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THE GEOPOLITICS OF CINEMA AND THE STUDY OF FILM / LA GÉOPOLITIQUE DU CINÉMA ET LES ÉTUDES CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUES

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PREFACE

Tim Bergfelder, University of Southampton

Following the psychoanalytic and poststructuralist debates of the 1970s, and the New Film History of the 1980s and early 1990s, one of the key concerns in the study of film over the past fifteen years has been what one may call the geopolitical or the topographical turn. Instead of attempting to define the essence of film (according to the old medium specificity paradigms), the more important problem to solve has become how to locate the space, or rather the spaces, of cinema.[1] In order to answer that question, one needs, in the first instance, to engage with the multiple consequences of the proliferation of media platforms, of new modes of production, circulation, distribution and consumption since the end of the 20th century. While digital moving images are seemingly everywhere, from iPhones to YouTube and Netflix to in-flight entertainment, cinema in the traditional sense of a fixed space of theatrical exhibition has become an ancillary function. Film studies methodology has adapted to these changes, branching out into research investigating developments and new practices of production in an expanded field of creative industries, as well as studies into distribution and consumption in the digital age. Topics include areas such as production research, film policy at national and supranational levels, investigations into the rise and fall and rise of 3D, the ubiquity of film festivals, the prevalence of piracy and other forms of informal distribution,[2] the reading strategies of audiences, and the creative activities of virtual cinephile and fan communities.

Apart from untying itself from an exclusive bind to the cinema, what Francesco Casetti has referred to as the medium's "relocation,"[3] film studies in the past fifteen years has attempted to unmoor itself from other spatial paradigms, especially where these map onto pre-conceived differences in aesthetics, politics and cultural value. Thus, old hierarchical categorizations and schematic divisions such as Hollywood/mainstream cinema, European/art cinema, and Third Cinema/political resistance have become increasingly problematized and challenged. Instead, the last decade has seen a championing of the cinema at the periphery,[4] the cinema of small, and often hitherto overlooked nations and regions,[5] and more generally a call to de-Westernize our understanding of film.[6] But apart from such simultaneously de-centring and localizing strategies and practices, there have also been attempts to understand more interactive and more global, but less clearly bounded, processes. These have been grouped under a range of contested categories, of which "world cinema"[7] and "transnational cinema"[8] have arguably become the most ubiquitous. The former category, in particular, has been employed in variety of contradictory and often mutually incompatible ways: from designating a cinematic version of the old Enlightenment ideal of a universal cultural reference point (i.e. the idea of *Weltliteratur*) to meaning anything that

lies outside the traditional duality of Hollywood mainstream and European art cinema, and thus precisely not being part of the (established) canon.

In a similar way, transnational cinema has been seen by some scholars as a means to challenge the very essence of the concept of national cinema itself and by extension to critique the discourses of identity and exclusivity that give rise to national(ist) narratives. In this reading of the transnational, then, hybrid and/or cosmopolitan identities, perspectives, and cultural practices are championed for their transformative progressive potential. For other scholars these very same transformations are seen as paving the way towards cultural homogenization and in the service of capitalist and neo-imperialist globalization, which can only be resisted through bolstering national defense mechanisms. In a different reading of the term, the transnational is being employed as a more circumscribed strategy to identify types of film and filmmakers that cannot otherwise be contained by ordinary national criteria (and thereby maintaining the normativity of national formations) – for example, the cinemas of (or featuring) migrants, diasporic communities, and ethnic minorities.

