narrator's voice, as in *Dawn of America*, frames the historical sequences, which are presented through flashbacks, and always with a clearly provocative intention (in his childhood in Genoa, the camera focuses in on the genitals of the baby Columbus), mocking (in "This is Spain") and parodic (the romantic scene between Columbus and Beatriz on the river in *Dawn of America* is transformed here into a scene with Columbus singing "I love you" in English to a Beatriz suffering from gas, to the sound of the birds and the continuous flatulence that never leaves her even in the marriage bed). This reformulation dismantles the providentialist conception of the Discovery, and ironically juxtaposes the discourse of the pan-Hispanic project (*Dawn of America*) with a new prophetic vision (projected on the screen) that presages wars, explosions, New York City, Marilyn Monroe and trips to the moon, and subscribes to a criticism of capitalism (the newly discovered world is the world of "Drink Coca-Cola"). The film, a great box-office success at the time, offers up a memorable metaphor. A dead Columbus and a queen who gets his name wrong when she begins her presentation highlight the suspicious and manipulative role of the director, writer and historian in the construction of a text, including the director of this comedy.

The two British comedies are daring efforts that fail to break out of the category of clumsy texts based on the stereotype. Although *Bye, Bye, Columbus* is a film commissioned by the British Broadcasting System to commemorate the fifth centenary, *Carry on Columbus*, is, if it bears mentioning, a better work. Barnes' Columbus (played by Daniel Massey) is a cynical and irreverent monster, whose divine mandate comes to him from a parrot that imitates the voice of God. When the Queen reprimands him for turning Indians into slaves, he replies that they take cannibal slaves on board so that they can eat each other during the journey.

The most interesting aspect of *Carry On Columbus* is the introduction of an international intrigue. The Sultan of Turkey, who imposes burdensome taxes on every caravan that passes through his territory, finds out that a certain Christopher Columbus (played by Jim Dale), is planning to find a new route to Asia from Portugal. He sends a spy (Sara Crowe as Fatima) to Lisbon so that, in collusion with a local resident, she can prevent Columbus from achieving his goal and ruin his prosperous business. There is also a certain novelty in the encounter with the Indians who, dressed in extravagant attire, sporting names like Pontiac and talking with Brooklyn accents, refuse Columbus' gifts and, in exchange for their leaving, give the Spaniards a chest full of fake gold. The image presented of Columbus is that of a selfish opportunist dressed in a red velvet cloak and a huge medallion chain.

The occasion of the quincentenary provided the opportunity for new reformulations of Columbus and the discovery, according to revisionist approaches, inclusive, multicultural and less Eurocentric perspectives, ecological concerns and substantial budgets for some films. From hero and genius, Columbus was transformed into villain, slave-trader and even genocidal maniac.

The historical exceptionalism of Columbus in modern versions

However, the two Hollywood films on the theme, *Christopher Columbus: the Discovery* (1992) under the production of the Salking Family and the direction of John Glen, and *1492: The Conquest of Paradise* (1992) by Ridley Scott (preceded by extremely costly advertising campaigns, and productions in which no effort was spared to hire internationally known artists, solicit advice from well-known historians, and shoot at different locations around Europe and Central America) did not turn into big box-office successes or classics of contemporary film. The music and special effects are impressive and offer excellent scenes of lush landscapes, action on the sea, on the ship and during the discovery, but they did not move away from the widespread conception of Columbus' historical exceptionalism, of the Spanish as the embodiment of superstition, ignorance, intolerance (the Inquisition) and as agents of destruction, or from the view of the Indian as a being with agency. The films were essentially big visual spectacles set within the classical genre of epic cinema.

Christopher Columbus: The Discovery was conceived as an adventure movie for the whole family that steered clear of all political controversy. Columbus (played by Georges Corraface) combines the qualities of Lawrence of Arabia with those of Robin Hood, and displays his great gifts as a swordsman, lady's man and persuasive talker. With a great cast (Marlon Brando as Torquemada) and a screenplay by Mario Puzo, the action is centred on Columbus-as-hero and on the challenges he faced up until 1492 and the discovery itself. The music by Cliff Eidelman brings together a variety of registers that capture the emotions, the dangers of the voyage and the climax of the arrival, in which the *Gloria* emphasizes the spectacular and grandiose nature of this moment. The Indians, as in previous texts, watch and admire but do not react. This triumphalist film shows Columbus as a black-haired handsome dreamer and adventurer, a good father and lover and a man of reason, who on first setting foot in the New World has the freshness, enthusiasm and spiritedness of a person coming off a cruise ship ready to start a tourist excursion.

1492: Conquest of Paradise divides the action into two very distinct segments: the first is dedicated to the long wait in Spain, and the second to the character's arrival, administration and fall from grace. Columbus (G  rard Depardieu) is the seafaring entrepreneur, the man of

destiny, the chosen one who, despite his temperamental qualities, is faithful to his mission. He has to survive in a world dominated by superstition and an oppressive atmosphere, full of fear, which is symbolised in the horrible spectacle of human execution under the Inquisition. In the second segment, Columbus is a compassionate, fair and moderate man, who preaches that the conversion of the Indians should be done by persuasion and not by force and who, like so many other Columbuses, declares that he has come in peace and with honour. The film's plot includes numerous episodes and narratives that are not very well woven together and Columbus emerges in the end as a sad, worn out and pathetic old man who is told that it was Vespucci who discovered a new continent. Columbus isn't a colonialist monster or slave-trader but a visionary, a victim of human greed, evil and ingratitude. The title does not do the plot justice; the film is not about the year 1492 or about the conquest, but about Christopher Columbus, his rise to the status of myth, his fall to the level of other men and his compensation in Western written history.

Other representative offerings

To find truly anti-Columbus offerings we need to turn to documentaries, such as: *Columbus Didn't Discover Us* (Robbie Lepezer, 1991), *Surviving Columbus* (Diane Reyna, 1992), *The Columbus Invasion: Colonialism and Indian Resistance* (1992), or a very short film (18 minutes) *Columbus on Trial* (1992) by the socially committed Chicana producer and director Lourdes Portillo. With the acting support of the satirical group Culture Trash, she produces a completely irreverent text centred on a trial against the Admiral. The judge and defending attorney are Chicanos loyal to their Hispanic roots, while the prosecutor, a man of indigenous origin, pleads for a verdict of guilty for this "great assassin". A witness named X, a black slave, fears that he will be acquitted, and indeed they do declare him innocent, but after hearing the sentence a young Chicana woman shoots him dead. This small independent Chicano film does what major commercial films have never dared to do. The killing of the first colonizer is a symbolic death and a complete break with every trace that recalls a tradition of Spanish/US dominance and oppression in the Chicano/Latino imaginary.

The disappointing parade of film essays that adopt black-and-white ideological postures, with plots supported by a scaffolding of monumental historical licence and inaccuracies and simplistic classifications for or against providentialist interpretations, foundationalist or deconstructive theories of nation, progress or modernity, is worthy of a study of its own. But I can affirm that three new films made in the 21st century seem to offer new approaches and presentations that are less spectacular but more intelligent and ironic, some of them entertaining



1492: *The Conquest of Paradise* (Ridley Scott, 1992)

and others provocative. In contradistinction to comedy and to the all-encompassing epic biography vindicating Spanish ingratitude, these films opt for the possibilities offered by adventure film and metafilm, and openly advocate the construction

of texts of a fictional character, thereby moving away from the pretension of realism, but establishing narrative threads that connect past with present. The first of these is *Christopher Columbus - The Enigma* (2007) by the nearly one hundred year-old Portuguese film director Manoel de Oliveira, who conceived it as “a work of fiction with a romantic tone, evocative of the act of discovering America”. And it is according to this conception that it should be judged. As is typical for Oliveira, the film is long, slow, nostalgic, intellectual and discursive. Based on the book *Christopher Columbus was Portuguese!* (2008), by Manuel Luciano de Silva and Silvia Jorge de Silva, this film offers a different perspective that is in part positioned as a compensatory nod to the postponement or oblivion over the last five hundred years of the achievements and nautical and maritime contributions of the Portuguese around the world generally, but especially in North America, without delving into the problematic issues of postcolonial times. The film starts with the image of the Admiral’s enigmatic signature and a narrator’s voice explaining the keys that reveal its true identity (Salvador Fernández Zarco, son of Isabel Gonsalves Zarco, daughter of the Jewish sailor Joao Gonsalves Zarco, who discovered Porto Santo, and of Fernando, Duke of Beja and enemy of King Juan II). Immigration, scientific study, passion and dedication come together in the life of this character and his wife, who spend their time travelling from place to place (Cuba, Alentejo, where Columbus was born), visiting museums and monuments, absorbed in a poetic and musical atmosphere that evokes the sea, in search of records of the great discoveries of Portuguese history.

The premier of *The Manuscript* (2009) by the young director Alan Nadal Piantini was a milestone in the history of Dominican film as the first epic adventure film produced in that country. Shot in Spain and in the Dominican Republic, the film tells of the adventures of a young investigator modelled on Indiana Jones, Lara Croft and Jack Colton, named Santiago Chevalier (played by Nadal Piantini himself), and a history teacher who become caught up in a complex plot involving various mysteries. A group of Spanish mercenaries try to steal Columbus’ remains and in the process find a manuscript that contains

a secret. The loss of these remains would affect not only the island’s economy, but also the dignity of a nation that has turned them into the cornerstone of its national history and identity. This search and in the efforts to stop the robbery results in a magical mixture of the roles of Columbus, the clergy of the Cathedral, the historians, the image of three caravels juxtaposed with those of an aeroplane, the excavations, and assorted struggles and intrigues; in short, adventures mixing together five hundred years of the history of Columbus in the Dominican Republic and Spain aimed at seducing the spectator. The soundtrack contributes brilliantly to integrate emotion and suspense into the action.

Even the Rain (2010), directed by Icíar Bollaín, is a film dedicated to the memory of Howard Zinn, the historian and the activist known for his stance against the war in Vietnam, the defence of the rights of the marginalised and for his popular book *A People’s History of the United States* (1980), based on the story of Hans Koning. The film presents a Columbus driven by his passion for gold, with a troubled disposition reflected in his obsession for erecting crosses and gallows, who enslaves Indians and subjects them to forced labour or turns them into servants, and who is incapable of restraining the *fierce beasts* of his men, who came only to kill, destroy and commit all manner of cruelties. And this is the version of Columbus that Sebastián (the director, played by Gael García Bernal) comes to film in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Very cleverly Bollaín resorts to the film within a film in order to situate a kaleidoscope of dominant and subaltern perspectives and relationships at the heart of the film, thereby problematising the accuracy and limitations of any approach to the past and the difficulties and challenges involved in examining it in all its complexity. It is a fiction film (Icíar Bollaín’s) about the production of another film (Sebastián’s about *Columbus*), to which other productions are added, like the documentary about the making of the film about Columbus, and an aborted project (the refusal to film a documentary about the abuse of the Indians for protesting against water privatization), as well as scenes that show the actors viewing the filmed scenes, or the television reports about the Indians’ demonstrations against the government. As spectators we witness the production of a text (the film) in which the prescriptions of a script, the references and sources that Sebastián turns to (De Bry’s drawings as a model of the brutalities), the circumstances, anxieties and frustrations of the actors, the contraposition between the desire to make a unique film and the stubborn insistence of the producer (Luis Tosar) for economising and minimising costs even at the expense of historical accuracy (filming in Bolivia instead of the Caribbean, hiring Indians who speak Quechua to play the role of the Arawak people), the question of the participation of indigenous actors (the Indian mothers who refuse

to take part in the scene in which they must drown their children) and the crisis in Cochabamba all problematise the limitations involved in creating, filming and writing about history, and in practice, prevent the completion of the film. But added to this story is the drama of Daniel (the leader of the Indians, played by Hatuey) and his fight against the authorities who oppress them, imprison them or abuse them for defending their rights to water. The Water War breaks out, the production team must decide whether to help, intervene, or flee in terror and cowardice from the danger. The producer, who initially has no interest in the local drama, risks everything to save the daughter of the leader of the protests, resulting in a drama of human transformation and solidarity.

The characterisation of Columbus (played by Karra Elejalde) as a gold obsessed slave-driver and oppressor of the Indians contrasts with the positions of social and human justice of the two other major characters, Montesinos and Las Casas, who temper the behaviour of the discoverer and the other evil Spaniards. In the end, the film is never finished; there are still incomplete fragments of scenes of a Columbus who –slave-driver or not– escapes once again so that many more Columbuses may rise from the places where they were silenced or banished by the director, and seek out more directors to try out new masks for the Admiral's identity. ■

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Notes

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1 Other films about Columbus worth mentioning, apart from those that are discussed in this article, include: *The Coming of Columbus* (Colin Campbell, 1912); *Christoph Columbus* (Márton Garas, 1923); *Columbus* (Edwin L. Hollywood, 1923); *The Double-Crossing of Columbus* (Joseph Henabery, 1934); *Cristoforo Colombo* (Carmine Gallone, 1937); *Chris Columbo* (Eddie Donnelly, 1938); *Christopher Columbus Jr.* (Roger Clampett, 1939); *Where do we go from here?* (Gregory Ratoff, 1945); *Hare We Go* (Robert McKimson, 1951); *Kolumbus entdeckt Krähwinkel* (Ulrich Erfurth, 1954); *The Story of Mankind* (Irwin Allen, 1957); the Brazilian television series *Cristóvão Colombo* (1957); *Christopher Columbus* (Jay Ward, 1962); *Willy McBean and His Magic Machine* (Arthur Rankin Jr., 1965); *Cristóbal Colón en la facultad de medicina* (Julio Saraceni, 1962); *Columbus 64* (Ulrich Thein, 1966); the Italian-Spanish miniseries *Cristóbal Colón/Cristoforo Colombo* (Vittorio Cottafavi, 1967); *Professor Columbus* (Rainer Erler, 1968); *Christopher Kolumbus oder Die Entdeckung Amerikas* (Helmut Käutner, 1969); *El paraíso ortopédico* (1969), by Chilean Patricio Guzmán; *Robinson Columbus* (1975), by Danish Ib Steinaa; *Der, Ein Kolumbus auf der Havel* (1977), by German Hans Kratzert; *Le retour de Christophe Colomb* (Jean-Pierre Saire, 1983); *Christopher Columbus* (Alberto Lattuada, 1985); the animated film *Die Abenteuer von Pico und Columbus* (Michael Schoemann, 1990); *Colon: The Scatological Columbus Epic* (Eric Gravley, 1992); *Mein Freund Kolumbus* (Thibaut Chatel, 1992); and the animated film based on the book of the same name by Dario Fo *Johan Padan a la descoberta de l'Americhe* (Giulio Cingoli, 2001).

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***Tokyo-Ga*: A First Person Journey (A Filmed Diary about Absence)**

José Antonio Hurtado

Since his first films, Wenders has been sketching the outlines of a vast filmic cartography that knows no borders, developed over the course of a long and drawn out cinematic odyssey which, if I may be allowed the metaphor, is a veritable journey through space and time. In addition to travelling halfway around the world to make films and elaborating a filmic discourse about movement and displacement, his work is also a symbolic trajectory through the history of film, which is none other than the source that feeds the images of this inveterate cinephile: early cinema, the French New Wave and the whole canon of European modernism, the American classics with John Ford at the head, Fritz Lang and, of course, Yasujiro Ozu¹.

Tokyo-Ga (Wim Wenders, 1985) fits into this model and is yet another milestone in the journey that confirms the wandering nature (as if it were one of his characters) of Wim Wenders, filmmaker. In this film he embarks on a twofold journey, both to the Japanese capital and to the universe of Ozu, one of his sacred cinematic references. Chance and necessity, two raw materials that are consubstantial with the best creations, converge in the origins of this project. On a rainy day some fifteen years earlier, Wenders had the powerful experience of seeing one of Ozu's essential works in a New York theatre: *Tokyo Story* (Tokyo monogatari, Yasujiro Ozu, 1953). Indeed, the experience was so stunning that Wenders

came out of the cinema with tears in his eyes. Shortly afterwards, he had the opportunity of seeing another five titles by this filmmaker presented at the MOMA. He discovered, as if it were a revelation, that the kind of cinema he had been dreaming of –an ideal cinema in which gaze and dream are closely intertwined– but which he didn't believe could exist, was realised in Ozu's images. This explains the words that open the commentary that runs throughout the film (recited, incidentally, in his own voice, a voice that sounds fragile, melancholy, restrained and yet full of emotion) and which are superimposed, like heavenly music, over the opening credits of *Tokyo Story*: "If in our century, something sacred still existed, if there were something like a sacred treasure of the cinema, then for me that would have to be the work of the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu [...] For me, never before and never again since has the cinema been so close to its essence and its purpose: to present an image of man in our century, a usable, true and valid image, in which he not only recognises himself but from which, above all, he may learn about himself"².

To turn this profound impression into a need to film something about the Japanese filmmaker, all that was needed was an opportunity. And once again, chance intervened: Wenders was invited to Tokyo to participate in a German film week. Added to this was his desire to continue with his first-hand experience after two significant and magnificent short documentaries made for the television program *Cinema, Cinemas: Reverse Angle. New York City, March 1982 / Quand je m'évielle* (1982) and *Room 666* (1982), which, along with *Tokyo-Ga* and grouped under the generic classification of *film diaries*, make

up a suggestive triptych which, as a metalinguistic exercise, takes the cinema itself as the object of reflection³.

And once there, why not Tokyo? Why not Ozu? Although according to Wenders the idea for the film arose spontaneously, he was, in light of all these facts, (pre)destined to take his camera and dive into Ozu's world. This *voyage* took place between 1983 and 1985, from the moment he began filming until the final cut was complete.

Between shooting, which lasted around three weeks, and postproduction, which went on for several months, he went to the United States to direct his acclaimed road movie *Paris, Texas* (1984), the product of the traveller's experience that is one of his identifying signs. His initial idea was to edit both films in Berlin, but it was impossible for him to do what he had proposed, and he only resumed editing once *Paris, Texas* had been presented at Cannes, where it won the Palm d'Or. Because of the time that had passed since his visit to Tokyo, Wenders claims that he couldn't recognise his own images, that it was as if they had been filmed by somebody else, and he had great difficulties finding his own subjectivity again, re-encountering the emotional gaze of the film. He also points out that he realised that it was more difficult to make a documentary than a fiction film, because it was harder to shape the images into a coherent and logical order.

Nevertheless, despite its creator's warnings (fortunately unnecessary as the problems he mentions are not evident in the final cut), *Tokyo-Ga* is an excellent work became his third and most complex filmed diary, after the two cited above.