As these complex debates attest, the question of where cinema is located is inherently political, as Fredric Jameson already noted in what must now be regarded as one the pioneering studies in the field,[9] but it is also always, as Michael J. Shapiro has insisted on, a question of aesthetics.[10] All the contributors to this special issue of *Cinéma & Cie* maintain a focus on the politics of aesthetics, while also illuminating the specific contexts of new forms of production, circulation and consumption. Delphine Wehrli, Jakob Nilsson, and Giorgio Avezzù offer more general theoretical reflections on the nature of cinema's geopolitics. In bringing into dialogue the work of Jameson and György Lukács in her essay, and arguing how the former's understanding of the term "totality" can be employed to make sense of postcolonial film practices, Wehrli's essay reminds us that much of our current assumptions about the function and uses of cinema (and art more generally) can be traced back to earlier theoretical arguments. Avezzù's contribution, meanwhile, usefully elucidates how much the rhetoric and aesthetics of world cinema remains indebted to the conceptual and metaphorical insights from classic cartography, carrying with it the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. In a similar vein, Jakob Nilsson employs Jameson's famous notion of cognitive mapping to re-envision and re-contextualise the history of "third cinema". In many of the articles, specific local case studies are brought into contact with broader global concerns. Dudley Andrew's essay on the extraordinary trajectory of Korean cinema from being a film culture barely known outside its borders for most of its history to becoming, almost overnight, a central plank of a new "world cinema canon" draws attention to the ambivalent consequences of this supposed "success," where a greater visibility in the global arena might coincide with a weakened ability of a national cinema to reflect, in a political sense, on its own local context. As a both domestically and increasingly internationally successful form of non-Hollywood popular mainstream cinema, Bollywood has frequently been an anomaly in traditional cartographies of world cinema. Alexandra Schneider's essay articulates these problems by drawing on Franco Moretti's intervention in redefining a contemporary notion of the Enlightenment ideal of *Weltliteratur*, adopting a method of comparative film analysis that relies on the insights from both the social sciences and the humanities. Angela Prysthon's contribution about the renaissance of regional filmmaking movements in Brazil highlights the doubly peripheral nature of these endeavours, while demonstrating that these practices nevertheless are unthinkable without a

dialogue that connects them to broader trends in global filmmaking. Moving from strictly national parameters to the importance of regional networks, Natalie Boehler's essay offers insights on how contemporary Southeast Asian independent filmmakers navigate national, regional, and supranational opportunities, in order to promote their often anti-imperialist or otherwise politically engaged cinematic visions. Finally, Valerio Coladonato and Ilaria De Pascalis's contributions chart the transnational dimensions in European and North American cinema, respectively. Taken together, this special issue of *Cinéma & Cie* not only manifests the multiple centrifugal and centripetal forces that drive global filmmaking practices, but also illustrates the complex theoretical and methodological approaches that can be brought to bear on their understanding.

1 See also Vinzenz Hediger, "What Do We Know When We Know Where Something Is? World Cinema and the Question of Spatial Ordering," *Screening the Past*, no. 37, October 2013, http://www.screeningthepast.com/2013/10/what-do-we-know-when-we-know-where-something-is-world-cinema-and-the-question-of-spatial-ordering/, last visit 24 November 2013.
2 Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012.
3 Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*, no. 2, Autumn 2012, http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-relocation-of-cinema/, last visit 24 November 2013.
4 Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, Belén Vidal (eds.), *Cinema at the Periphery*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2010.
5 Mette Hjort, Duncan Petrie (eds.), *The Cinema of Small Nations*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2008.
6 Saër Maty Bâ, Will Higbee (eds.), *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2012. See also: Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Routledge, London-New York 1994.
7 Stephanie Dennison, Song Hwee Lim (eds.), *Remapping World Cinemas: Identity Culture and Politics in Film*, Wallflower, London-New York 2006.
8 See, e.g., Elizabeth Ezra, Terry Towden (eds.), *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2005; Patricia Pisters, Wim Staat (eds.), *Shooting The Family: Transnational Media and Intercultural Values*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2005; Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre, Áine O'Healy (eds.), *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008; Nataša Ďurovičová, Kathleen Newman (eds.), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, London-New York 2010.
9 Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1992.
10 Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, Routledge, London-New York 2009.