After his *filmic visit* to Tokyo, in the form of an intimate travelogue on the trail of Ozu⁴, Wenders went back

Tokyo-Ga (Wim Wenders, 1985)





Tokio-Ga (Wim Wenders, 1985)

to Germany. It was the return home, to Berlin and to the angels that lived there before (*Wings of Desire*, 1987) and after (*Faraway, So Close!* 1993) the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Before returning to his Germanic roots he answered Ozu's call (as confirmed in the commentary, written by his own hand, that flies over and punctuates the images), although while on the adventure he found himself, like the characters in Sofia Coppola's movie, lost in translation as he tried to capture the Japanese landscape, populated with question marks that are difficult for a foreign gaze to decode.

So, as in all his films, it is the story of a journey; in this case, a journey to a city –but also through time, into the past, in search of one of the greatest and most distinguished names in film history– with the intention of finding traces of the venerated master in contemporary Japan, whose paradigm is Tokyo, a chaotic, strange and vast metropolis with its agglomerations and contradictions.

Although in the commentary he denies that it is a pilgrimage to the *holy places*, Pedraza and López Gandia (1986:7) state flatly that “it doesn't matter what he says: this is a pilgrimage, which doesn't even leave out the visit to the grave of the master, the weeping of his chosen ones, and the exhibition of relics (Ozu's stopwatch, religiously preserved by one of the members of his crew)”. In this sense, *Tokyo-Ga* is an extremely personal approach that breathes an explicit devotion, not without its tenderness, to Ozu and what he represents, including the Tokyo of the past shown in his films.

Wenders was driven by a desire to uncover the spirit and atmosphere so characteristic of the filmic portraits of his favourite filmmaker, and to do this he wandered through the city that is Ozu's Tokyo thirties later, taking as his point of reference *Tokyo Story*, some of whose images open and close *Tokyo-Ga* (specifically, the images at the beginning and end of the film). But the Tokyo that Ozu shows in his films, particularly those made after the war, is nothing more than a ghost. Indeed, it was in the process of disappearing, rapidly mutating: Ozu does no more than tell us, through his family stories, of the decline of traditional Japan. And what Wenders finds in its place is a modern, chaotic and artificial world whose ultimate meaning is summed up in the Chinese character written, as an epitaph, on Ozu's grave by his own request: ‘MU’, which means the space between things; nothingness or the void.

This is why the film exudes from every pore a melancholy sensation of lost paradise. It is an elegy to the twilight of an era: its spirit has been lost in the vertiginous upheaval that has shaken contemporary Japan, a loss that was already foreshadowed in Ozu's images. But the spaces and moods of Tokyo that we can identify in Ozu's films are not irretrievable solely because Japan has changed, but also because cinema itself has changed. Telling simple stories of life from the perspective of Ozu's harmonious and placid *classicism* may no longer be possible in the contemporary context of the wild, frenetic pace of the modern city (a Tokyo dominated by skyscrapers, neon lights and colourful, luminous advertising signs), where the postmodern culture of simulation reigns (epitomised by the imitation food in restaurant display windows) and there is a asphyxiating inflation of images. Because of the inexorable passage of time, the Tokyo that appears in Ozu's films, perhaps more mythical than real, no longer exists, nor does the spirit that embodies his work (Chisu Ryu, his long-time actor, is recognised in the street by a group of women not because he was the protagonist in almost all of his films, but because he had recently appeared in a television programme). Wenders' commentary is an unequivocal testimony: “The more the reality of Tokyo struck me as a torrent of unkind, impersonal, threatening, yes even inhuman images, the greater

and more powerful it became in my mind the image of the loving, ordered world, of the mythical city of Tokyo that I knew from the films of Yojiro Ozu; perhaps that was what no longer existed: a view which still could achieve order in a world out of order. A view which could still render the world transparent. Perhaps such a view is no longer possible today, not even for Ozu, were he still alive”.

It is curious, although I do not believe it is accidental, that when the camera leaves the urban centre and we sense it turning towards the periphery, towards nature, it seems to reencounter the languid tranquillity of Ozu’s films, which we can also still find in the manner and gestures of the people he worked with, both the aforementioned Ryu or his director of photography Yuharu Atsuta, who in various interviews offer their perspective on the figure of their maestro and mentor. The meetings with these two take place in locations far away from the everyday noise and safe from the aggressive invasion of the audiovisual universe, for which the omnipresent screens appearing in *Tokyo-Ga* are a clear metaphor. These locations look rather like Ozu’s scenery, starting with the presence of the traditional Japanese house. It is a contrast evident throughout Wenders’ film: modern city versus tradition and nature; the contemporary artificial images in opposition to Ozu’s universe, replete with authenticity; in short, the Tokyo of today compared with the Tokyo of yesterday. These counterpoints are underlined by the music: percussive, metallic and sometimes dissonant when it accompanies the cold and superficial scenes and moments that reflect modern Japanese life, which are reduced to a melancholy *leitmotif*, which is repeated in the film’s credits and in the fragments featuring its privileged interlocutors, Ryu and Atsuta, and which establishes a dialogue with the music in Ozu’s *Tokyo Story*.

On the other hand, as noted above, the whole documentary is replete with reflections on cinema in general, and especially on the work of the Japanese filmmaker, reflections that Wenders spells out very clearly. An example of this is how the interview with his loyal collaborator Atsuta turns into a splendid lesson on his visual style and work methods. The last images of this conversation invite us, perhaps unintentionally, to reflect on the limits (which in my view are ethical limits) on what can be shown (alluding back to that mournful elegy on the agony and death of another filmmaker, his friend Nicholas Ray, that is *Lightning over Water*, [1980]), those boundaries that cannot be crossed without falling into obscene exhibitionism. How long can an image be maintained without creating an atmosphere that is unbearable for the spectator, and without being accused of a lack of discretion? This is the question that one asks after witnessing and participating in such a great display of



Tokyo-Ga (Wim Wenders, 1985)

intimacy, when one sees, close up and in a dramatic *crescendo*, how emotion begins to seize Atsuta and tears run down his face, while he evokes his “cinematic father”, until finally he begs to be left alone, and the camera seems to hesitate as if it doesn’t know where to go, and finally very timidly it rises slowly until the sorrowful Atsuta is off camera, a movement that ends with an abrupt scene cut. It seems as if we had entered the realm of melodrama. Immediately afterwards and without a break in continuity, this image links, as if trying to find a kinship with them, into the final images of *Tokyo Story*, melodramatic in nature and racked with melancholy⁵, which also conclude Wenders’ film, in a perfect, circular closure.

Epilogue

Although *Tokyo-Ga* is not as recognized as many others in his filmography, perhaps because it is a documentary or an essay film (situated in that vast and fertile territory of non-fiction), it has the unmistakable stamp of the Wenders universe: its images –as if they were taken from a moving car, in the rain, effects that recur so often in his films– are the result of the most powerful of his gazes. A gaze that is cast onto a landscape that plays an unquestionable leading role in the film: Tokyo, with Ozu’s figure in the background (or perhaps in the foreground). And the gaze stops, captivated by the figure of a train, which is something he shares with Ozu, because according to

IT IS THE STORY OF A JOURNEY; IN THIS CASE, A JOURNEY TO A CITY –BUT ALSO THROUGH TIME, INTO THE PAST, IN SEARCH OF ONE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST DISTINGUISHED NAMES IN FILM HISTORY



Tokyo-Ga (Wim Wenders, 1985)

Wenders there isn't a single film in his filmography where at least one train doesn't appear. It is a powerful icon which in his films symbolically represents the medium that connects the traditional and the modern, although in *Tokyo-Ga* more than one critic has seen the trains passing one another incessantly in a constant and rhythmic motion as nothing more than beautiful multicolour serpents playing a hypnotic visual game before our eyes.

As I suggested earlier, this film is a travelogue (indeed, the film's subtitle is "a filmed diary by Wim Wenders"), and therefore marked by an intensely personal tone. This is confirmed by the German filmmaker's voice-over and its subjectivisation of the film's images, which, on the other hand, merely aim to show the more or less trite reality of Japan in the 1980s. These images often become pure visual fragments, the product of a gaze that questions its own position. Wenders himself declares at the beginning of the film: "If only it were possible to film like that [...] like when you open your eyes sometimes. Just to look, without wanting to prove anything". It is difficult to find a definition that better expresses the intentions of the film.

Wenders tries to recover the images of his idolised filmmaker, an operation that proves impossible, and in his failure he pays him a straightforward and emotive tribute. And as he does so, especially while filming the vestiges that come to life through the recollections of Ozu's two closest colleagues, he wanders around with his camera through a city that is nothing but layers of information, above all visual information, hypnotic movements (produced both by those metallic balls in the Pachinko arcades and by the countless golf balls hit day and night

in enclosed courses) and an accumulation of television images, beginning with the image of John Wayne talking in Japanese in a John Ford western. In a surrealistic tour of a distant foreign culture (in spite of its relentless process of Westernization, or in some cases, paradoxically, because of it), the tireless traveller that is Wenders confronts the empire of signs that is Tokyo, behind which only emptiness is visible.

Through its images, sometimes fascinating, sometimes surprising but always gripping, *Tokyo-Ga*, like all of Wenders' films, speaks of desires and journeys taken to realise them: in this case, specifically, the desire to dive into the ashes of time in order to bear witness to the universe of Ozu, of his unique figure and his long legacy. Of trains and stations along the way, a primordial image in his films. Of cities and highways. Of change and movement. Of the image and its phantasmal character. Of the nature of film and its complex, paradoxical and ambiguous relationship with the world. Of memory and passage of time. Of solitude and its abysses. Of past lives that leave their marks and also their scars. And above all, through the echoes awakened by 'MU', *Tokyo-Ga* speaks of absence. ■

Notes

* Editor's Note: This essay was originally published in July 2011 under the Spanish title "*Tokio-Ga*: Un viaje en primera persona (un diario filmado sobre la ausencia)". The English version was translated by Maja Milanovich and revised by Martin Boyd in September 2013.

¹ The theme of travel, understood in a very broad sense, is primordial in Wenders' films. I have discussed this idea previously in the journal *Nosferatu*, and in the book *Paris, Texas* written with Antonio Santamarina.

- 2 See <<http://www.wim-wenders.com>>. For Wenders, the commentary should be heard in the language of each country (this does not include the interviews, etc., which are left in their original version). He dubbed the versions in French and English with his own voice, but was unable to do so with the Spanish version.
- 3 At the beginning of the eighties, Wenders lived in the United States, where, due to the hard and conflictive experience constituted by the interminable project of *Hammett* (1978-1982), he suffered a particularly tumultuous period that culminated with the exercise in self-exorcism that was *The State of Things* (1982). In this context of what might be described as professional crisis and creative reflection, and as the consequence of the crossroads at which he found himself, arose these documentary works, which were more than mere assignments.
- 4 There are other directors who have cultivated the travel genre in search of traces of a cinematic past, such as José Luis Guerín, who, in his fascinating work *Innisfree* (1990), travels to Ireland, to the mythical places where *The Quiet Man* (John Ford, 1952) was shot, to enter into a dialogue with John Ford's Homeric epic.
- 5 The first of these is a woman crying, which establishes a perfect visual and symbolic rhyme.

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Visual Architecture in the Action Film

Jordi Revert

1. The main reason for this essay was the bibliographical research that preceded it. The synergies of academic study and film analysis have determined a space for the action film which, if not residual, is at least marginal and ignored by scholars who have preferred to dedicate their works to Jean Renoir rather than John Frankenheimer, or to Orson Welles rather than Peter Yates. Manny Farber point this out in a different time and context, but the reflection suggests that the panorama hasn't changed much: "The saddest feature of cinema today is to see how long-disdained action film directors gradually disappear while less gifted directors like De Sica and Zinnemann continue to fascinate the critics" (FARBER, 2004:394). In a certain way, the intention is to overcome a kind of academically based classism, one that has relegated this particular film genre to a lower level ever since it became associated with mass entertainment and/or *cinema of attractions*. This tendency, more or less perpetuated, has allowed the intrinsic complexity of innumerable filmic texts located within the coordinates of the action genre, inside the boundaries of what is often hypocritically defined as commercial cinema (and therefore dismissed as object of study to the detriment of the clearly authorial works produced therein), to be excluded from a critical

historiography in which it has no place. It is not the objective of this article to patch up holes, or to call for the extension of the aforementioned synergies into fields of study never or seldom explored. Rather, it is to draw attention to this largely unjustified absence and, most of all, to propose models which, in a modest and not very delimited way, invite us to reflect on the question, and perhaps even to engage in a more thorough analysis that is less burdened by the complexities generic classifications.

2. The relationship and internal cohesion between the those sequences that best synthesize the essence of a film -and, depending on the case, of its director- is, together with or even ahead of the primary determining feature of a style, its basic conglomeration of meanings. I am referring to functionality and immersion, which are treated with emphasis on the connection established between the spectator and what is happening on the screen. I also refer to the spatial selection and geographical configuration that is capable of creating (or not) a specific scene, based on which it will achieve a greater or lesser degree of ubiquity. In short, it is a question of determining the visual architecture that structures the most defining and representative sequences of a specific example and/or action genre, a concept that is closely connected with the editing process and which is illustrated in the subdivision established by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (BORDWELL and THOMPSON, 1993:250) when they speak of the special relationships between a shot A and shot B. Without dismissing the other areas of election and control that comprise the so-called dimensions of editing (graphic, rhythmic and temporal), I will highlight the importance of spatial relationships in the functionality and immersive effectiveness of the sequences analysed.

3. In the interests of greater productivity, and guided merely by a sense of pragmatism, the corpus I will analyse will be that of the set piece, considering this the unit and statement that best synthesises the essences and meanings of the action genre. In terms of the aspects involved, those that interest me most for my purpose here are those referring to: a) the spectator's sensation of immersion in the scene, achieved through the relationships established between shots and spaces, with a special focus on ubiquity; b) the specific characteristics that give the chosen set piece a personality distinct from other examples of the genre, whether or not this results in an authorial signature; c) its spatial construction and geographical coherence in the process of meaning production, as well as the degree of skill with which these spaces are combined and the self-imposed limitations. It goes without saying that, semiotic intentions aside, it is necessary first to expose the clichés and rash preconceptions regarding the genre studied here, which are partly the legacy of a critical literature generally resistant to acknowledge the depth that the genre often displays.

Deconstructing the clichés

In general, action films have been subject to a laxer criticism that has taken little time to analyse the set piece as a basic structure of the grammar of a film. This has something to do with the categorisation of *minor genre* assumed almost unconsciously and automatically (which of course doesn't silence interesting voices in the field, such is Diego Salado's), which results not only in the practical exclusion of this analytical corpus from publications with a cinephile target readership, but also in the propagation of the clichés used to dismiss the question as swiftly as possible.¹ For example, the expression *video clip montage* is often used in reference to many titles and directors, but obviously this can't -or shouldn't be- used without distinction to refer to the flashy, epileptic edition of *Man on Fire* (Tony Scott, 2004) and the thunderous hyper-visibility of *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (Michael Bay, 2009). Nor could it be used to equate the immersive experience offered by Paul Greengrass' jittery, rapid-fire montage in *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004), with that provided by M. Night Shyamalan's unstable sequence shot in *The Last Airbender* (2009).

Each of these techniques each has a distinct configuration and materiality, was devised within a different set of parameters and requires a differentiated study adapted to its own particular characteristics. To this end, in the following sections I posit two contrapositions, with the intention of offering examples of the idiosyncrasies of the action piece and exploring its functionality in view of the aforementioned factors.

Contrapositions 1

The relationship between geographical space and visual architecture is extremely intimate in the film *The International* (Tom Tykwer, 2008), especially in its climax scene, a shoot-out in the Guggenheim Museum in New York.² Tykwer himself highlighted the importance of the architecture in the conception of his work: "this movie also looks at the role of architecture in our lives and how much it influences emotions. Expensive modern architecture has changed the skylines of so

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The International (Tom Tykwer, 2008)

many big cities. It's fascinating architecture: it seems driven by a desire to exude clarity with its lines, yet at the same time it difficulties hard to read" (WIGLEY, 2009: 47). It would be quite reasonable to attribute this idea to the aforementioned sequence in the famous New York museum, which is a highly complex exercise in planning, visual structuring and editing which results in a set piece that is shrewd in its execution, and violent and dirty in its mood. The passage starts with a demarcation, in a single crane-shot, of the space and boundaries within which the action will take place, upon the entrance of the main character, Lou Salinger (Clive Owen). He is accompanied by other agents who, together with Salinger, are searching for a possible key-witness to uncover a plot involving corruption on a global scale. Salinger enters the lobby and keeps walking while raising his gaze to examine the interior of the building, a movement that is followed by the camera and that establishes the context with visual economy.

A few shots later, and before the shoot-out starts, we witness an example of a skilful use of space and of the possibilities of the setting. In the scene, Salinger and one of his companions are hiding behind one of the walls spying at their target, who is sitting on a bench next to the consultant from the international bank that they are investigating. When the latter leaves, the potential witness, played by Bryan F. O'Byrne, stands up, redirects his gaze as he walks and stops to stare thoughtfully at the enormous hanging crystals in the centre of the building. It is a shot that adopts his point of view and allows us to see Salinger's and his companion's reflections, and in the reverse shots we can see that they realise they have been discovered. This set of shots

maximises the perspective of each character and establishes a sense of ubiquity for the spectator that is maintained throughout this sequence: the audience may be disturbed by the fast pace and the sordid nature of the events, but it will always be from *inside* the images of the scene, immersed in a geographical logic that will prevent them from losing track of what is happening. The same occurs once the spectators are plunged into the heat of the action, where the keys of visual perspective prove to be vital. At one moment, we see a confrontation in the setting described above, but with the positions reversed: Salinger remains hidden in the background behind a corner of the wall, while now in the place he was spying before is one of the mercenaries who have burst into the museum, shooting at him. In the

exchange of gunfire and of camera shots, the field of vision of each character remains clear, information possessed by both the spectator and the characters themselves. However, this changes in the next shot: a high angle shot shows Salinger crouching down in his trench-corner and also reveals the lower floor of the Guggenheim, where we can see the advancing positions of the other two armed men. In this moment, the spectator is privileged with information that is unknown to the impromptu hero of the movie, a strategy that is repeated almost immediately, when Salinger catches sight of the (presumably) dead hand of the witness holding a gun and decides to move forward to reach it. But first, he turns around to offer a calming gesture to one of a museum visitor in a state of panic. The spectator's privilege of information over the character is repeated when we see, in the background, a figure crossing from one side to another to hide in a different corner without Salinger noticing. Immediately thereafter, we see our hero leaving his shelter and running for the gun, dodging the enemy fire on his way. But just as he is about to take the gun, a fleeting close-up shows us the hand holding it react and dodge Salinger's movement. In this way, Tykwer reveals that the character O'Byrne is not dead as we thought, and now he comes back into the action, this time to become an ally.

In the sequences described, the director always indicates an explicit desire to clarify the location of his characters on the screen, but also, and equally importantly, the location of the spectator who, depending on the needs of the action in each case, may be given more information than the characters have. Both patterns will be repeated throughout the sequence in order to establish

a dimension of ubiquity that is present both in a coherent, almost geometrical visual structuring and in the frames and the skilful use of every space and element of the setting.

I will now turn to an opposite example. The ending of *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010) contains in turn up to four different endings established in different dream layers underlying the dream induced during a flight taken by the main characters (in theory, the real layer). In what would be equivalent to the third layer in this set of Russian dolls, the characters, played by Leonardo DiCaprio et al., seek to infiltrate a snowy mountain fortress guarded by a small army, with the aim of breaking into its vault. Outdoors, the expedition is divided into various groups and Eames, the character played by Tom Hardy, must do whatever he can to distract their enemies and keep them away from the fortress. As a result, various lines within the same dream layer intersect, and Nolan needs only a few shots to introduce a chase scene on skis reminiscent of the one in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Lewis Gilbert, 1977). However, if we look closely to the shots that precede it, a succession of shots only a few seconds long is enough to provoke disorientation and a loss of ubiquity: in a lateral close-up, we see Eames talking to Cobb (DiCaprio) by intercom; in the background, in a frontal shot between the trees, a vehicle arrive with enemies who spot Eames; after further intercutting with other plotlines in progress, we see these enemies shoot at Eames; the next shot shows us the marksman

on top of the vehicle, shooting off-camera to the right, i.e., towards the same position that Tom Hardy occupied in previous shots, breaking the sense of the visual axis established between the two characters; we go back to Eames, who moves quickly to find shelter from the gunfire and rises to leave the shot on the right; the marksman makes signs to other soldiers to go after the fugitive; and we see Eames jumping over a hill from the left on skis, the jump that initiates the chase. The problem that drags down this sequence lies both in a lack of consistent match cuts -all the actions, even though they occur at different and/or opposite points, move from left to right- and in the chaotic distribution



The International (Tom Tykwer, 2008)

of the few characters that appear, which fails to describe with visual logic the exchange of gunfire or the moment when Tom Hardy's character decides to escape on skis; his appearance in the last shot on the left side of the screen is as surprising as it is hasty, as he flees down a hill that we didn't even know existed because it hadn't been shown to us before. In this sense, this scene is far from Nolan's best sequences as an action film director, such as the bank robbery in the opening scene of *The Dark Knight* (2008) skilfully organized into three phases, also visual, or the fight in the rotating hallway in *Inception*, in which audience engagement is ensured through a single shot that gives room for the



The International (Tom Tykwer, 2008)

real source of fascination: the suspension of the laws of physics as the main conditioning factor of the hand-to-hand combat between the two opponents.

Contrapositions 2

Indeed, the immersive experience offered to the spectator in the rotating hallway scene is not far from that offered by the most interesting moments in *The Last Airbender*. In this film, based on Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko's American *anime* produced and broadcasted by Nickelodeon, director M. Night Shyamalan opted for a highly uncommon method of depicting the action: the camera as a fluid and almost uninterrupted companion, with minimal editing mediation. Consider, for example, one of the first fight scenes in the film: the main characters Aang (Noah Ringer), Sokka (Jackson Rathbone) and Katara (Nicola Peltz) find themselves surrounded by masters of the Fire Nation. The confrontation has a clearly defined geographical centre, occupied by the three aforementioned characters, around which is arranged a ring of enemies. When the fighting starts, the camera begins a light rotation over this gravitational centre, offering different angles on the action. It is strategically placed behind one of the masters of the Fire Nation, and it is then that a stone hits the soldier's head from behind. At this

moment, the action expands beyond the defined centre and ring and opens the range to take in the people of the Earth Nation who, up until then, had been passive spectators, too afraid to interfere. The shot thus leaves the centre and moves to follow the attacks exchanged between the masters and the villagers, following the elements that they control and leading to new points of attention. For example: the soldier taken by surprise from behind turns around to counterattack; enraged, he throws a blaze of fire at the villager, and the camera follows it until it hits a wall that rises suddenly out of the ground; when the camera breaks through the cloud of smoke caused by the impact of fire and wall, we see the villager who has raised this wall, thereby initiating a new direction for the action. What follows is a succession of comings and goings between two concentric areas of action, attacks being showed without losing the continuity of the sequence shot and ultimately leading back to the starting point.³

On the opposite extreme we find action filmed with self-conscious hyper-visibility of the image, a painstaking maximisation in editing that offers the gaze a different kind of immersion, directly connected to the visual frenzy and, occasionally, to the simulation of a first-hand experience. In *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007), the last two films

in Robert Ludlum's trilogy, director Robert Greengrass⁴ explores this visual planning in some of the set pieces that best represent the cinematic saga. The chase scenes in Moscow and New York at the end of these films, for example, are paradigmatic both of Greengrass' rapid-fire montage and aesthetics of hyper-visible realism sustained by various strategies. One of these, without doubt, is of the jittery camera or *shaky cam*, which is used even more lavishly inside the car driven by Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) than in the shots that visually situate the progress of the chase. In these moments the shaking camera responds and contributes to Bourne's lack of control, adopting positions and rapid movements that could be those of a hysterical passenger or of Bourne himself, supplanting his gaze in the brief glances he shoots at the rear-view mirror. The other aspect that supports the submersion is the conception of both chases as experiences that are not only essentially unpleasant, but also clearly violent, in which the audience must experience the impact as if they were inside the vehicle or direct victims of a hit and run. This is how the producer Frank Marshall explains it in one of the documentaries about the production of *The Bourne Supremacy*: "Dan Bradley had the idea of putting the audience inside the car with Bourne, so they could experience the chase from the inside."⁵ And Bradley himself adds: "...the idea is every camera's moving. It's all loose or hand-held." In this sense, the camera is in constant motion and is shaken forcefully when inside the car, next to the character in the moments of the chase. Outside the car, the camera becomes a *crash cam*, i.e., a camera that occupies the position of the headlight that is smashed in a crash or that is placed at the point of impact, adopting the consequent synergy of movement behind it. In effect, the aim is to render the scene with a physical harshness beyond the usual, imposing the direct impact of the collision on the audience through planning and editing strategies.

Epilogue: The real video clip aesthetic

In such a generic and succinct study, it is difficult to cover such a broad field to reach any specific conclusions. The only reasonable conclusion, perhaps, would be to recognize the heterogeneity of the systems of representation in the action film, and the impossibility of standardising visual procedures and strategies when involving the spectator. This is why it is unfeasible to describe the genre using a single analytical criterion, or to proclaim the video-clip aesthetic to be the ultimate outcome of any maximisation of cinematographic montage. In other words, to use an ill-conceived generalisation that often ignores the fact that this aesthetic doesn't exist, and, if it did, is far too vague to be meaningful. The possibilities of the video clip are as wide as

the audiovisual spectrum itself, with all its consequent and almost infinite combinations. Therefore, of the terms discussed here the closest one to a certain degree of truth can be found in a film that is fully conscious of this inexhaustible multiplicity. *Crank* (Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, 2006) is the impossible paradigm for this kind of work, a rare example that challenges all the habitual narrative constructions (by approximation, the role model would be the well-known saga of video games *Grand Theft Auto*, where the action is constructed on the way, without even a synopsis to guide the narrative) to carry out an unpredictable and stimulating exploration of audiovisual possibilities. A scene that synthesizes this consciousness shows Chev Chelios (Jason Statham) running frantically after finding out that if his adrenaline level drops, the poison that has been injected into his blood will kill him. While on the run, Chelios calls a doctor friend on his mobile phone to ask him for a solution: at one moment we see him running down some hallways, but we can also see the doctor on the other end of the line, whose projection fleetingly appears on the walls that flank Chelios. The levels of representation of both sides of the line are overlapped and superimposed in a single place that could be that of a visual alternative of the future: of the real video clip aesthetic, i.e., of multiplicity as the true common ground for in-depth exploration. ■

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Notes

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1 Another topic for exploration would be where the frontiers between analysis and criticism begin and end, the boundaries between two fields that are discussed in the section *(Dis)agreements* in this issue, with regard to debate over the state of criticism in Spain. In any case, criticism usually treats the set piece superficially, in mere praise or description, while analysis rarely enters into these kinds of discussion.

2 The scene required a couple of weeks and a high level of destruction, making it impossible to shoot it in the original location -only a few shots of the characters entering the building were filmed there. Instead, the location was reconstructed in sixteen weeks out of an old locomotive warehouse in Babelsberg, near Berlin, with similar dimensions.

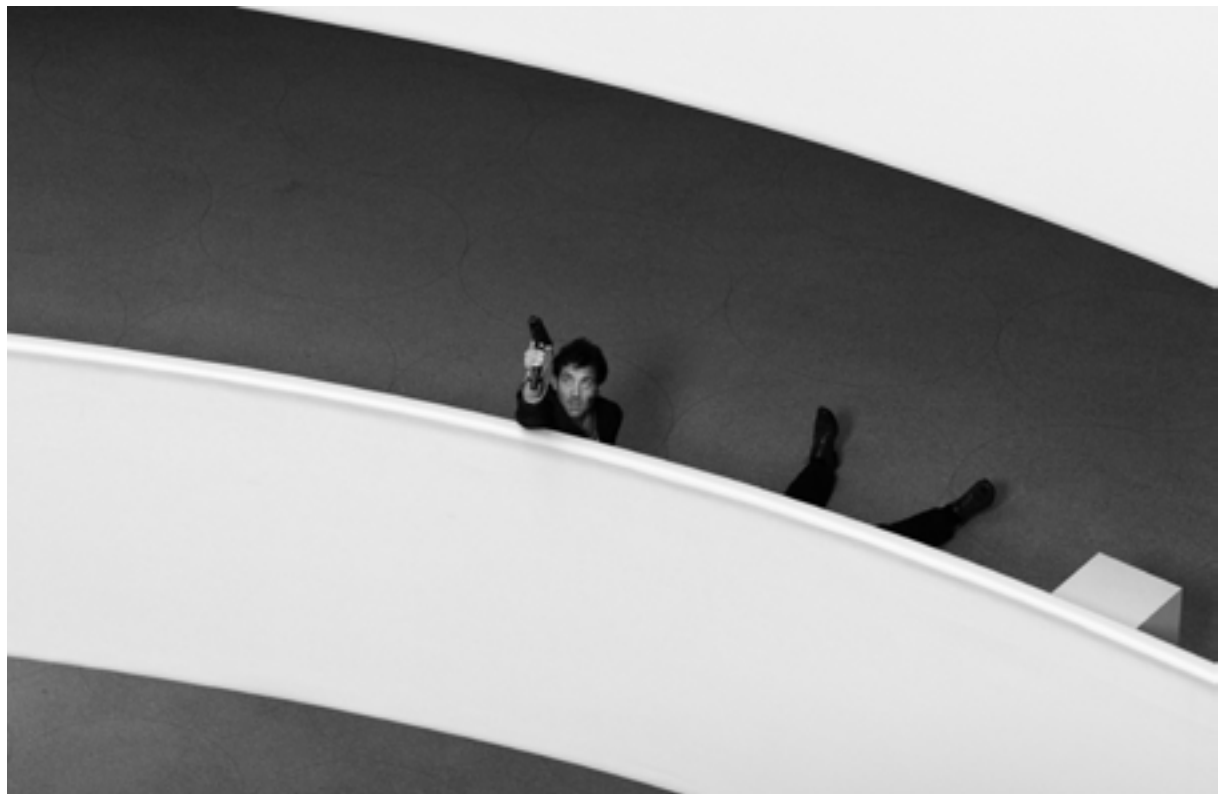
3 The particular way in which Shyamalan decided to shoot the fight scenes extends to other sequences in the film; for example, the scene where Prince Zukko (Dev Patel) practices his fire-handling skills. From afar, the camera films the bodies in combat from waist up, and moves between some very narrow frames, never losing Prince Zukko as its visual centre. Later, a

change of shot leaves the rest of the action to take place in the background, at a distance.

4 It should be noted that, although Greengrass was the film's director, he delegated the shooting of the action scenes to the second unit, headed by Dan Bradley, who, for example, was the main person responsible for the New York car chase scene that closes *The Bourne Ultimatum*, which I analyse in this article.

5 The declarations made by Marshall and Bradley can be found in the documentary *Crash Cam: Running at Full Speed on the Streets of Moscow*, in the DVD edition of *The Bourne Supremacy*.

The International (Tom Tykwer, 2008)



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Looking at the Little Events: the Case of Chris Marker and David Perlov

Marta Montiano

The cinema continues to be in contact with the world. As Jean-Louis Comolli once said, the *mise en scene* of the documentary appears to be the strongest link that keeps the world and the cinema connected. It also gives the impression that the most direct way to approach things is from everyday film practice, filmmaking day after day, capturing the simplest things, sometimes in a domestic context. Some manifestations of the contemporary documentary film are identified with the idea of filmmaking as an individual everyday practice, a dynamic posited by Alexandre Astruc's *camera-stylo* (the camera as a pen) and an activity to which Chris Marker has also made reference: "We possess the means –and this is something new– for a form to filmmaking that is intimate, solitary. The process of making films with oneself, the way a painter or a writer works, no longer has to be necessarily experimental" (ORTEGA and WEINRICHTER, 2006: 187). The meaning of this would thus be to see and understand filmmaking as an individual job of collecting a series of *live* snapshots of reality, a collection of images which, as Marker suggests, quoting from *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shônagon, "make the heart beat faster".

Through the recording of everyday activities, some filmmakers have sought to establish a connection with the world. As if by paying the attention to the closest things and the simplest movements, it would be possible to see these things for the first time. Film images rediscover the world for us and function as a revelation. Filming would be an everyday activity so that 'cinema' comes to be considered a verb, whereby the activity is almost more important than the theme or content. However, the images that result from this kind of film practice are usually characterised by great force. This would suggest that Chris Marker's, Jonas Mekas' or David Perlov's filmography is full of images pregnant with significance, whether random portraits or filming of *down time*. The desire of the image is a question that Marker raises at the end of his film *Sans soleil* [Sunless] (Chris Marker, 1983), when he returns to the quote with which the film opens: the image of three blond children staring at the camera, i.e., staring at him. The filmmaker's voice constantly asks himself, asking us: "The trembling shot under the force of the wind that was hitting us on the cliff, everything that had been selected to arrange and that best reflected what I was seeing in that moment; why was I keeping it at arms' length, at the end of the zoom, up to its last twenty-fourth of a second?" What is the relationship that the filmmaker establishes with these children? It is connecting relationship with the image in which the object of desire is the image of others, the collective present, "not turned in on oneself, but on the other, the others", as Oliver Kohn puts it (ORTEGA and WEINRICHTER, 2006: 109).

Observation as work and routine

Chris Marker's alter ego in *Sans soleil* embarks on a journey in search of the mundane, of the collectable movement whose simplicity contains all the power of the cinematographic image. A similar attitude can be identified in the work of Israeli David Perlov, which is made up of two parts: *Diary* (1973-1983) and *Revised Diary* (1990-1999). What is fascinating about his daily film practice is how from behind the camera he attentively observes an everyday movement (for example, a man sweeping the street, or a window opening) and feels the desire to see it better and to collect that movement in the form of an image. A reflection on the question of the visual offered by writer and critic John Berger is in close alignment with these images of Perlov's. In his book *About Looking*, on the topic of the painting of Gustave Courbet, Berger writes that in Courbet's work, "everything is interpreted with wonder: wonder because looking, which is something free of rules, consists in being constantly amazed" (BERGER, 2001: 136). Perlov's films are open to wonder; they allow themselves to be amazed and set out to look from the very begin-

ning. His *Dairies* involve embarking on filmmaking from zero: buying a modest camera, leaning out of the window and recording repeated everyday routines as if they were being looked at for the first time. The images that result are gazes on the world of an almost primal nature. In May 1973, Perlov bought a camera and began his everyday film practice. His first shot, taken from a window of his home, already hints at the framework of what would become a task of observing the movements and actions of everyday activities, detached from mere narrative or dramatic interest. The exercise of these *Diaries* is based on the activity of observing, which Perlov himself admits has become the key to his work and his way of life. These images report his impressions of *the infra-ordinary*: the movement of the traffic in the street, the movements of people walking by under his window, the everyday activities of his wife and daughters, the collection of faces of friends who come to visit him. The simplest movements draw the attention of the filmmaker, who feels the desire to capture and preserve them. He does the same with the recording of everyday street sounds; the sound of a bus horn or of a gate rattled by a playing child.



Filming life is important, says Perlov

For the director, observation becomes a routine and a game. On the one hand, observing and filming are daily practices that the filmmaker finds it necessary to perform with a certain regularity. As is explained in Perlov's voice, managing to film one interesting movement sparks the desire to "film more and more". The filmmaker says of these images: "I want to start filming on my own and for myself. Professional filmmaking has ceased to appeal to me. I am looking for something different. I want to get

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closer to the everyday. Most of all, I want to do it anonymously. It takes time to learn how to do it". This routine needs a certain degree of practice to be able to film the movements that best reveal their vitality. On the other hand, the practice of observing becomes a game, consisting of establishing a fixed frame (which may be the window of the filmmaker's own home) and collecting the movements which, by leaving chance to do its work, can

be captured within that frame's boundaries. This game of capturing the vitality of small events in the street, the flow of life in the streets, the movements visible from the window, the images produced more or less by chance, the different frames that can be established, recalls the urban symphonies that made portraits of different cities: *Man with a Movie Camera* (Chelovek s kino-apparatom, Dziga Vertov, 1929), *À propos de Nice* (Jean Vigo, 1930) or *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt, Walter Ruttmann, 1927). The game of spying on the outside world also provokes the desire in the person filming to record the movements happening on the other side of the window, inside the domestic space.

In his book *About Looking*, John Berger describes an experience that illustrates the main characteristics of the visual approach to the everyday taken in David Perlov's films. Berger explains that, occasionally, when he drives home, a closed level crossing brings him to a stop next to a beautiful green field (BERGER, 2001: 184). During a pause of a few minutes, chance offers him the opportunity to observe what is happening there. This privileged place for observation a short distance from his house and, nevertheless, he seldom visits it. Berger's explanation for this makes reference to a notion of the event in which space and time unite. The *events* that occur in the field are similar to those listed by Georges Perec in his book of short works *La infra-ordinaire*; i.e., habitual, everyday events that have nothing spectacular about them. They are also along the same lines as those events recorded by Perlov's camera from his window: "Two birds chasing one another, a cloud crossing the sun and changing the colour of the green" (BERGER, 2001: 184). These little events acquire a special meaning because they occur in those minutes when Berger is forced to stop, or during the space-time in which Perlov leans out of the window, a camera in hand.