IS CINEMA CONTAGIOUS? TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE CASE OF KOREA

Dudley Andrew, Yale University

Abstract

Overused and under-theorized, the term "transnational" remains crucial for any dynamic examination of problems and processes in World Cinema. It sits between local context and global context. While national and international approaches have the advantage of clear demarcations, they do not respond to the unofficial life that cinema lives transnationally. Like other bottom-up phenomena (fashion, religion, even disease), films do not obey national boundaries. In this regard the position of Korea is anomalous, for here a national policy put into effect in 1995, aims directly at transnational results. This article looks briefly at pre-1995 Korean films and then at those that have come since, in order to gauge the extent to which a national policy can promote a transnational consequence (different from mere export).

I.

The term "transnational" retains the "national" in an era that assumes that the real action has raced beyond it aiming at whatever is "global." Transnational film or literary studies enables those who care deeply about a national culture to keep their focus fixed while zooming out to a view of a wider system to which local literature contributes and from which it increasingly gains its nourishment. An intermediate, or third, term, "transnational" is most often employed in relation to small countries. One hears little of "transnational American film." Instead the adjective "global" is deemed suitable to characterize Hollywood's incalculable resources and reach, not to mention the culture it purveys. The adjective "transnational" seems to apply best to junior national cinemas that are asking, or have been asked, to play in the big leagues.

Korea is in my sights because its ascendancy has been so dramatic and recent. Still not listed as one of the forty "common national cinemas" in IMDB, it was so junior as to be effectively invisible before 1995, not appearing on the world cinema map. True, from the mid-1960s on it has averaged almost 80 films per year, yet until 1995 it had but a single auteur whose name was recognized: Im Kwon-taek. Korea's lift-off from obscurity to brash upstart on the world stage makes it a uniquely instructive, though hardly representative, case study of transnational cinema.

Tellingly, the most comprehensive essay on cinematic transnationalism was written by Mette Hjort,[1] whose books include *The Cinema of Small Nations* and *Small Nation*, *Global Cinema*.

Her essay, commissioned for an anthology entitled *World Cinema*, *Transnational Perspectives*, draws up a taxonomy of multiple "transnationalisms." South Korea inhabits the seventh of her eight categories, the one she designates "modernizing transnationalism." Hjort's is a moralizing taxonomy, there being good and bad versions of the process, just as for Andrew Sarris there were seven categories of auteurs, from top tier to worst, and for Comolli/Narboni in 1969 there were six categories of political cinema, graded a-f, according to their revolutionary potential.[2] Hjort is equally moralizing. She rightly fears that the term "transnational" is not just banal, it has been kidnapped by market strategists. And so she forthrightly divides the uses of this term into those that are unseemly, like "globalizing" and "opportunistic" transnationalism, and those that are healthy, such as "affinitive" and "milieu-building" transnationalism. The latter apply to small national cinemas that band together in mutual self-survival, such as Denmark and Scotland. South Korea doesn't figure here (though it does at times cooperate with other modest national cinemas like Thailand). Instead it falls into her category of "modernizing transnationalism," whereby a nation improves its conditions through the nurture of cultural relations beyond its borders. Officially underwritten by the State, cinema in Korea serves not just to rally national filiation at home but to be a leading edge as Korean entrepreneurs venture out to engage other societies and markets. Korean cinema, Hjort insists, has helped the nation enjoy unprecedented growth in stature not just by exporting its self-image but by fostering a progressive approach to cultural exchange, in short as a kind of business model in which the health of the system (in this case film art and industry) takes precedence over the advantage gained by any one participant in the system.

Hjort rightly points to the Jeonju Film Festival held each Spring since 2000 because it screens films from all over and because its "Digital Shorts" project has resulted in thirty mid-length movies made by masters from around the world, like Zhang Yuan, Naomi Kawase, John Akomfrah, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Harun Farocki, Pedro Costa, Idrissa Oeudraogo, James Benning, etc. More than a gesture of the cosmopolitan brotherhood and sisterhood of cinephilia, these omnibus digital films exemplify Korea's progressive entrepreneurship in transnational business affairs. Such efforts have opened up lines of finance and communication between Korea and the nations these directors hail from that can be utilized by the nation's cultural and mercantile sectors. But where Hjort applauds, I instinctively draw back, for whenever culture is "accounted for" by the ledgers of business, it loses its critical force.