The mode of perception described here by Berger coincides in many respects with the observational images developed in Perlov's diaries, with the window as the paradigmatic and privileged place. There is a moment when the filmmaker proposes a game around the gaze. From a window that looks out onto a courtyard of a dwelling in Paris, a camera leans out and establishes some boundaries inside the image, a re-frame configured by the lines that form an inner wall, the floor, an outer wall. The game involves lingering on the filming of these boundaries and hoping (trusting) that *something* will happen. The smallest event will be recorded and the filmmaker will consider it a stroke of fortune and an image of great value and a power that is almost revelatory. The images that will occur inside these boundaries will be nothing more than the steps of a pair of high heels, or the legs of a man running. Perlov will comment about this image that, far from any dramatic or narrative interest, what is interesting is not the reason for running, or the destination of the runner, but the image itself of a man running. The frame established by Perlov's game is the cinematographic image that forms the basis of the events that occur inside it. The frame-image, like the field, not only frames the events, but also, as Berger suggests, *contains* them. Suddenly, what had started as just one more experience of everyday observation, says Berger, "opens in its centre and gives birth to a happiness which is instantly recognisable as your own. The field that you are standing before appears to have the same proportions as your own life" (BERGER, 2001: 188). This happiness that Berger describes is something like the David Perlov's stroke of fortune when, without expecting it, an event slips into the frame he has imposed.

The act of collecting

The idea of collection seems an appropriate concept for examining the way in which the perception and filming of daily life is structured. The things seen in this kind of filming are described as a series, an unfinished list of impressions, or a collection of sketches. The case of the description of still-life is especially significant. In *La infra-ordinaire*, Georges Perec counts the objects found on his routine walk: "on the side, Italian furniture or Japanese lighting shops, sellers of engravings, of art books, of Indian jewellery, of film posters, of any kind of pseudo-antique or pseudo-modern thing in the style of yesteryear, today or tomorrow: it is there where, for couple of francs, one can obtain a tin of food that contains a little Paris air, a pencil sharpener shaped like a paddle steamer, or like an old gramophone or like... Centre Georges-Pompidou, a vintage school notebook with an antiquated multiplication table on its back cover" (PEREC, 2009: 37).

This accumulation of images, although it seems to offer no *profound* knowledge of reality, is established as an

image pregnant with significance. When Perlov or Marker visit a city, they see things like, in Perec's words, "a very dignified gentleman running in a squall with his bowler hat on, [or] a small girl sitting between the paws of one of the lion statues of Nelson's Column". This idea of collection gives rise to a notion of a new kind of gaze. In his meticulous journey, Georges Perec suggests the idea that the discovery of new locations and challenges for the gaze is something that revolutionises the mode of perception of the gazer. The filmmaker of daily happenings is dedicated to recording what he finds around him; the people, the movements. What is the interest in filming these things? In *Sans soleil* Chris Marker explains: "He liked the fragility of those moments suspended in time. Memories whose only function is to be leaving behind nothing more than memories. He wrote: I have been around the world several times and now only trivialities still interest me".

The film, which becomes an essay on memory, begins with the practice described here: the recording of things which, apparently insignificant, produce a kind of revelation when turned into a cinematographic image. It is about translating the lived experience into an image, which gives rise to an archive or collection of images of the world, people and beautiful things. Marker admits that, even though he had wanted to make a film about the economic miracle in Japan, he ended up filming something more direct; the celebrations in the street, and recording the sound, the intensity of the dances, conveying to us his presence and the presence of the people portrayed. These "things that make the heart beat faster" have this effect because they are recorded and turned into a cinematographic image, and on some occasion the filmmaker has felt the need to capture the image and to engrave onto the retina the full power of a portrait. There is a kind of revelation in these images, and in editing together a shot filmed in Africa and another of emus living in Île-de-France, the filmmaker expresses a feeling of universality or of the coexistence of different times. Or, as Oliver Kohn has expressed it, the "feeling of travelling around the planet with a huge open eye, in passing from one landscape to another with a click of the camera shutter, from one face to another, which we know are far apart, separated in space and time, but which nevertheless speak to each other, and we can hear their voices" (ORTEGA and WEINRICHTER, 2006: 107).

Marker's film gives us a means for interpreting this kind of image and cinematographic practice of collecting: the memory. He films in order to compile some archives of the world, as an *aid* to the memory. David Perlov tries

to organise the fragments he takes from reality, perhaps to understand it better, and to preserve the memories. The signs of memory, in the so-called *zone of Sans soleil*, can be held, says Marker, "like insects that have flown beyond time, and that can be observed from a point of view outside time": i.e., eternity.

Beyond the intensity of the things revealed by the cinematographic image, the critical pedagogy of Marker's work reaffirms the *essence* of the image, the need for critical images that are not confused with the reality they represent. Jean-Louis Comolli suggested that we film in order to see. The images, as in the case of Robert Flaherty in *Man of Aran* (1934), are the only remaining proof "of the existence and the power of beings and things". In the cinematographic image, reality is revealed in a new dimension: through the cinematic process, the world is transformed into a gaze upon the world.

Organising the domestic world in images

Filming in order to see is what David Perlov was doing in his diary practice, which has many points of connection with family films. In his endeavour to record life, the images are snapshots of reality, gazes upon the world, functioning without needing to be supported by a story. In order "to see life" as he aims to, he abandons the stories and plots used in other documentary practices and limits himself to documenting the everyday, "the ordinary".

This determination to capture the everyday doesn't obviate public life or politics. The filmmaker leans out from his domestic environment to film what is going on outside. He chooses to establish a distance and also a boundary, signalled by the window frame, as a point of transfer between outside and inside, public and private worlds. In his ambition to capture the essence of reality, he acknowledges the difficulty of answering the question: *how do you film public life?* Thus, the filmmaker

Trembling shot by Chris Marker



*Sans soleil* lingers on random images

has to adapt to the somewhat random boundaries established by the window in his room. Reality is too big to be recorded with a camera, or to be understood with a gaze. This act of filming is realised in a series of snapshots of reality, which produces some archives aimed at the future. Filmmakers who assign themselves this kind of work gather some material that is useful for acquiring a better understanding, but it is also a task of organising the information, the events, the feelings, producing a more accessible whole. In this attempt to organise reality, Perlov engages in a second reading of the images filmed, reviewing the filming process and identifying the construction of ideas. In this revision, he completes the meaning of the images, although it is always an open meaning, as he questions their significance and opens them up to the spectator.

As is evident in Perlov's work, filming the everyday involves focusing the attention on movement, especially human movement, and trying to glean the essence of each one. The most interesting events to collect are therefore the simplest movements, accessible from a window, flowing motions that can capture reality: his wife changing her dress in a single shot, "the active angles of my house". Sometimes the sequences filmed outside capture movements that are strange for him, but in most cases any simple movement can prove to be hypnotic for the camera's gaze: two people praying on the beach, an oriental group's dance, a woman cleaning. The images of the everyday are tentative, open possibilities that esta-

blish their way of relating to the things of the world; lived experience turns into an image. To record and archive the lived experience is to settle accounts with intimate reality, an activity designed to live the present with greater intensity. But the emotion experienced in the present opens up the possibility of preserving a reminiscence for the future, for the memory itself.

Perhaps as a result of the sensation that the world is too full (of gazes, of images), Perlov decides to start considering the images from the private sphere, inside the home. Fascinated by the profusion of acts and movements outside that he captures from his window, Perlov feels "the need to turn around, to focus my camera inwards, into my own house". In the domestic space the possibilities for collecting images seem to grow. An image paradigmatic of this question is the movement made between rooms by his wife, Mira: "I still haven't managed to understand how Mira, in a single shot, manages to change her dress and come back so quickly".

Perlov's work focuses precisely on these possibilities of the everyday environment, with the aim of capturing life in the present tense. If the common photograph was once a product for private use, with significance only for the one who took it and the people portrayed in it, these films recover universality and transfer to the public sphere some materials that originally seemed to be reserved for the private sphere, the sphere of family and intimacy. The person behind the camera also leaves proof of his presence in the moment of filming. His personality and



In Perlov's *Diary*, the experience of a field

existence also go on living in the images filmed. In addition to the attention given to the faces and activities of others, of friends and strangers, there are many moments in David Perlov's diaries when the filmmaker finds himself alone inside the family home. Recording on film the time that he spends on his own is an expression of the most absolute intimacy, of the person behind the camera. On one occasion, Perlov states that the family scenes represent too much presence and that he, on the other hand, needs to adopt a distance. When he is alone, the presence behind the camera recovers its significance. The indoor space represents his need to be alone, although only on a few occasions does Perlov actually show his own image in the mirror. The apartment walls, the windows, the paintings and photographs hanging on the walls are the expression of the individual who is alone with himself. The faint movement of the camera is the direction of his gaze and his wandering around the home. Through filming, filmmakers like David Perlov and Chris Marker seek to stay in contact with the world, with reality. Rather than looking at himself, the filmmaker leaves traces of the little events that he saw. ■

Notes

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“Oskar: *Who are you?*
 Eli: *I’m like you...*
 Oskar: *What do you mean?*
 Eli: *What are you staring at? Well? Are you looking at me? So scream! Squeal!... Those*
were the first words
I heard you say.
 Oskar: *I don’t kill people...*
 Eli: *No, but you’d like to, if you could, to get revenge, right?*
 Oskar: *Yes...*”

“He opened his eyes and saw only light blue... veils of pink”: notes on *Let the Right One In**

Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín
 Iván Bort Gual
 Shaila García Catalán

~~Cold~~ Frozen blood

In the last few years, the vampire story has been experiencing a definite boom in mainstream cinema, marking the rise of an almost ancestral theme that has re-emerged in contemporary audiovisual media, particularly due to the film adaptations of Stephenie Meyer’s saga *Twilight* (2005), a series of neo-Romantic-style novels aimed at adolescent readers.

In the midst of this vampire frenzy, the US television channel HBO didn’t hesitate to jump into the game, and to do so in a style completely different from that of the hegemonic environment which served as its source of inspiration but from which it would take its characteristic and customary distance to create a new series in keeping with its untiring commitment to quality: *True Blood* (Alan Ball, HBO: 2008-). “Forget about that catchy wave of vampire products that are overwhelming us: *True Blood* is yet another example of the creative power of the best television at full power. *True Blood* is more than just another vampire series” (MANRIQUE, 2010).

Essentially disassociated from the typical excesses inherent to the machinery of the cinematic *metropolis*, but, paradoxically, ultimately influencing a Hollywood remake adapted to the same old patterns of commercial

culture, a Swedish film premiered in 2008, a highly restrained work titled *Let the Right One In* (Let the Right One in, Tomas Alfredson), an adaptation of the novel of the same name by fellow Swede John Ajvide Lindqvist. It was a new kind of vampire story, but with very little or nothing to do –especially in formal terms– with the *Twilight* films or with *True Blood*. Disturbing, slow-moving and terribly dark, its points of reference are closer to Murnau's (1922) or Herzog's (1976) *Nosferatu* than to its contemporary relatives. It was in 2010 that the excellent reviews received and the prizes won by this European production caught the attention of US producers who, as they have been known to do with brazen frequency in the past¹, would release *Let Me In* (Matt Reeves, 2010).

Let the Right One In in three voices (original novel, Swedish film adaptation and US remake) are the three dimensions that provide the material for this article and on which its analysis is based. However, it will be borne in mind here that there is something in the text –in the sense of the mood of the images or words– that resists translation. It is the materiality of the signifier that makes something of the discourse that impedes its communicative transparency (that which Habermas worked so hard to defend) and its easy exchange. This suggests that there is something in the text that needs it and claims it as its own, on the level of the absolutely individual.

Those eyes of fire (remembered about these eyes of water)

The inhabitants of a rural community fall unconscious for hours. Some time later, the women of the community discover that they are pregnant with children who, as will become evident later, are cursed. This plot development would annihilate the correspondence assumed until then, as if it were a postulate of nature, between childhood and innocence. The story is from the film *Village of the Damned* (Wolf Rilla, 1960), one of the first films in which children –with white hair and eyes of fire– embody evil, thereby shattering the Enlightenment notion of the parallel progress of civilization and goodness. The film was subsequently remade in John Carpenter's disturbing and faithful adaptation of the same name in 1995. As we will show here, fiction refutes ideals; thus, almost fifty years later *The White Ribbon* (Das Weisse Band, Michael Haneke, 2009) would appear, a film set in 1913 (the same year that Freud wrote the clinical case "Two Lies Told by Children"), which explores the Freudian maxim that "there is something in man that does not seek his wellbeing" through a latent evil that is exposed to reveal that the World Wars did not constitute new events, but were in fact the consequence of a daily violence that had been brewing in the private realm of society.

Although the film *Bicycle Thieves* (Ladri de biciclette, Vittorio de Sica, 1948) toppled once and for all the notion

of childhood innocence as the consequence of a harsh society, it wasn't until the fifties that the angelical face of childhood showed its dark side. Thus, abandoning the position of helpless victim, children took on sinister qualities that were accentuated in the sixties with the French New Wave and were definitively established as demonic in the seventies with the rise of the horror film³ in that decade.

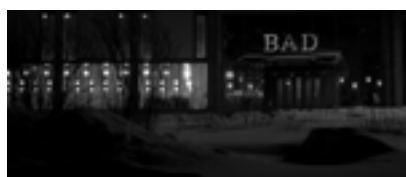
Anyone expecting a horror film of *Let the Right One In* will find instead an icy portrait of innocence and a statement that has nothing to do with either morality or nature. With crude realism Alfredson's film mounts a poetic and categorical challenge against the traditional vampire film, flooding its fields with white light, with no gratuitous blood, a drawn-out pace and the idea that victims aren't always innocent. In short, the film represents a subversion of its genre.

In Lindqvist's original novel, *Let the Right One In* is the story of Oskar, a twelve-year-old boy who lives with his mother in a suburb of Stockholm. Oskar is a solitary boy, addicted to sweets and with a curious hobby: he collects press cuttings about brutal murder cases. His classmates make fun of him and subject him to harassment that he is incapable of avoiding. One day, a new girl moves to the neighbourhood: Eli, an enigmatic girl of his age –at least apparently– who smells strange, never gets cold and has gray hair. Oskar can't help but feel fascinated by her and the two of them become inseparable. Coinciding with Eli's arrival is a wave of horrific murders and bizarre occurrences that have the local police baffled. Everything points to a serial killer... Eli is a 200-year-old vampire⁴. As the tagline for *Let the Right One In* puts it: "Innocence dies. She doesn't".

Ode to off camera: a comparative analysis of the final scene at the pool (as a model-sequence of the film)

Both *Let the Right One in* and *Let Me In* open their final scene with an establishing shot⁵. In the Swedish version [image 1.1] –in the remake the words "POOL ENTRANCE" are barely visible [image 2.1]– the spectator sees at the gym's entrance an ornate sign that reads "BAD", which, although Swedish for "BATHROOMS", in English it introduces an evident mistake in its translation: "BAD" in the sense of evil. It is impossible to ignore the unexpected meaning that provides a certain ironic effect, as the deictic effect of a bathroom sign takes on a symbolic quality when we know that the location indicated will be the place of the horror.

Behind the snowy and wintry location, *Let the Right One in* initiates a fascinating tracking shot that declares a clear enunciative commitment. The implicit narrator peeks into the changing room stealthily to find Oskar tying his sneakers [image 1.2]. Then, the coach enters the



1.1



2.1



1.2



2.2



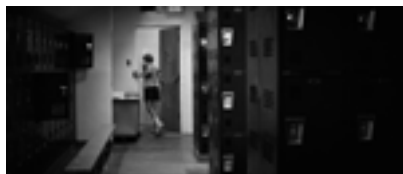
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2.3



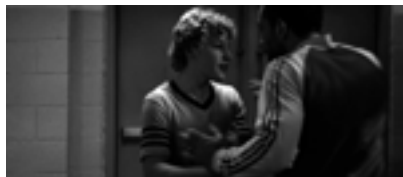
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1.6



2.6



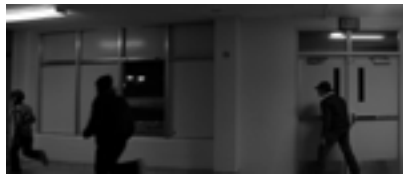
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2.7



1.8



2.8



1.9



2.9



Page for the ending of the novel by John Ajvide Lindqvist *Let me in*, with frames of its Swedish (1) and American (2) film adaptations which are referred to in the analysis of this text

shot, until the boy leaves the space. The camera follows him. Just a few seconds later we see him looking off camera [1.3], but before showing us the object of his attention the coach enters the scene, taking the boy with him. The camera's placement then proves to be strategic, because in the first shot we see a classmate of Oskar's – who will turn out to be one of the boys involved in the forthcoming revenge– looking off camera while sharing the frame with a door opening by itself, which by mythical and cinematographic convention we know indicates Eli's entry [image 1.4]. The off-camera dialectic proves itself perverse here, because while in the first instance the spectator doesn't see what the boy does, the mirror is established as a direct hint to the spectator, revealing Eli's vampiric nature. In short, *the spectator sees less but knows more*.

In the choreography of the tracking shot and in the rest of the shots in the scene Oskar holds the privileged position in the frame. Indeed, in the first shot, the coach only appears on camera if he is located close to Oskar. Otherwise, the camera cuts out his figure; the interest expressed is not in portraying the scene but in accompanying the boy [image 1.2]. In this way, the enunciation enthrones Oskar (an enthrone-ment also

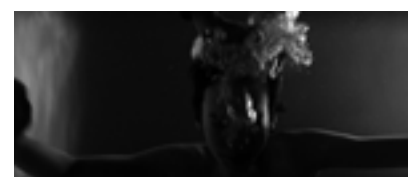
expressed in his towel with crowns [image 1.3]) in an effort to compensate for or give symbolic justice to the humiliation that he has suffered from the beginning of the film.

In both films, inserts of shots outside the pavilion are crosscut into the scene, showing Oskar's classmates working out a strategy to get the coach out of the pool in order to concoct their plan for revenge⁶ [image 1.6 and 2.6]. In both films, the friends seek to empty the scene where the violence will take place, although for this transition each film will choose very different, indeed almost antagonistic, formal strategies that reveal their respective reinterpretations of the terror.

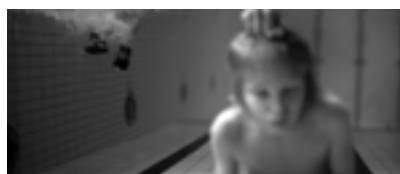
Let the Right One in is constantly immersed in white spaces, bathed in light, which avoid a narrative foreshadowing, thereby enhancing the contrast in order to accentuate the naivety of the characters. *Let Me In*, on the other hand, is flooded with the darkness typical of horror genre. The close-ups are convulsive, edited hurriedly for dramatic effect to create tension and speed up the pace of the horror. An example of this is the water shots that recall the effect established by Steven Spielberg in *Jaws* (1975). On the other hand, the close-ups in the Swedish version are more drawn out, interwoven in a way that aims for subtlety. This is evident in the shot in which all we see is the action of one of the boys standing on tiptoes signalling a warning to the coach of a quarrel outside⁷, which makes him come out immediately [image 1.5]. *Let Me In* foreshadows its conclusion through the use of extra-diegetic music in keeping with the canons of the horror genre, while in *Låt den rätte komma in* the music is diegetic, coming from the radio that the coach uses to do the water exercises⁸ [image 1.7]. Both formal proposals adopt an arrangement typical of films about gang brawls and evening of scores, but with notable differences. In *Let Me In* [images 2.3, 2.8 and 2.9] it is made explicit through a staging reminiscent of *film noir*, while in *Let the Right One in* it is hinted at by the dialogue line "An eye for an ear, ok?", with powerful intertextual references that succeed in revealing the latent violence or sinister underbelly of the supposedly innocent water game. Thus, in *Låt den rätte komma in* [images 1.7 and 1.8] the exercises that the coach indicates to a smiling and carefree Oskar and that are imitated by some girls outside the pool will turn sinister when the friend does them, because the frame of his legs



1.10



2.10



1.11



2.11



1.12



2.12



1.13



2.13



1.14



2.14



1.15



2.15



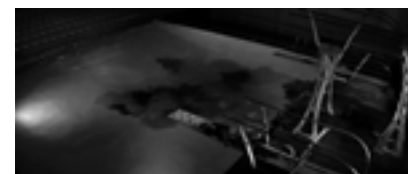
1.16



2.16



1.17



2.17

recalls a military march and the aesthetics of confrontation between the military and civilians from the Odessa Steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (Bronenosets Potyomkin, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925). In the American version, the confrontation is resolved with accentuated high and low angle shots, while in the Swedish version the effect is achieved not only with the angling of the camera but with the scaling of the elements of the shot, exhibiting an exemplary compositional architecture [image 1.9]. This shows that Alfredson's interpretation of Lindqvist's text has been guided by a search for "restraint and silence"; at the same time, the tone of Alfredson's version challenges the hyper-codification of the horror genre to which Reeves' version is loyal at all times.

While, as noted above, the enunciation of the Swedish version effectively grants a privileged place for Oskar, the fact that we see the final crimes from inside the pool, with the protagonist, emphasizes decisively that the point of view in the film has been right beside Oskar. Thus, the exemplary use of off camera, far from being taken up merely as an affected strategy or a spectacular formula for the greater visual impact of seeing cut-up bodies tinting the blue water, constitutes an ethical statement as a narrative culmination. This formal strategy, which proves that the American version is an adaption—as acknowledged in the film's credits—of both the novel and the film, ultimately constructs one of the most lucid cinematic achievements of recent years in its strategic way of evoking the poetics of absence [1.10 to 1.14 and 2.10 to 2.14].

Notable among the insuperable influences revealed in this final fragment that we have analysed is the reference to one of the most memorable milestones in the history of the horror film: the pool scene in *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942). In this scene there is no actual aggression, but only a disturbing atmosphere created with intense chiaroscuros that seem to be imagined by the beautiful Alice Moore (the character played by Jane Randolph), which, through fleeting shadows and strange noises, seem to foretell the attack of a monster that we never actually get to see. In Tourneur's film we can discern the genetic codes of the horror and suspense film as the resource, coinciding with the scenes analysed in this article, in the symbolic enhancement of a solitary field threatened by the apocryphal universe of the omitted.

In the book the enunciation in this climax moves from Oskar to Micke, one of Oskar's classmates who accompanies him in the act of revenge but is too frightened to participate. Thus, the first, Oskar: prisoner of terror and immediately thereafter finding peace;

He opened his eyes and only saw light blue... veils of pink that swirled from his head past his eyes [...] rippling the pale blue in front of his eyes, refracted in light waves.

Bubbles rose from his mouth and he threw his arms out, floating on his back, and his eyes were pulled to the white,

to the swaying halogen tubes' glow in the ceiling. His heart was throbbing like a hand against a glass pane, and when he happened to draw water in through his nose a kind of calm started to spread in his body. But his heart was beating harder, more persistently, wanted to live, and again he thrashed desperately, tried to get a grip where there was no grip to be had. (LINDQVIST, 2008: 448)

The second, Micke: the only witness, needed in order to tell the story *a posteriori*.

Micke looked back at what was happening in the pool. Oskar's body had stopped moving, but Jimmy was still leaned over the edge, holding his head down. Micke's throat hurt when he swallowed.

Whatever happens. Just make it stop.

A banging on the glass door, harder this time. He looked out into the darkness. When the girl opened her mouth and shouted at him he could see... that her teeth... that there was something hanging from her arms.

"Say that I can come in!"

Whatever happens.

Micke nodded, said almost inaudibly:

"You can come in."

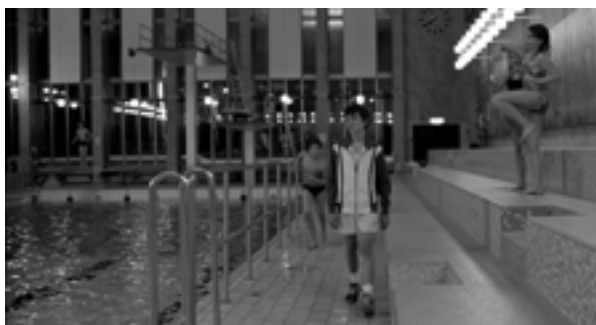
The girl pulled back from the door, disappeared into the darkness. The stuff that was hanging from her arms shimmered for a moment, and then she was gone. Micke turned back to the pool. Jimmy had pulled Oskar's head out of the water and taken the stiletto back from Jonny, moving it down Oskar's face, aiming.

A speck of light was visible in the dark middle window and a split second later it shattered.

The reinforced glass didn't shatter like regular glass. It exploded into thousands of tiny rounded fragments that landed with a rustle at the edge of the pool, after flying out into the hall, over the water, glittering like myriad white stars. (LINDQVIST, 2008: 449-450)

The novel thus suggests the death subtly and with suspense. It introduces the death in the pool with "veils of pink" and then seeks to relate the events through the figure of the last witness. In this scene, as occurs throughout the film, there continues to be a meaningful use of blurring, of the blind image. In both films, Micke doesn't dare to look; the scene is unbearable to look at; the only solution is a fade-to-black as a denial of the horror [images 1.17 and 2.17].

Let the Right One in adds to the novel a (strictly filmic) reverse shot view of Eli's and Oskar's final encounter, closing the film justly [images 1.15 and 1.16]. This view is not present in the novel, in which the encounter must be imagined as no one has been able to narrate it. In *Let Me In*, despite being unquestionably more a remake of the original film than of the literary text on this point, the reverse shot of Eli's view is, as in the book, omitted. Eli has only a metonymic presence: all we see of her are her feet covered in blood [image 2.15]. This discursive mechanism should be viewed as a significant enunciation



When the game turns sinister. The staging makes the innocent exercises of the children in the pool evoke the Odessa Stairs scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, Sergei M. Eisenstein. 1925)

in the sense that it avoids the presentation of definitive evidence at the price of eliminating romanticism from the encounter produced in the almost mystic dialectic of shot-reverse shot in the Swedish film.

Oskar Eriksson had been rescued by an angel.

The same angel who, according to the witnesses, had ripped Jonny and Jimmy Forsberg's heads off and left them in the bottom of the pool (LINDQVIST: 2008: 451).

In the end, both films dissolve all competition. In the extraordinary formal conclusion of the European adaptation any dialectic is dissolved; there is no contest. The story builds its discursive strategies based on the fundamental premise that either everyone is a victim or everyone is an executioner. The use of off camera generates a rhetoric that cuts the circuits of black-and-white morality to insert us into the duplicity of the human condition: we don't see Eli kill anyone; all that we see of her –in *Let the Right One In*– is her final redemptive gaze. Some of Oskar's classmates are cut up in pieces, and those who have survived are stunned and immobile, while Oskar himself is shown to be relieved after having been freed from years of humiliation. In short, the burden of guilt falls on nobody, nor is any character presented as a model for the spectator. In this sense, the view of evil in *Let the Right One In* bears a kinship with Abel Ferrara's view in another chilling story of vampire love with an underlying philosophical reflection: *The Addiction* (1995). As Gérard Imbert suggests, "there is a terribly fatalistic view of evil in Ferrara, as if the (collective) horror had been too great to leave room for redemption for the (individual) subject, a trans-historical guilt that generates an indelible bad conscience. Should it be concluded that violence is intrinsic to man, that man is pure violence?" (IMBERT, 2010: 477).

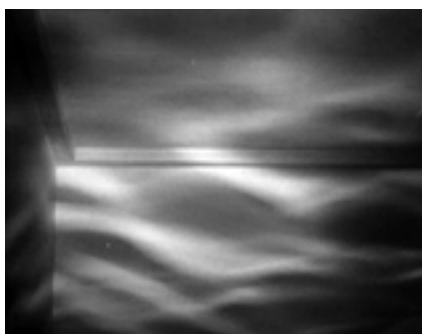
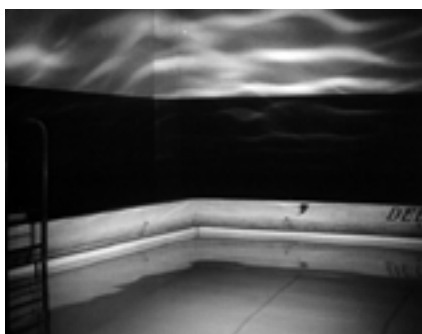
Camouflaged perversion

In this article we have offered a detailed comparison of the of the novel *Let the Right One In* with its two film adaptations released onto the market, which were both given the same title in Spanish (*Déjame entrar*, i.e., "Let Me In"), although their originals were *Let the Right One in* ("Let the Right One In") and *Let Me In*. As already commented in a footnote, the fact that the American movie appeared so quickly after the positive public response to the Swedish version raises questions about the prevailing market ethics and about the overbearing approach of the US film industry towards productions that have been successful beyond its borders and that are used to produce remakes instead of promoting the original in the cinematic metropolis. Although this has always been the case, and lately even more frequent (the titles concerned are well known to all), it is surprising to note another strange coincidence: the appearance of a phenomenon among the adolescent masses who surrender to the strange –almost perverse– pleasure of following the adventures of their heroes (?) in the *Twilight* saga, also based on successful novels, which has spawned the release of various titles mentioned earlier in this article. Needless to say, the most recent titles –*New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*– have cinematic connotations that should be kept at a safe distance for sake of the mental and sensory health.

All of this comes to mind out of an additional reflection –after taking on the analysis of the final model-sequence in *Let the Right One In*– about this new *format* of adolescent who self-identifies with a *good-looking monster* and seems to approach this monster through a process that has more to do with fashion than through any kind of reasoning or argument. Of course, the qualitative chasm separating *Let the Right One In* from *Twilight* is patently clear (also for questions of mental health, in this article we will work exclusively from the perspective of these two films, i.e., the Swedish version of *Let the Right One In* and the first film in the *Twilight* saga).

What follows is an outline of some of the reasons for the aforementioned chasm that separates the two films.

To begin with, the vampire universe is clearly defined in our collective imagination by the cultural sum of a series of literary texts, from *The Vampire* by John William Polidori (1816) to *Camilla* by Serdian Le Fanu (1872) and Bram Stoker's excellent *Dracula* (1897), whose precedents can be found in Gothic literature and the unique constructions that are *The Monk* (Matthew Gregory Lewis, 1796) and the no less important *Melmoth*, *the Wanderer* (Charles Robert Maturin, 1820), without forgetting *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelly, 1818) and many other texts that will lead us finally to H. P. Lovecraft and more contemporary writers. However, this universe, culturally distant for most of today's youth, has been recovered and referenced many times in the cinema, which has in turn generated a new imaginary – distorted perhaps, but, on occasions even enhanced– of the image of the vampire, its behaviour and circumstances (we won't quote specific film titles because they are obvious and widely known). This vampire, the legacy of various artistic expressions (painting, theatre, novel, film), has certain concrete characteristics: it is a being



The final sequence in the pool in *Låt den rätte komma* is a tribute to one of the most memorable scenes of the horror genre: *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942)

neither dead nor alive, who has no reflection, is afraid of religious symbols, needs to satiate its appetite with blood, and hides from the light of the sun. These characteristics are common knowledge, because the depictions have placed them before our eyes –and senses– time and time again. Nevertheless, the vampire is something more. Le Fanu's *Camilla* can be found in *Dracula*, to whom it passed on its voluptuousness; the appetite for blood is the drive of life, which is set in opposition to the death-wish (the end as final rest). And the most significant point is that the vampire (*Dracula*, vampire par excellence) doesn't exist.

The reader will no doubt be thinking that this is an obvious point. And the reader would be right, but the point bears clarification: the vampire doesn't exist simply because it is no more than the accumulation of unsatisfied desires that converge to form the threatening monster of a society in decay: Victorian society, when *Dracula* was written, or the Puritan society of double standards, which we would like to see eradicated for good but which keeps rearing its ugly head, especially in the accursed Western world in which we live, where we can neither die nor feed on blood, since other vampires do so without being living dead (one need only read of certain bankers, politicians, etc., today's champions of the double standard).

With this in mind, it makes lot of sense that the monsters of the *Twilight* saga aren't the vampires, but some of them –bad-faced, dark and pestilent– who are established as the exception because the unsatisfied desire generated by the

earlier *evil* is no longer considered evil, but rather as the *conquest of the status quo*. In other words, while a hooligan who steals a car should be punished with prison, a banker who steals and brings families to ruin becomes a rich and honoured member of society, how could we help but expect an image of the good monster *versus* the

evil monster? It is a masterful lesson for an unsuspecting audience that penetrates consciousness: millions of young people feeding off an imaginary that *normalises* them and elevates them to the highest heights of mediocrity and cultural nullity. Thus, if we look closely, the vampires in *Twilight* are a pure representation of the society desired by the *law*.

And moreover, taking *Dracula* as a guide, to say that vampires don't exist is not a mere whimsy, because the novel is constructed on what is permanently *off camera*, on the accounts of a series of narrators and documents –maps, diaries, audio tapes, press cuttings, etc.– that can only convey to the reader *its version of events*, and that version, in a frustrated, desire-filled being typical of the society of his or her time, creates monsters, invents a vampire as a catharsis to eradicate its shortcomings, as a repository for its most intimate unsatisfied secrets. It is located in the realm of the sinister, and returns from there when it is called. It is thus not evil itself, but the legacy of a society in decay. It only exists *off camera*, a point that Coppola knew very well in his version of Stoker's work, in showing the vampire as a kind of chameleon that changes in accordance with the direct relationship he has with his victims, even the delirious and insatiable monster that makes love to Lucy, an icon par excellence of frustrated desire-filled woman.

This world *off camera* is taken up directly by *Let the Right One In* and completely dismissed by *Twilight*. The *friendly monsters* in *Twilight*, to the delight of their teenage fans, are displayed *on camera*, in the most obvious territory of presentation and spectacularization, jumping from tree to tree, walking through walls, playing like children, and invading the screen with their ridiculous presence. The sinister being in *Let the Right One In* (sinister in spite of himself) is an asexual adolescent who confuses love and friendship, loyalty, life and death, is constantly banished to the *off camera* world of the society and, in the same way, is shown in his ordinary and not his monstrous nature. Words are unnecessary, because the evidence is clear, as is the yawning gap that separates quality from banality.

We could go on, but space is limited. Suffice it to say, by way of conclusion, that the end of the chain is the death drive. Dracula, in his eternal place *off camera*, doesn't want to go on living. Death would be a blessing for him; he transforms this death drive into sex drive –neither homosexual nor heterosexual, hence the brilliant representation of the vampiric *essence* in *Let the Right One In*.

The *monstrosities* in *Twilight*, on the other hand, organise their lives around the family clan (and the law), and want to live inside a society that doesn't marginalise them, where they can develop their goodness and show off their attributes (their fashionable looks), doing good

things and stopping the *evil monsters* from hurting their human friends. This, to put it mildly, is nothing more than ingenuous and inane nonsense. The trouble is that they're all the rage and these sweet little *life forms* (in death, by nullity) are standing right in front of us. What a fate has befallen us, when *real* vampires walk beside us and we don't know how to recognize them... so badly bitten we've been! ■

Notes

* ITACA-UJI Research Group. This article has been prepared with the assistance of the Research Project: Nuevas tendencias e hibridaciones de los discursos audiovisuales contemporáneos, funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation's National RDI Plan for the period 2008-2011, with code number CSO2008-00606/SOCI, under the direction of Dr. Javier Marzal Felici.

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1 There are countless cases that could serve as examples for this protectionist practice, especially when it comes to Asian horror titles, consisting of remaking existing movies successful in their country of origin, but which would not be profitable enough if they were distributed with subtitles, and so it is decided to make an entirely new film. Two examples where Spain was the victim are *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), an obviously inferior remake of *Abre los ojos* (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997), but for which the presence of Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz ensured a warmer welcome in Hollywood than an unknown Spanish movie; or the more recent *Quarantine* (John Erick Dowdle, 2008), which exploited the rights to *[REC]* (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007) sold to the US market.

2 The original title of this groundbreaking film of Italian neorealism is *Ladri di biciclette*, which would be in Spanish *Ladrones de bicicletas*, and in English *Bicycle Thieves*. However, although in other Spanish-speaking countries like Argentina the title was translated literally, in Spain it was changed from plural *ladrones* (thieves) into the singular *ladrón* (thief). The change is significant, because while the film describes a very harsh reality that turns many people into bicycle thieves, the Spanish title offers a different reading, turning the story into an isolated case and stripping it of its intention to represent the dire poverty of a whole country. Taking into account that the film was released at the height of Franco's dictatorship, it is highly likely that the error was intentional; in other countries where the title was also changed to the singular, such as France or the United States, there might be room for doubt as to whether the error was due simply to a lack of knowledge of Italian. But the censors altered something even more important than the title: they introduced a voice-over not present in the original, which softens the distress-

ing (and masterly) final shot of the film, in which the man, who has been unable to recover his bicycle, is walking with his young son. The atrocious Spanish voice-over flattens the climax and the meaning of the film by suggesting essentially that the family will surely be alright in the end because Christian kindness always triumphs.