Having been recognized, the transnational dimension remains latent in all approaches to Korean cinema, even those that do not focus on it. For instance a new anthology on Korean popular culture aims to identify and bring into line a century of distinct daily life practices and discourses. This apparent archeology of national roots, however, is framed by a larger mission: to learn the origins of the hazy phenomenon exported in the past dozen years as *Hallyu*, the Korean Wave.[3] If the adjective "Korean" has acquired value such that it literally inflates the price of whatever it qualifies when sold abroad (Korean handbag, Korean haircut, Korean comic book, Korean film), those who know best and care most ought to focus on – bring into focus – this amorphous phenomenon, "Korean Culture, " to determine its morphology and history.

However, this introspective inquiry will be satisfying only to a point, and satisfying mainly to those scholars content to remain within their home culture. Yet Korean studies, including Korean cinema studies, is not really centripetal; Mette Hjort is right: its growth pattern makes it coincident with, even an effect of, *Hallyu*, the wave broadcast from Korea. Everything Korean,

I'm saying, finds its value raised by its export quotient. Jung-Bong Choi insists on this in his astute introduction to a dossier of essays on Korea published in a new journal bearing the name *Transnational Cinemas*:

> *[The transnational] is an enzyme that prompts the organizational metabolism of the national. With transnational administered into the national body, the latter morphs into a semi-solid state with a higher degree of [...] elasticity. [...][Just as "transnational"] is an indicator of the chameleon-like adaptability of the national, 'Korean' must not be taken to be any obdurate insistence upon cultural distinctiveness. [...] Rather, 'Korean' signifies a transit platform located within an expanding grid of travelling cultures [...] reorganized and repackaged in response to shifting domestic and international demands.*[4]

Choi organized the first major conference concerning the expansiveness of Korean cinema, which took place in New York rather than in Seoul.[5] In the 1970s or even the 1980s, such a gathering in New York would have consisted chiefly of American scholars, with the addition of well-chosen native informants; in the cold war atmosphere it would have been undertaken in the name of "area studies," with those outside Korea anxious to learn what was needed about that culture so as to better operate in and around a country important to America's international interests. But today, to hold a Korean studies event in the US, and to do so in the name of "Transnational Korea," suggests a different conception of the object and a different aim. For *Hallyu* literalizes Franco Moretti's distinction between waves and roots in the study of cultural development.[6] The national approach examines films as arising from cultural roots planted in local soil and supplying nourishment to new branches and fruit. On the other hand, if seen laterally, that is, transnationally, literature and cinema develop through waves that wash across borders in just the way economic capital does, or diseases, or new trends in technology and ideas. The Korean Popular Culture anthology mentioned above traces roots; whereas the conference at NYU follows waves. Today's academic climate approves the latter, prizing flows and being suspicious when any given shape takes on a degree of solidity or is tied to roots. Both Korea (qualified at the NYU conference as a trans-National formation) and Cinema (qualified as cine-media) are assumed to be constantly dissolving and reforming within a deterritorealized Asian culture and an expanded sphere of media-hybridity.

The dramatic vocabulary employed by this and other movements (as well as by scholars of those movements) tends to project terminal states where all movement disappears. To return to fears of entropy that were rife when the discourse of globalization really caught fire a few decades ago, such elusive terms as "cine-media" and "trans-National formation" respond to the exponential rise in heat that is altering the state of many cultures and many media, like ice turning to water, or water turning to gas, until the containers that once kept substances intact cannot hold them any longer: they melt away or boil over or entering the atmosphere as steam. In just this way, cultures and media are said to be running together in shapeless pools that soon or eventually may merge in larger cultural waters until they reach a single sea without nameable differences, where hybridity is the norm and where, therefore, every instance carries exactly the same weight. In a hundred years, it's been suggested – or maybe in just twenty – a single subject area may exist, called simply, "Global Culture," without any qualification whatsoever: on the national side, the "trans" of *trans*national would have reached its global limit, and on the cinema side, final convergence

would have rendered all media interchangeable. We would then be concerned no longer with the cultural *field* but with cultural *fluid*.