- 3 For further exploration of the question of childhood in the horror film see: 'El teorema de Swift: De niños terrible y demás monstruos filmicos' by Fernando de Felipe in the book *Imágenes del mal. Ensayos de cine, filosofía y literatura sobre la maldad*, edited by Vicente Domínguez (2003).
- 4 According to the novel, Eli is actually Elias, the youngest son of some humble farmers, serfs born 200 years before the time that the story takes place. Elias was turned into a vampire by his feudal master after one of his servants cut off his penis (which explains a fleeting and strange close-up of a scar on Eli's genitals that appears in the Swedish film but is omitted from the American version). It is thus not made very clear in the book that Eli is a girl, a fact that poses no problem to Oskar at all and which has therefore incited interpretations regarding latent homosexuality that neither of the film adaptations take on board.
- 5 Also called a situation shot, this refers to the 'frame that shows us the general space of a scene, the place where the action will take place in order to facilitate our orientation' (BENET, 2004: 301). According to Gómez Tarín, it is a shot that provides the spectator with the necessary location on the basis of which an analytical montage could be developed. By virtue of the recognition of this setting, the space also becomes inhabitable for the audience in the cinema (GÓMEZ TARÍN, 2011).
- 6 The final scene in both films is an act of revenge by Jimmy, the boy whom Oskar, earlier in the story delivers a blow to the ear with a stick in self-defence, after he was encouraged by Eli to stand up against his bullying classmates. Jimmy asks his elder brother, Jonny, to go to the pool to threaten Oskar.
- 7 The manoeuvre to distract Mr. Avila –the name of the coach in the novel– so that Oskar would be left alone in the pool does not involve a deliberately lit fire outside the pavilion in the novel as it does in both films (another piece of evidence that *Let Me In* is more a remake of the Swedish film than a new adaptation of the novel), but through a much more violent act in which they beat him about the head that results in a concussion.
- 8 The song heard on the radio is 'Flash in the Night' by the Swedish group Secret Service, a pop band that enjoyed some success in the eighties, reaching the peak of its popularity in 1982 with this song (the film doesn't make use of setting titles, and so this is a detail the provides implicit information about the time and space where the action takes place). The extra-diegetic musical composition heard in the American remake (which we know from the start takes place in Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1983), is an instrumental score specifically made for the scene by the composer Michael Giacchino named 'The Weakest Goes to the Pool'.
- 9 According to the director's and scriptwriter's audio-comments in the Blue-ray disc of *Let Me In*, released in Spain by Karma Films. On various occasions Alfredson comments that, after reading

Lindqvist's novel, he decided to make an 'almost silent' film, and that it was the action and not the dialogues that explained the plot to the spectator, as in the film he sought to avoid the negative effect that television had had on cinema in this mode of storytelling.

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ABSTRACTS [english]

NOTEBOOK

From Camera to Camera: Still Photography and the Moving Image

Time-Lapse, Time Map. The Photographic Body of San Francisco in David Fincher's *Zodiac*. Damian Sutton

Keywords: Photography, Cinema, Deleuze, Lewin, hodological, time-lapse, *Zodiac*, Fincher.

Abstract: This article discusses the continued reliance of the cinema image on the notion of the photographic, as expressed in the 2007 Warner Bros. film *Zodiac* (David Fincher). This police procedural movie details the story of detectives and newspaper reporters as they follow the trail of the Zodiac, a serial killer who terrorised California residents in the late-1960s and early 1970s, sending taunting letters to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The production involves extensive use of digital set-building and CGI compositing in order to reproduce the look and feel of the period, and is interspersed with segue sequences including an apparent time-lapse shot of the construction of the Transamerica building. Although this was created entirely digitally, the sequence relies heavily on the details expected of time-lapse photography, and therefore illustrates how the new digital cinema makes use of the codes and conventions of analogue cinematography. This is particularly significant because the time-lapse sequence as a technical flourish occurs within the feature film, which ordinarily makes the mechanics of cinema transparent. Unlike contemporary film and

video art practice, studio features are not expected to explore the framing of time overtly but instead to reflect as much as possible our commonplace cultural conceptions. Using the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Kurt Lewin, this article explores the cinematic creation of hodological time, achieved through a reference to film's photographic legacy, and the establishment in digital filmmaking of a cinema of the body.

Author: After attending DeMontfort University, Leicester, and the University of Southampton, Damian Sutton (Southampton, England, 1971) obtained his PhD from the University of Glasgow in 2002. He is the co-editor of *State of the Real: Aesthetics in the Digital Age* (I.B. Tauris, 2007) and is the author of *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image of Time* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). He previously worked at The Glasgow School of Art, and is currently Reader in Photography at Middlesex University.

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Cartier Bresson's *Le Retour*, or, What Is Wrong with this Picture? Stuart Liebman

Key words: Holocaust; documentary; decisive moment, photography.

Abstract: This essay is a reevaluation of Henri Cartier-Bresson's film *Le Retour* (1945) and, more generally, of his approach to filmmaking in the light of his theory of "the decisive moment". Questions about how, when, by whom and why the film was produced are considered against the background of post-World War II French national mythmaking.

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Pennsylvania, 1948) is a Professor of the History and Theory of Cinema at Queens College (Department of Media Studies), as well as at the PhD Programs of Art History and Theater at CUNY Graduate Center. Professor Stuart Liebman's research focuses on two principal areas: the intersections of the cinema with modernism in the arts, and the representation of history in films. He has published widely on early French cinema, American avant-garde cinema, Soviet cinema, films about the Holocaust, and post-World War II German cinema. He is currently at work on a book about representation of the Holocaust in world cinema between 1944 and 1956. In 2006 he was named an "Academy Film Scholar" by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles. He has served as a member of the Advisory Board for the critical journal *October* and is a former member of the Board of Trustees of Anthology Film Archives in New York City. He is the editor of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah: Key Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), among other publications.

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The Strange Twentieth-Century Family Album. Sylvie Lindeperg

Keywords: cinema, photography, history, Auschwitz, gazes, regimes of the visible, invisibility.

Abstract: Starting with the story of the Auschwitz Album (a photographic report recorded in the spring of 1944 on the ramp in Birkenau), this article examines the modes of the album's *reinterpretation* in three works of cinema and television. By contrast, Alain Jaubert's film *Auschwitz*,

the Album, the Memory (1984), relies on an articulation between archive and testimony to reflect on what lies outside the frame of the photographs, to explore their signs and margins. Harun Farocki, in *Bilder der Welt uns Inschrift des Krieges* (1988), places the Auschwitz photographs at the heart of a reflection on the journey of the visible and the instability of meaning, applied to the image according to the horizons of expectations and the contexts of the reading. Both of these works are compared with the BBC television series *Auschwitz, the Nazis and the Final Solution* (2005), which mixes reconstructed scenes and virtual images, testimonies and archival documents (including negatives from the album), put to the service of a new economy of the visible.

Author: Sylvie Lindeperg is a historian and professor at the University of Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, where she heads the Cinema Department and the Centre de recherches en histoire et esthétique du cinéma (CERHEC). She also holds the position of assistant director at the Graduate School of Art History. Lindeperg is the author of *Les Ecrans de l'ombre: La Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le cinéma français* (CNRS Éditions, 2000); *Nuit et Brouillard: Un film dans l'histoire* (Odile Jacob, 2007); *Univers concentrationnaire et génocide: Voir, savoir, comprendre*, in collaboration with Annette Wierviorka (Mille et Une Nuits, 2008); *D'Arusha à Arusha*, in collaboration with Thierry Cruvellier and Christophe Gargot (Filigranes, 2011); *La Voie des images* (Verdier, 2013); and the co-author of Jean-Louis Comolli's film *Face aux fantômes* (Ina et Ciné-Cinéma, 2009).

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Migrations: The Grapes of Wrath and the Aims of the Farm Security Administration. Rebeca Romero Escrivá

Abstract: The relationship between journalists, writers, photographers and filmmakers during the Great Depression in the 1930s in the U.S. gave rise to a fertile climate for the production of a powerful and recurring interweaving of text and image. The photographs of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) affected the writers of the time and vice versa. Cinema would

adapt the language of writers, journalists and photographers in its own way. Through a study of *The Grapes of Wrath* (novel by Steinbeck, film by Ford), the article focuses on the influence the FSA aesthetic had on modes of cinematic representation both during the period and today.

Keywords: migration of images, aesthetics, poverty, social photography, photojournalism, realist novel, naturalist realism, social realism.

Author: Rebeca Romero Escrivá (Valencia, 1982) holds both bachelor degrees in Audiovisual Communication and in Journalism, and received her European Doctorate from Universitat de València (Spain) in June 2013. She specializes in the history of photography and journalism and concentrates her scholarship on the interaction between journalism, photography and film. She also contributes to specialized print publications such as *Archivos de la Filmoteca: Revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen*, *Cinema & Cie: International Film Studies Journal* and *Migraciones y exilios: Cuadernos de la Asociación para el Estudio de los Exilios y Migraciones Ibéricos Contemporáneos*. Her last book, *Las dos mitades de Jacob Riis. Un estudio comparativo de su obra literaria y fotográfica* [*The Two Halves of Jacob Riis: A Comparative Study of His Literary and Photographic Work*] was published in November 2013 in *Cuadernos de Bellas Artes*, vols. 28 & 29 (La Laguna, Tenerife) with the support of several Spanish universities (Universidad de La Laguna, Universidad de Alicante, Universidad de Santiago de Copostela and Universidad de Málaga). Currently she is the editor of *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*.

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The Suspension of Cinematic Momentum. César Ustarroz

Keywords: Cinematic momentum, materiality of cinema, institutional mode of representation, found footage, essay film, indeterminate cinema, paracinema.

Abstract: This essay analyzes the freeze-frame as a sequential element that generates meaning and significance in a film, a prism that projects an expanded and deconstructed reflection from which we can

approach the foundational models that gave birth to contemporary cinematic discourse as we know it. I undertake this analysis of a grammatical resource that has typically held a marginal and secondary place in the study of cinema history, rescuing it as a form of suspension of cinematic *momentum*. With this label I invest the freeze-frame with a recognition that obliges us to think about it not only as a trick, but as a link between still photography and the moving image, a core connection that invites us and at the same time challenges us to consider the cinematic image from its most basic unit of significance.

Author: César Ustarroz (Aldeanueva de Ebro, 1978) holds a BA in History from the University of Zaragoza and a MA in Film Innovation and Development of Projects from the Valencian International University (VIU). He has conducted cinematic direction studies at the Centre d'Estudis Cinematogràfics de Catalunya (CECC), as well as studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Universitat de Barcelona (UB) and doctoral studies in Audiovisual Communication and Journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). He is currently working on an MA in Cinematic Innovation and the Development of Projects at the Valencian International University (VIU). He has contributed to periodicals like *Salonkritik* and *Realtime Magazine*, and in 2010 he published *Teoría del Vjing, Realización Audiovisual a Tiempo Real* (Ediciones Libertarias, Madrid).

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The Camera Lucida (and the Digital Camera): the Re-mediation of Photography in Computer Generated Animation. Marta Martín Núñez

Keywords: Photography, re-mediation, computer generated animation, digital image, advertising.

Abstract: Through a rereading of Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, this essay analyses the values of the photographic image present in the digital image. The notions of objectivity, truth, manipulation, temporality and certificate of presence that are unique to photography are re-mediated (adopting Bolter and Grusin's terminology) in the photorealist style of computer generated animation. The digital

image is therefore conceived of as a hyperimage, capable of integrating other earlier means of representation and reproducing the values they conveyed. The analysis of the photorealist elements in Coca-Cola's advertisement *Happiness Factory* supports the theoretical argument developed in the article.

Author: Marta Martín Núñez holds a BA in Advertising and Public Relations and in Audiovisual Communication from the Universitat Jaume I. She has an MA in CGI Animation Production (Pasozebra LLC and the Universitat Jaume I) and a PhD also from the Universitat Jaume I. Her doctoral thesis is a study on the nature of the digital image applied to CGI animation in commercials. Currently she is a teaching assistant in the Department of Communication Sciences at the Universitat Jaume I.

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Cinema and Photography: The Poetics of the Punctum in Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1962). Javier Marzal Felici

Keywords: Photography, Cinema, Image Theory, Cinema Theory, Chris Marker

Abstract: This article offers a reflection on the relationship between photography and cinema beyond the presence of photography as a material artifact in films (a very common approach in the history of cinema), and more specifically on the relationship between photography and cinema from an expressive and narrative, vital and experiential point of view. To this end, the article focuses closely on the peculiar science-fiction work *La jetée* (1962) by Chris Marker, undoubtedly one of the most important directors of the 20th century. Visually, the film is made up of photos or still images, and tells a hypnotic and captivating story that can help us explore the complex relationship between photography and cinema, especially from the perspective of Image Theory.

Author: Javier Marzal Felici (Place of birth, year) has a BA in Audiovisual Communication, Spanish Language and Philosophy and Education Sciences at the Universitat de València in Spain and a Master's in Communication and Education from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He is a tenured

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Ariadne's Thread. The Beaches that are Agnès Varda. Shelley Rice

Keywords: women filmmakers, gender, photography, film, aesthetics.

Abstract: *The Beaches of Agnes* begins with the filmmaker Agnes Varda walking backwards on a beach she frequented as a child. It ends with the 80-year old artist sitting in her home in Paris, holding an image of herself surrounded by colorful brooms. Suddenly the photograph becomes animated, and starts to recede into the space behind the frame. Seen together, these two scenes encapsulate the relationship between the still and moving image in Varda's filmic self-portrait. In the end, it is not Agnes but her photograph that moves backward. The animated body, in two and three dimensions, remains mobile as long as it is able, but ultimately it will be the fixed image that carries on.

Author: Shelley Rice was born in New York City, U.S.A. in 1950. A critic and historian of photography and multi-media art since 1973, she is a Professor of Art History and Photography Studies at New York University. Her writings have appeared in a range of publications like *Art Journal*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice*, *French Studies* and *Etudes Photographiques*, and her books include *Parisian Views*, *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*, and *The Book of 101 Books*. In 2010, Professor Rice was named a Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture.

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DIALOGUE

From photography to film and vice versa. Agnès Varda and Christa Blümlinger

Keywords: film, photography, genre, aesthetics, video art.

Abstract: A montage of texts and interviews edited by Christa Blümlinger and revised by the filmmaker Agnès Varda in 2009, analysing the relationship existing between cinema and photography in the French director's films. The statements made by Varda shed light on her photographic and cinematic training, as well as her opinions about the interrelationship between the still image and the moving image in her work (films and video installations).

Author: Christa Blümlinger is a professor of Film Studies at the University of Vincennes-Saint-Denis (Paris 8) and a guest professor at the Free University of Berlin. She has undertaken numerous critical and curating activities in Vienna, Berlin and Paris. Her publications include the writings of Harun Farocki (in French) and of Serge Daney (in German) and books about essay-films and film theory. Her most recent publication in German is: *Kino aus Zweiter Hand: Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2009), and in French, *Théâtres de la mémoire : Mouvement des images*, co-edited with Sylvie Lindeperg, Michèle Lagny et al. (Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, "Théorème 14", 2011). She has also published numerous articles in English on multimedia art, essay-films and avant-garde films.

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(DIS)AGREEMENTS

The State of Criticism in Spain. Jordi Revert

Discussion: Daniel Gascó, Carlos Losilla and Diego Salgado.

Keywords: Criticism, state, Spain, generational shift, Internet

Abstract: This three-way discussion addresses the state of critical practice in Spain. The challenges posed in a panorama in constant transformation are discussed, as well as current problems being faced. This debate touches upon topics such as trends in publishing, film festivals, the impact of the Internet, the overlap with analysis and the status of the figure of the critic and its possible generational handover.

Authors: Daniel Gascó García (Benicar-

l6, Spain, 1971) studied Business Sciences at Universitat Jaume I in Castell6n, Spain, where for three years he was responsible for the film classroom. From 1993 to 1997 he was a member of the editorial board of the Valencian magazine *Banda Aparte*. He has contributed to a wide range of entertainment guides including *Qu6 y d6nde*, *Valencia d6a y noche*, *Ateneaglam*, as well as various magazines: *Plano corto*, *D autor*, *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, *Cahiers du Cinema-España* and *Versi6n original*. He has contributed to various anthologies and actively participates in the film cycles organised by the Museo Valenciano de la Ilustraci6n y la Modernidad (MuVIM). He has been a panel judge for a wide range of film festivals (Alcal6 de Henares, La Cabina, Radio City) and has taught the History of Comparative Cinema course at the OFF Academy in Valencia. He was also the host of the television program *Butaca Cero*, on LPTeVA and for one season was responsible for the cinema show *El s6ptimo cielo*, on Radio 7. Since 2004, he has been running the *Stromboli* video club and is a weekly critic for the entertainment guide of the daily newspaper *Levante*. **Contact:** strombolidigital@yahoo.es. / **Carlos Losilla** is a writer and professor of Communication at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, as well as a member of the editorial board for *Cahiers du Cin6ma-España* and a film critic for the daily newspaper *Avui* and for the *La Vanguardia* newspaper's *Cultura/s* supplement. His published books as author include *En busca de Ullrich Seidl* (2003), *La invenci6n de Hollywood* (2003), *El sitio de Viena* (2007), *Fran6ois Truffaut: el deseo del cine* (ed. 2010) and *Flujos de la melancol6a* (2011). **Contact:** carloslosilla5@gmail.com. / **Diego Salgado** is the editor of *Miradas.net*. He writes regularly for *D6tour*, *Cahiers du Cin6ma España*, *Fandigital*, *WeLoveCinema* and *CosasDeCine.COM*. He has contributed to *El Destilador* and to *L'Atalante*, and has worked as a teacher in the Foro de Creadores. He has also contributed to the collective volume *Cien Miradas de Cine* (2010) and the critical DVD editions of *Bajo el Volc6n*, *Mata Hari: agente H-21*, *Orfeo Negro* and *El Conformista*. **Contact:** cine_diegosalgado@hotmail.com. / **Jordi Revert** (Valencia, 1984) holds a BA in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication from the Universitat Val6n-

cia and contributes to both electronic and print media on the subject of cinema. He is currently the vice president of the Asociaci6n Cineforum Atalante, which runs the film classroom at the Universitat Val6ncia and works as a critic and an editor for the online cinema magazine *LaButaca.net*. **Contact:** revert.jordi@gmail.com

VANISHING POINTS

Polanski's Head. Javier Alcoriza

Keywords: violence, amorality, music, ethics, aesthetics, film genres, health/sickness.

Abstract: This text argues that the evaluation of Polanski's best films must resist the temptation to simply reduce his work to a biography of the director. Polanski's cinema returns to the classic ambition to tell stories in a wide range of genres without shying away from the typically modern realm of violence, as a condition of every genuinely moral conquest. The synecdoche of Polanski's head, as it appears in *The Tenant*, would be the resource that the director employs in order to maintain an imaginary conversation about human nature and artistic creation.

Author: Javier Alcoriza Vento (Valencia, 1969) holds a BA in Philosophy and in Art History from the Universitat Val6ncia, and a PhD in Philosophy from the Universidad de Murcia and is a professor of Philosophy at the Universitat Val6ncia. In addition to working as a translator and editor of more than thirty works for different Spanish publishers, he is also the author of various books, including *La democracia de la vida: Notas sobre una met6fora 6tica* (Verbum, 2009), *La patria invisible: Juda6smo y 6tica de la literatura* (Hebraica Ediciones, 2010), *Educaci6n la mirada. Lecciones sobre la historia del pensamiento* (Psylicom, 2012), *El tigre de Hircania. Ensayos de lectura creativa* (Plaza y Vald6s, 2012) and *L6tigos de escorpiones. Un ensayo sobre el arte de la interpretaci6n* (work in progress). He has co-directed two periodicals, *Caracteres literarios* (1997-2005) and *La Torre del Virrey. Revista de estudios culturales* (2005-2009) and has contributed to a wide range of books on cinema, including, *La filosof6a*

y el cine (Verbum, 2002), *Estudios sobre cine* (Verbum, 2004), *Ingmar Bergman, buscador de perlas* (Morphos, 2008), and *Stanley Cavell, mundos vistos y ciudades de palabras* (Plaza y Vald6s, 2010). Since 2010 he has served as president of the Sephardic Jewish cultural association, Tarbut Vilanesa.

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Torture as an Inversion of the Social Order: A commentary on Roman Polanski's *Death and the Maiden*.

Efr6n Poveda Garc6a

Keywords: Trust, moral slide, banality of evil, moral identity, recognition, insanity, vulnerability, self-expansion, annihilation, social contract, torture, pain.

Abstract: *Death and the Maiden* operates as a representation of the three poles participating in the act of torture and beyond it. In this essay, the film is analysed by focusing on how trust in the victim's world, connected to the idea of a social contract, is broken by the act of torture with different consequences for each of these poles. Based on this idea and following the plot line of Roman Polanski's film, I will reflect on the conditions that maintain our social order, as well as the conditions that can break it –what Hannah Arendt called the *banality of evil*.

Author: Efr6n Poveda Garc6a holds a BA in Philosophy from the Universitat de Val6ncia (UV). He is currently participating in research with a grant from the Department of Metaphysics and Recognition Theory at UV. He won the national first prize for excellence in academic performance and the award for outstanding achievement in his major.

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The Myth and Legend of Columbus: In Search of Christopher Columbus in Film. Asela R. Laguna

Keywords: representation, history of Columbus, myth, legend, silent film, documentary, fiction.

Abstract: This essay analyses the continuous attraction and fascination that Christopher Columbus has generated in cinema, as well as the cinematic representation of the validity of the myth and legend of Columbus. Through a brief

historiographic examination of the diverse depictions of Columbus in film –from the early short *Cristophe Colomb* (Vincent Lorant Heilbronn, 1904) to *Even the Rain* (Icíar Bollaín, 2010)– the author reviews the variety of perspectives from which cinema has approached this figure, from hero and genius, to slave-driving villain and even promoter of genocide, illustrating the complexity associated with achieving an accurate portrait of the historical and human condition of the character.

Author: Asela R. Laguna received her Ph. D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is Professor of Spanish at Rutgers University-Newark (New Jersey, USA), was the Director of the Hispanic Civilization & Language Studies Program from 1992 to 1999, and on two occasions has been Acting Chair of the Department of Puerto Rican & Hispanic Caribbean Studies at Rutgers-Livingston Campus (2001-2002; 2004-2005). She is the author of *George Bernard Shaw en la literatura hispánica* (University of Puerto Rico Press, 1981), and editor of *Imágenes e identidades: el puertorriqueño en la literatura* (Huracán, 1985), *Images and Identities: The Puerto Rican in Two World Contexts* (Transaction Press, 1987) and *The Global Impact of the Portuguese Language* (Transaction Press, 2001), among others.

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Tokyo-Ga: A First Person Journey (A Filmed Diary about Absence). José

Antonio Hurtado

Keywords: Wenders, journey, filmed diary, Ozu, Tokyo.

Abstract: This article presents the conception and development of the film *Tokyo-Ga* (Wim Wenders, 1985), and reflects on the film as a twofold journey (physical and emotional) and a diary of the film's author. It is a journey on which Wenders discovers the environment of one of his greatest points of reference: the filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu. Although the author may deny it, this discovery also becomes a kind of pilgrimage. It is the story of a journey to a city, but also a journey back in time, in search of one of the greatest and most notable names in cinema history, with the intention of finding traces of the revered

master in contemporary Japan, whose paradigm is Tokyo, a chaotic, strange and vast metropolis with its agglomerations and contradictions.

Author: José Antonio Hurtado (Sidi Ifni, 1961) holds a BA in Geography and History from the Universitat de València (UV) and a Diploma in Cinema History and Aesthetics from the Cinema Department at the Universidad de Valladolid. He was responsible for the film classroom at the Universitat de València from 1985 to 1989. Since 1985 he has worked as Chief of Programming at the IVAC-La Filmoteca. He is a member of the editorial board of *Cahiers du Cinema España* and a member of the advisory board of *L'Atalante: Revista de estudios cinematográficos*. He is also a professor of Film Genres in the Cinema Department at the Universidad de Valladolid. He has contributed to a wide range of cinema journals, such as *Nosferatu* and *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, and has coordinated the following collective monographs: *Paul Schrader, el tormento y el éxtasis* (1995), *La mirada oblicua: El Cine de Robert Aldrich* (1996), *Richard Fleischer, entre el cielo y el infierno* (1997) and *Robert Rossen: su obra y su tiempo* (2009). He is also the author of *Cine negro, cine de género: subversión desde una mirada en sombra* (Nau llibres, 1986) and *Paris, Texas* (Octaedro, 2010), co-written with Antonio Santamarina.

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Visual Architecture in the Action Film. Jordi Revert

Keywords: Action film, set piece, visual architecture, montage, geographic space, video clip aesthetic, visual structure, semiotics, planning.

Abstract: This essay studies visual architecture within the action film genre, in relation to ubiquity and geographic orientation in its most emblematic scenes. The text also seeks to expose clichés and preconceptions that have relegated the genre to the margins of academic study and research.

Author: Jordi Revert holds a BA in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication from the Universitat València and contributes to various electronic and print media on

the subject of cinema. He is currently the vice president of the Asociación Cinefórum Atalante, which runs the film classroom at the Universitat València, and works as a critic and editor for the online cinema journal *LaButaca.net*.

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Looking at the Little Events: The Case of Chris Marker and David Perlov. Marta Montiano

Keywords: Observation, collection, everyday life, domestic, intimacy.

Abstract: This article reflects on some of the manifestations of the contemporary documentary, focusing on the work of Chris Marker and David Perlov. The text presents the notion of cinema as an everyday task of observation, aimed at capturing a series of shots that reflect reality, in the form of collections. The theory suggests that to film everyday life is to organize reality into images that function as tiny archives of information about the world.

Author: Marta Montiano holds a BA in Audiovisual Communication from the Universitat de València and has completed a Master's in Contemporary Cinema and Audiovisual Studies at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. She recently presented her dissertation titled 'La imagen coleccionada de lo cotidiano' [The collected image of the everyday]. She regularly contributes to the magazine *Lumière*.

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"He opened his eyes and saw only light blue... veils of pink": Notes on Let the Right One In. Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín, Iván Bort Gual y Shaila García Catalán

Keywords: vampires, evil, childhood, audiovisual narrative, remake, adaptation, mainstream, expressive resources, narrative resources.

Abstract: Published in Sweden in 2004, *Låt den rätte komma in* is an unconventional vampire novel written by John Ajvide Lindqvist whose successful reception led to a film adaptation by director Tomas Alfredson in 2008. The film received numerous international awards and critical acclaim and inspired an American remake directed by Matt Reeves. Over this same

period many other vampire-themed works have appeared (such as the *Twilight* saga, or the television series *True Blood*), inviting us to reflect on the reemergence of this almost ancestral theme and its cinematic recoding in the new millennium. This article also aims –in the context of this convulsive setting– to analyse the misfortunes, echoes and departures in Alfredson’s and Reeves’ film adaptations of Lindqvist’s seminal novel.

Authors: Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín (Valencia, 1949) is a doctor of Audiovisual Communication. He has published monographs on *Arrebato* and *A Bout de Souffle*. The most important of his many works include *Más allá de las sombras: Lo ausente en el discurso fílmico desde los orígenes al declive del clasicismo (1895-1949)*, *Discursos de la ausencia: elipsis y fuera de campo en el text fílmico* (2006), *Wong Kar-wai* (2008) and *Elementos de la narrativa audiovisual: expresión y narración* (2011). An author and editor of a wide range of books and publications, Gómez Tarín has extensive experience in script-writing, film editing and directing audiovisual productions. He is Professor of Audiovisual Narration and Script Theory and Technique at the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón, and Assistant Dean of the Audiovisual Communication Program. [personal website: <http://apolo.uji.es/figt>]. / **Iván Bort Gual** (Castellón, 1982) is European Doctor in Communication, and he has a Degree in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations from the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón, where he wrote his doctoral thesis *New paradigms in the curtains of contemporary audiovisual stories Narrative particles of aperture and closure in North-American drama TV series*. Throughout his research career he has participated in numerous conferences and published numerous academic texts such as the book *La vida y nada más*, co-authored with his advisor and mentor Francisco Javier Gomez Tarin. He currently is professor at the Centre d’Ensenyament Superior Albert Giménez (CESAG), Palma de Mallorca, where he teaches in the Degree of Communication Studies [personal website: ivanbortgual.com]. / **Shaila Garcia Catalán** (Castellón, 1983) is European

Doctor in Communication Sciences and Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at Universitat Jaume I (Castellón, Spain), where she teaches “Visual Culture and Mass Media” in the Degree of Video Game Design and Development. Currently she focuses her research interests in contemporary delirious narratives.

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ABSTRACTS [español]

CUADERNO

De cámara a cámara. Foto fija e imagen en movimiento

***Time-Lapse, Time Map. El cuerpo fotográfico de San Francisco en Zodiac de David Fincher.* Damian Sutton**

Palabras clave: fotografía, cine, *time-lapse*, tiempo hodológico, imagen digital, 3D.

Abstract: El presente artículo se ocupa de la continua dependencia de la imagen cinematográfica respecto de la noción de la fotografía, tal y como aparece representada en el film de Warner Bros. *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007); película policiaca que narra la historia de un grupo de detectives y reporteros que siguen los pasos del asesino del Zodiaco, homicida en serie que aterrizó –mediante el envío de cartas burlonas al periódico *San Francisco Chronicle*– a los habitantes de California a finales de los 60 y principios de los 70. Esta producción implicó una amplia utilización de escenarios contruados digitalmente, así como la composición de imágenes generadas por ordenador (CGI), con el objetivo de reproducir la apariencia y ambiente de la época. Asimismo, en el film se intercalan diversas secuencias de transición, como una toma en fotografía secuencial (*time-lapse*) que recoge la construcción del edificio Transamerica. A pesar de que fue creada íntegramente de manera digital, esta secuencia se apoya fuertemente en aquellos detalles que serían esperables en la fotografía secuencial, de manera que sirve para ilustrar el modo en que el nuevo cine digital hace uso de los códigos y convenciones de la cinematografía

analógica. Este hecho es especialmente significativo, porque la secuencia en *time-lapse* –como floritura técnica– se inserta dentro del largometraje, lo que habitualmente hace transparentes los mecanismos del cine. Al contrario de lo que sucede en las películas contemporáneas y las prácticas de videoarte, no es esperable que los largometrajes de los grandes estudios exploren de manera abierta el enfoque temporal; sino que, lejos de esto, acostumbran a reflejar en la medida de lo posible nuestras concepciones culturales más comunes. Apoyándose en las ideas de Gilles Deleuze y Kurt Lewin, este artículo pretende explorar la creación cinematográfica del tiempo hodológico, conseguida a partir de la referencia al legado fotográfico del film y el establecimiento en la producción digital de una cinematografía del cuerpo.

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***El retorno, de Cartier Bresson, o algo no cuadra en esta fotografía.* Stuart Liebman**

Palabras clave: Holocausto, exterminio, liberación, refugiados, campos de concentración, documental, fotografía, *instante decisivo*.

Abstract: Este ensayo supone una reinterpretación de la película de Henri Cartier-Bresson *El retorno* (Le Retour, 1945) y, de manera más general, de su aproximación a la dirección a la luz de su teoría sobre *el instante decisivo*. Preguntas sobre cómo, dónde, por quién y por qué el film fue producido son consideradas en el contexto de la creación del mito nacional francés acabada la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Autor: Stuart Liebman (Filadelfia, Pennsylvania, 1948) es catedrático de Historia y Teoría del Cine en Queens College (Departamento de Comunicación), además de Doctor en Historia del Arte y Teatro por el CUNY Graduate Center. Las investigaciones de Stuart Liebman se centran en dos áreas principales: las intersecciones del cine con el modernismo en el arte y la representación de la historia en el cine. Ha publicado ampliamente sobre el primer cine francés, el cine americano vanguardista, el cine soviético, las películas sobre el Holocausto y el cine alemán posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Actualmente, trabaja en un libro sobre la representación del Holocausto en el cine internacional entre 1944 y 1956. En 2006, fue nombrado «Estudioso del Cine» [Academy Film Scholar] por la Academia de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas de Los Ángeles. Ha sido miembro del Gabinete de Asesores para la revista *October* y fue miembro del Consejo Directivo del Archivo Cinematográfico [Anthology Film Archives] de Nueva York. Es editor de *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah: Key Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), entre otras publicaciones.

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El extraño álbum familiar del siglo XX. Sylvie Lindeperg

Palabras clave: cine, fotografía, historia, Auschwitz, judeocidio, miradas, regímenes de lo visible, invisibilidad.

Abstract: Partiendo de la historia del Álbum de Auschwitz (reportaje fotográfico registrado en la primavera de 1944 en la rampa de Birkenau), este artículo examina las modalidades de su *reinterpretación* en tres obras de cine y televisión. A modo de contrapunto, la película de Alain Jaubert, *Auschwitz, el álbum, la memoria* (1984), se apoya sobre la articulación entre el archivo y el testimonio para reflexionar sobre el fuera de campo de las fotografías, explorar los indicios y los márgenes. Harun Farocki, en *Bilder der Welt uns Inschrift des Krieges* (1988), ubica las fotografías de Auschwitz en el centro de una reflexión sobre la travesía de lo visible y la inestabilidad del sentido, aplicado a la imagen en función de los horizontes de espera y los contextos de lectura. Estas dos obras se emplazan frente a la serie televisiva de la BBC *Auschwitz, the nazis and the Final Solution* (2005), que mezcla escenas reconstituidas e imágenes virtuales, testimonios y documentos de archivo —entre ellos negativos del álbum—, puestos al servicio de una nueva economía de lo visible.

Autora: Sylvie Lindeperg es historiadora y profesora en la universidad de París I-Panthéon Sorbonne, donde dirige el Departamento de Cine y el Centre d'Etude et de Recherches sur l'Histoire et l'Esthétique du Cinéma (CERHEC); también ostenta el cargo de directora adjunta de la escuela de doctorado de Historia del Arte. Lindeperg es autora de *Les Ecrans de l'ombre. La Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le cinéma français* (CNRS Éditions, 1997); *Clio de 5 à 7. Les actualités filmées de la Libération* (CNRS Éditions, 2000); *Nuit et Brouillard. Un film dans l'histoire* (Odile Jacob, 2007); *Univers concentrationnaire et génocide. Voir, savoir, comprendre*, en colaboración con Annette Wieviorka (Mille et Une Nuits, 2008). Asimismo, es co-autora de la película de Jean-Louis Comolli *Face aux fantômes* (Ina et Ciné-Cinéma, 2009).

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Migraciones: Las uvas de la ira y los objetivos de la Farm Security Administration. Rebeca Romero Escrivá

Palabras clave: migración de imágenes, estética, pobreza, fotografía social, fotoperiodismo, novela realista, realismo naturalista, realismo social.

Abstract: La relación entre periodistas, escritores, fotógrafos y cineastas durante la Gran Depresión de los años treinta en Estados Unidos dio lugar a un clima fértil para que se produjera una poderosa y recurrente imbricación entre el texto y la imagen. Las fotografías de la Farm Security Administration (FSA) afectaron a los escritores de la época y viceversa. El cine adaptaría en la forma que le es propia el lenguaje de escritores, periodistas y fotógrafos. A través del estudio de las *Las uvas de la ira* (novela de Steinbeck, película de Ford), el artículo centra su atención en la influencia que ha ejercido la estética de la FSA en los modos de representación cinematográfica coetáneos y contemporáneos.

Autora: Rebeca Romero Escrivá (Valencia, 1982) es doctora por la Universitat de València y licenciada en Comunicación Audiovisual y en Periodismo por la misma universidad. Colaboradora de publicaciones en prensa especializada, como *Archivos de la Filmoteca. Revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen*, *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* y *Migraciones y exilios: Cuadernos de la Asociación para el Estudio de los Exilios y Migraciones Ibéricos Contemporáneos*, su último libro, *Las dos mitades de Jacob Riis. Un estudio comparativo de su obra literaria y fotográfica* (Cuadernos de Bellas Artes, vols. 28 y 29, 2013), presenta un trabajo de investigación interdisciplinar de historia, literatura, periodismo y fotografía norteamericanas. Entre las monografías que ha editado, figura *Páginas pasaderas. Estudios contemporáneos sobre la escritura del guion*, coordinado junto con Miguel Machalski (Shangrila, 2012). Actualmente dirige *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*.

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La suspensión del momentum cinematográfico. César Ustarroz

Palabras Clave: Momentum cinematográfico, materialidad del cine, Modo de Repre-

sentación Institucional, *foundfootage*, cine-ensayo, cine indeterminado, *paracinema*, primer cine, puesta en forma.

Abstract: Este ensayo analiza el congelado de la imagen como elemento sintagmático generador de significado y sentido filmico, prisma que proyecta una reflexión expandida, deconstruida, desde la que poder aproximarnos a los modelos fundacionales que originaron el discurso cinematográfico tal y como hoy lo conocemos. Acometemos su análisis como recurso gramatical que ha ocupado un lugar marginal y subsidiario en la historiografía del cine, rescatándolo bajo la forma de la suspensión del momentum cinematográfico; le dotamos con este etiquetado de un reconocimiento que nos obliga a contemplarlo no solo como truca, sino como enlace entre fotografía fija e imagen en movimiento, nexo nuclear que nos invita y a la vez desafía, a pensar la imagen cinematográfica desde una unidad de significación mínima.

Autor: César Ustarroz (Aldeanueva de Ebro, 1978) es Licenciado en Historia por la Universidad de Zaragoza. y tiene un Máster en Innovación Cinematográfica y Desarrollo de Proyectos por la Universidad Internacional Valenciana (VIU). Ha realizado estudios de dirección cinematográfica en el Centro de Estudios Cinematográficos de Cataluña (CECC), estudios de Antropología Social y Cultural en la Universidad de Barcelona (UB) y estudios de doctorado en Comunicación Audiovisual y Periodismo en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB). Colaborador de publicaciones periódicas como *Salonkritik* y *Realtime Magazine*, en 2010 publicó su libro *Teoría del VJing, Realización Audiovisual a Tiempo Real* (Ediciones Libertarias, Madrid).