I have projected here such an entropic final state so as to highlight the thermodynamics of globalism, including the energy it requires and the energy it gives off. Now in reality, there exist many intermediaries that transform (in the electrical sense of the term) this globalizing energy so that it can be used in specific locations. Processes of dubbing, subtitling, advertising, and criticism help high-voltage films, often from distant sources, to successfully enter various local cultures, and to do so in different ways, place to place. Famously, *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000) did poorly (and was generally reviled) in the PRC, and did just modest business in Korea and Japan, while breaking every box office record in Taiwan and Singapore.[7] In each of these national cases, distinct issues concerning language, genre, and star appeal had to be dealt with. For instance, with the main actors coming from different Chinas, and so pronouncing Mandarin in a comical chorus, the film's English subtitles served as a homogenizing linguistic base. This means that from the outset such a "transnational" Chinese film aimed to be supra-regional too, with its clear Asian appeal meant to be supplemented by North American and European audiences. American distributors who worried that its foreignness could "shock" non-Asian mass audiences (in the electrical sense), saw their risk reduced by certain transformers, including those subtitles and the critical attention to "woman warriors." In short, a film that might have appeared to be an outlier flowed into the current of mainstream cinema everywhere, encountering a very wide, if uneven reception. This is usually how the term "transnational" modifies the extremes of the national on one side and the global on the other.[8]

Now entropy occurs most visibly where extremes prevail and are not reduced through transformation, as when a piece of ice is placed in an oven or when one culture injects itself forcefully into another (the U.S. entering Korea to establish a vast military presence after WWII). When the logic of opposition favors extremists (whether ethnic nationalists or one-culture globalists) it's time to look for a "third" position, something "in between" the extremes. This is when it is time to recruit the word "transnational," not as a sign of millennial change but as a sign of the historical, and one that has a history itself. We find the word drafted into the discourses of many fields in the 1980s and then massively in the 1990s. This new focus term helped disciplines cope with discussions that had lost their shape when confronted by the turn to issues of globalization in all domains. First in the social sciences (geography, demographics, sociology) and then in the humanities (history, art history, literature), the transnational managed debates that had too quickly taken the form of nation vs. world and local vs. global. It softened this stark yet banal opposition by opening space between them, inducing circulation, adjustment, compromise and, I believe, novelty capable of extricating us from either/or situations.

As a fundamentally historical, rather than nomological discipline, cinema studies should expect to triangulate problems that often come to it in binary form. Take, for instance, the perennial interrogative, "Is film a language?" This purely theoretical question constipated the discipline in the era of semiotics, even though Christian Metz had fairly early on declared cinema a "langage" not a "langue." I think André Bazin had intuited the answer in the title of a famous essay, *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* (1958). Evolution (i.e. history) answers the questions that theory poses. As for our field's most primary question, *What is Cinema?*, let history answer again: cinema today is that which stands between writing at one extreme and the internet at the other,

between singular expression and public network. It stands as a "third" option progressively re-defined over time. We should always look for a third term in logical debates involving culture, searching for a concept that launches historical approximations. This is what Roland Barthes did when he inserted "écriture," into the middle of Sartre's uncompromising binary, "language and style."[9] Barthes came up with écriture to give himself and French literature some breathing room. It identifies the evolution at play when writers adopt and alter the conventions of language in instances of expression that cannot quite be called personal since they belong also to a given period with its norms and expectations. *Écriture* makes visible the existence of genres and styles; it makes of literature a cultural enterprise rather than either a logical given (language) or an existential one (style).