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La cámara lúcida (y digital): la re-mediación de la fotografía en la animación infográfica. Marta Martín Núñez

Palabras clave: Fotografía, re-mediación, animación infográfica, imagen digital, publicidad

Abstract: A través de una relectura de la obra de Barthes *La cámara lúcida*, este texto analiza los valores de la imagen fotográfica presentes en la imagen digital. Las nociones de objetividad, verdad, manipulación, tem-

poralidad y certificado de presencia propias de la fotografía se re-median (en términos de Bolter y Grusin) en la animación infográfica de estilo fotorrealista. La imagen digital se concibe, por tanto, como una hiperimagen capaz de integrar otros medios de representación previos, y reproducir los valores que transmiten. El análisis de los elementos fotorrealistas del spot de Coca-Cola *Happiness Factory* apoyan la argumentación teórica desarrollada.

Autora: Marta Martín Núñez es licenciada en Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas y en Comunicación Audiovisual por la Universitat Jaume I. Tiene un máster en Producción de Animación Infográfica (Pasozebra S.L y Universitat Jaume I) y es doctora en Comunicación por la misma universidad. Su tesis doctoral es un estudio sobre la naturaleza de la imagen digital aplicado a la animación infográfica en los spots publicitarios. Actualmente es profesora ayudante en el departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación de la Universitat Jaume I.

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Cine y fotografía. La poética del punctum en *El muelle* de Chris Marker (La jetée, 1962). Javier Marzal Felici

Palabras clave: Fotografía, Cine, Teoría de la Imagen, Teoría del Cine, Chris Marker, **Abstract:** El presente artículo ofrece una reflexión sobre la relación entre la fotografía y el cine, más allá de la presencia de la fotografía como artefacto material en los filmes, muy frecuente en la historia del cine, y más concretamente sobre la relación entre el medio fotográfico y el cinematográfico, desde un punto de vista expresivo y narrativo, vital y experiencial. A tal fin, se presta especial atención al peculiar filme de ciencia-ficción *El muelle* (La jetée, 1962) de Chris Marker, sin duda uno de los directores más relevantes del siglo XX, película cuya banda de imagen está compuesta de fotografías o imágenes fijas. Un relato hipnótico y cautivador que puede ayudarnos a explorar la compleja relación entre la fotografía y el cine, en especial, desde la perspectiva de la Teoría de la Imagen.

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El hilo de Ariadna: en las playas que son Agnès Varda. Shelley Rice

Palabras clave: Fotografía, paisajes, playas, Agnès Varda, autobiografía.

Abstract: *Las playas de Agnès* (The Beaches of Agnes, 2008) comienza con la cineasta Agnès Varda caminando hacia atrás en la playa que frecuentó siendo niña, y finaliza en su casa de París, con la artista de ochenta años sentada, sujetando una imagen de sí misma donde aparece rodeada de coloridas escobas. De repente, la fotografía toma vida, comienza a alejarse en el espacio detrás del marco. Vistas conjuntamente, estas dos escenas condensan la relación entre la imagen fija y la imagen en movimiento en el autorretrato filmico de Varda; pues, en el final, no es Agnès quien marcha hacia atrás, sino su fotografía. El cuerpo animado, en dos y tres dimensiones, permanece en movimiento mientras puede, pero, en última instancia, será la imagen fija lo que perdure.

Autora: Shelley Rice (Nueva York, 1950), crítica e historiadora de la fotografía y el arte multimedia, es profesora de Historia del arte y Estudios fotográficos en la New York University (NYU), Nueva York, Estados Unidos. Sus artículos han aparecido en diversas publicaciones, como *Art Journal*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice*, *French Studies* o *Etudes Photographiques*. Entre sus libros cabe destacar *Parisian Views* (The MIT Press, 1997); *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Chaun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman* (The MIT Press, 1999); y *The Book of 101 Books. The Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century* (Roth Horowitz, LLC: 2001). En 2010, Rice fue nombrada Caballero de la Orden de las Artes y las Letras de Francia por el Ministro de Cultura de dicho país

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DIÁLOGO

De la fotografía al cine y viceversa.

Christa Blümlinger

Palabras clave: cine, fotografía, género, estética, videoarte

Abstract: Montaje de textos y entrevistas realizado por Christa Blümlinger y revisado por la cineasta Agnès Varda en 2009, en los que se analiza la relación existente entre el cine y la fotografía en la filmografía de la directora francesa. Las declaraciones de Varda dan cuenta de su formación fotográfica y cinematográfica, así como de sus opiniones sobre la interrelación entre la imagen fija y en movimiento en su obra (películas e instalaciones de videoarte).

Autora: Christa Blümlinger es profesora de estudios cinematográficos en la Universidad Vincennes-Saint-Denis (Paris 8) y profesora invitada en la Free University de Berlín. Ha desarrollado numerosas actividades críticas y curatorias en Viena, Berlín y París. Sus publicaciones incluyen la edición de escritos de Harun Farocki (en francés) y de Serge Daney (en alemán) y libros sobre películas de ensayo y teoría del cine. Su publicación más reciente en alemán es: *Kino aus Zweiter Hand. Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2009), y en francés, *Théâtres de la mémoire. Mouvement des images*, co-editado con Sylvie Lindeperg, Michèle Lagney et alii (Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, «Théorème 14», 2011). También ha publicado numerosos artículos en inglés sobre el arte multimedia, películas de ensayo y películas de vanguardia.

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(DES)ENCUENTROS

El estado de la crítica en España.

Jordi Revert

Discusión: Daniel Gascó, Carlos Losilla y Diego Salgado.

Palabras clave: Crítica, estado, España, relevo generacional, Internet.

Abstract: Esta discusión a tres bandas aborda el estado del ejercicio de la crítica en España. En ella se tratan los desafíos que plantea un panorama en constante transformación,

así como los problemas a los que se enfrenta en la actualidad. En este debate tienen cabida las tendencias editoriales, los festivales de cine, la incidencia de Internet, las fronteras con el análisis y el estatus de la figura del crítico y su posible relevo generacional.

Autores: **Daniel Gascó García** (Benicarló, 1971) estudió Ciencias Empresariales en la Universitat Jaume I de Castellón, donde se hizo cargo durante tres años del Aula de Cine. De 1993 a 1997 formó parte del consejo de redacción de la revista *Banda Aparte*. Colaboró en diversas carteleras —*Qué y dónde*, *Valencia día y noche*, *Ateneaglam*— y en diversas revistas —*Plano corto*, *D autor*, *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, *Cahiers du Cinema-España* y *Versión original*—. Ha contribuido a la publicación de varios libros colectivos y participa activamente en los ciclos de cine organizados por El Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y la Modernidad (MuVIM). Ha sido jurado en diversos festivales de cine (Alcalá de Henares, La Cabina, Radio City) e impartido la asignatura de Historia del Cine Comparada en la Academia OFF de Valencia. También fue presentador del programa de televisión *Butaca Cero*, en LPTeVA, y responsable durante una temporada del programa de cine *El séptimo cielo*, en Radio 7. Desde 2004, regenta el video-club *Stromboli*, el más completo de la ciudad de Valencia en cine de autor y *underground*, y publica crítica semanal en la Cartelera del diario *Levante-EMV*. Contacto: strombolidigital@yahoo.es. / **Carlos Losilla** (Barcelona, 1960) es escritor y profesor de Comunicación en la Universitat Pompeu Fabra de Barcelona, así como miembro del consejo de redacción de *Cahiers du Cinéma-España* y crítico cinematográfico del diario *Avui* y del suplemento *Cultura/s* del periódico *La Vanguardia*. Algunos de sus libros publicados como autor y/o editor son *En busca de Ulrich Seidl* (2003), *La invención de Hollywood* (2003), *El sitio de Viena* (2007), *François Truffaut: el deseo del cine* (2010) y *Flujos de la melancolía* (2011). Contacto: carloslosilla5@gmail.com. / **Diego Salgado** (Madrid, 1967) es redactor de *Miradas.net*. Escribe habitualmente en *Détour*, *Cahiers du Cinéma-España*, *Fandigital*, *WeLoveCinema* y *CosasDeCine.COM*. Ha participado en *El Destilador Cultural* y en *L'Atalante*, y ejercido como docente en el Foro de Creadores. Colaborador en el volu-

men colectivo *Cien Miradas de Cine* (2010) y en las ediciones críticas en DVD de *Bajo el Volcán*, *Mata Hari*: agente H-21, *Orfeo Negro* y *El Conformista*. Contacto: cine_diegosalgado@hotmail.com. / **Jordi Revert** (Valencia, 1984) es licenciado en Periodismo y Comunicación Audiovisual por la Universidad de Valencia y colaborador de distintos medios, electrónicos y en papel, de temática cinematográfica. Actualmente ocupa el cargo de vicepresidente de la Asociación Cinefórum Atalante, que gestiona el Aula de Cinema de la Universitat de València y trabaja como crítico y editor de la revista de cine online *LaButaca.net*.

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PUNTOS DE FUGA

La cabeza de Polanski. Javier Alcoriza Vento

Palabras clave: violencia, amoralidad, música, ética, estética, géneros cinematográficos, salud/enfermedad

Abstract: Este texto considera que la valoración de las mejores películas de Polanski debe evitar la tentación de reducir la obra a la biografía del director. El cine de Polanski recupera la ambición clásica de contar historias de diversos géneros sin eludir el dominio de la violencia, típicamente moderno, como condición de toda conquista genuinamente moral. La sinécdoque de la cabeza de Polanski, según aparece en *El quimérico inquilino*, sería el recurso del que se vale el director para mantener una conversación imaginaria sobre la naturaleza humana y la creación artística.

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ensayo sobre el arte de la interpretación (en prensa). Ha codirigido dos publicaciones periódicas, *Caracteres literarios* (1997-2005) y *La Torre del Virrey. Revista de estudios culturales* (2005-2009) y colaborado en diversos libros de temática cinematográfica, entre ellos, *La filosofía y el cine* (Verbum, 2002), *Estudios sobre cine* (Verbum, 2004), *Ingmar Bergman, buscador de perlas* (Morphos, 2008), *Stanley Cavell, mundos vistos y ciudades de palabras* (Plaza y Valdés, 2010). Desde 2010 preside TarbutVinalesa.

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La tortura como inversión del mundo social. Un comentario a La muerte y la doncella de Roman Polanski. Efrén Poveda García

Palabras clave: Confianza, deslizamiento, banalidad del mal, identidad moral, reconocimiento, locura, vulnerabilidad, autoexpansión, anihilación, contrato social, tortura, dolor.

Abstract: *La muerte y la doncella* funciona como una representación de los tres polos actuantes en la situación de tortura y más allá de ella. En este ensayo se analiza la película centrándose en cómo la confianza en el mundo de la víctima, vinculada con la idea del contrato social, queda rota en la tortura con distintas consecuencias para cada uno de los polos. A partir de ahí y siguiendo el hilo argumental de la película de Roman Polanski, reflexionaremos sobre las condiciones que mantiene nuestro orden social, así como las que pueden romperlo —lo que Hannah Arendt llamó *banalidad del mal*—.

Autor: Efrén Poveda García es licenciado en Filosofía por la Universitat de València. Actualmente ejerce como becario de investigación del Departamento de Metafísica y Teoría del Conocimiento de dicha universidad. Obtuvo el Primer premio nacional a la excelencia en el rendimiento académico y el Premio extraordinario de licenciatura.

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Mito y leyenda colombinos: en busca de Cristóbal Colón en el cine. Asela R. Laguna

Palabras clave: representación, historia colombina, mito, leyenda, cine mudo, documental, ficción.

Abstract: Este ensayo analiza la atracción y fascinación ininterrumpidas que Cristóbal Colón ha generado en el cine, así como la representación fílmica de la vigencia del mito y leyenda colombinos. A través de un breve recorrido historiográfico de las diversas representaciones de Cristóbal Colón en el cine —del temprano cortometraje *Christophe Colomb* (Vincent Lorant-Heilbronn, 1904) a *También la lluvia* (Icíar Bollaín, 2010)— la autora repasa la variedad de perspectivas con las que el cine se ha aproximado a su figura —de héroe y genio, a villano esclavista e incluso genocida—, lo que muestra la complejidad de llevar a cabo una representación fiel de la condición histórica y humana del personaje.

Autora: Asela R. Laguna es licenciada en Humanidades por la Universidad de Puerto Rico (Mayaguez, Puerto Rico) y doctora en Literatura Comparada por la University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, Estados Unidos). Directora del Department of Classical and Modern Language and Literatures de Rutgers University, Newark (New Jersey, Estados Unidos), actualmente escribe sobre teatro, literatura puertorriqueña y la representación de la figura de Cristóbal Colón en la literatura. Es autora del libro *George Bernard Shaw en la literatura hispánica* (University of Puerto Rico Press, 1981) y editora de *Imágenes e identidades: el puertorriqueño en la literatura* (Huracán, 1985), y de *The Global Impact of the Portuguese Language* (Transaction Press, 2001), entre otras obras.
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Tokio-Ga: Un viaje en primera persona (Un diario filmado con el nombre propio de Ozu). José Antonio Hurtado

Palabras clave: Wenders, viaje, diario cinematográfico, Ozu, Tokio.

Abstract: El presente artículo expone como se gestó el proyecto y se desarrolló la filmación de *Tokio-Ga* (Wim Wenders, 1985). Y reflexiona sobre el film en su doble vertiente de viaje (físico y emocional) y diario del autor. Un viaje de descubrimiento del entorno de uno de sus grandes referentes: el cineasta Yasuhiro Ozu, que aunque el autor lo niegue se convierte también en una cierta peregrinación. La historia de un viaje a una ciudad —pero también en el tiempo, hacia

el pasado, en busca de uno de los grandes e insignes nombres de la historia del cine—, con la intención a su vez de encontrar las huellas, las del maestro venerado, en el Japón contemporáneo, cuyo paradigma es Tokio, una caótica, extraña y gran metrópoli con sus aglomeraciones y contradicciones.

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La arquitectura visual en el cine de acción. Jordi Revert

Palabras clave: Cine de acción, *set piece*, arquitectura visual, montaje, espacio geográfico, estética videoclip, estructura visual, semiótica, planificación

Abstract: Este ensayo estudia la arquitectura visual dentro del cine de acción, en relación con la ubicuidad y la orientación geográfica en sus escenas más emblemáticas. Asimismo, pretende el texto desenmascarar tópicos y lugares comunes que han relegado al género a un espacio marginal en la investigación y el estudio.

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Mirar los pequeños acontecimientos. El caso de Chris Marker y David Perlov. Marta Montiano

Palabras clave: Observación, colección, cotidiano, doméstico, intimidad.

Abstract: Este artículo reflexiona sobre algunas manifestaciones del documental contemporáneo, centrándose en la obra de Chris Marker y David Perlov. El texto apunta a una noción del cine como trabajo cotidiano de observación, dirigido a la consecución de una serie de tomas sobre la realidad, en forma de colecciones. Se señala la tesis de que filmar lo cotidiano es ordenar la realidad en imágenes que funcionan como pequeños archivos sobre el mundo.

Autora: Marta Montiano es licenciada en Comunicación Audiovisual por la Universitat de València y ha realizado el Máster en Estudios de Cine y Audiovisual Contemporáneos en la Universitat Pompeu Fabra de Barcelona. Recientemente ha presentado su tesina llamada *La imagen coleccionada de lo cotidiano*. Colabora habitualmente en la revista *Lumière*.

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«Abrió los ojos y no vio más que azul claro... velos de color rosa»: notas a Déjame entrar. Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín, Iván Bort Gual, Shaila García Catalán

Palabras clave: vampiros, mal, infancia, narrativa audiovisual, *remake*, adaptación, *mainstream*, recursos expresivos, recursos narrativos.

Abstract: En 2004 se publica en Suecia *Låt den rätte komma in*, atípica novela de vampiros escrita por John Ajvide Lindqvist cuya exitosa acogida provoca su adaptación al cine en 2008 de la mano del director sueco Tomas Alfredson. La película consigue numerosos premios internacionales y reconocimiento crítico y en 2010 se estrena un *remake* norteamericano dirigido por Matt Reeves. En el contexto de este tránsito surgen muchas otras obras de temática vampírica —saga *Crepúsculo*, la serie televi-

siva *True Blood*— que invitan a reflexionar acerca del resurgir de esta temática casi ancestral y su recodificación cinematográfica en el nuevo milenio. El presente artículo pretende, además, en el interior de este convulso escenario, analizar los trasvases, ecos y rupturas de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Alfredson y Reeves desde la novela germinal de Lindqvist.

Autores: **Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín** (1949) es doctor en Comunicación Audiovisual. Ha publicado monografías sobre *Arrebato* y *A bout de souffle*. Destacan, entre otros, sus libros *Más allá de las sombras: Lo ausente en el discurso fílmico desde los orígenes al declive del clasicismo (1895-1949)*, *Discursos de la ausencia: elipsis y fuera de campo en el texto fílmico* (2006), *Wong Kar-wai* (2008) y *Elementos de Narrativa Audiovisual. Expresión y Narración* (2011). Autor y editor de diversos libros y publicaciones, tiene amplia experiencia en guión, montaje y dirección de audiovisuales. Es Profesor de *Narrativa Audiovisual* y *Teoría y Técnica del Guión* en la Universitat Jaume I de Castellón, Vicedecano Director de la Titulación y Grado de Comunicación Audiovisual. [web personal: <http://apolo.uji.es/fjgt/>] / **Iván Bort Gual** es doctor europeo en Ciencias de la Comunicación, licenciado en Comunicación Audiovisual y en Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas por la Universitat Jaume I de Castellón, donde realizó su tesis doctoral *Nuevos paradigmas en los telones del relato audiovisual contemporáneo: partículas narrativas de apertura y cierre en las series de televisión dramáticas norteamericanas*. A lo largo de su trayectoria investigadora ha participado en numerosos congresos y publicado diversos textos académicos, como el libro *La vida y nada más*, co-escrito con su director de tesis y mentor Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín. Actualmente es profesor en el Centre d'Ensenyament Superior Albert Giménez (CESAG) de Palma de Mallorca, donde imparte docencia en el Grado de Comunicación Audiovisual. / **Shaila García Catalán** (Castellón, 1983) es profesora ayudante doctora del Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación de la Universitat Jaume I donde imparte Cultura visual y medios de masas en el Grado en Diseño y Desarrollo de Videojuegos en la Licenciatura en Comunicación Audiovisual. Actualmente centra el

interés de sus investigaciones en las narrativas delirantes contemporáneas.

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