Paul Ricoeur introduced a similar "third" to historicize (and to humanize) the structuralist binaries that Barthes' schema had, despite its culturalism, helped bring about. The title of Ricoeur's brilliant response to Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Savage Mind* (1962), I take for my template: "Structure, Word, Event."[10] His characteristic move in this seminal essay is to interpose a term between the dyad "langue/parole" of Saussurian linguistics, for Structure is the language system and Parole is the singular event of speech; that term, "mot" (word) carries thick traces of theology and history, upending structuralism's purely logical distinctions. Every word in the dictionary, Ricoeur points out, bears in its etymology the sediment of prior uses which amount to a history of experience. History can be accounted for neither by structural rules (langue) nor by an accumulation of individual events (paroles). Words – *les mots* – carry language forward from one use to the next; in their evolution words bear tradition, heritage, and a certain amount of credit that human beings draw on for a shared future.

Those who are impatient when they hear "transnational" are looking for quick or final solutions; but in cinema studies, as in most areas of culture, such solutions are illusory. Our fundamentally historical inquiry requires the kind of third term that Barthes came up with for literature and Ricoeur for language. The transnational dimension shows every film to have access to a past and a future extending beyond the flicker of its original projection, its local moment. For the film came into existence in a force field of pressures not all of which are properly national, and it may be viewed in later times and other places; these historical extensions derive from and modify its relation to the whole of cinema. And so we should not treat a film for what it is (ontologically, as if it were a fixed object, a stack of cans containing a movie on celluloid) but instead phenomenologically, for the way it has come into being and for what it has meant in its successive appearances. For example, the first Korean blockbuster, *Shiri* (Kang Je-gyu, 1999), means something different, something more, after having been screened at the Asia Pacific Festival and then after competing for the top foreign film award of the Japanese Academy. It means far more after its distribution in more than a dozen countries following those festivals, since it has been put into the orbit of the critical discourse brought to it by Japanese and French critics, and by enthusiasts who went on talk and write about it in many languages. Transnationalism is an effect of history in just this way; it urges us to abandon the search for a film's meaning (in E.D. Hirsch's sense) and to look for its *significance*, or better, for its developing significance.[11] Significance varies with circumstances and with perspective, which are the two components of history.

II.

Korean Cinema challenges this plea for nuanced historical inquiry. For no other cinema, except perhaps that of Iran, has moved so directly from the local to the global, with scarcely an intermediate stage. There seem to be just two Korean periods, the national moment up to the mid-1990s and the global one, which has since dominated all discussion. Compare this to Taiwan or to Yugoslavia. Like most mid-size cinemas, these two developed links to regional neighbors over a couple decades, before becoming partially global. Indicatively, several of their key filmmakers studied abroad in the 1960s and 1970s (Edward Yang in the US, Emir Kusturica in Prague). Before videotape made image circulation so convenient, films and filmmakers from these places interacted with others directly at festivals. Hou Hsiao-Hsien was a genuinely Taiwanese national filmmaker in the 1970s and 1980s, until the Hong Kong festival of 1983 brought him to the attention of Asian critics in Japan and France. After the triumph of *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-hsien) at Venice in 1989 he became the most recognizable for all Asian directors, along with Zhang Yimou. Characteristically, these two assisted each other in the 1990s, proving that cinema could circumvent the iron gates firmly separating the States of Taiwan and the PRC from one another. In the new century Hou would become the first director chosen by the Busan film festival for its annual "Asian Film Academy," thereby crowning him as the region's top transnational director. Yet Busan, despite its Asian emphasis, has achieved the stature of a global festival, and Hou, despite being so rooted in Taiwan has now made films in Tokyo and Paris for the global art cinema market. My point is that, while he may be a perfect example of a global auteur, it took three decades for him to move into that position from the nation, and he did so through the intermediate zone of the region where transnationalism operates thanks to spatial contiguity.

However, in the same four decades during which Hou Hsiao-hsien gradually emerged in Asia and then across the globe, Korea seems to have leaped directly from an inward looking national institution to its outward global phase without any intermediary stage. Surely the picture is far more complicated, but Jinhee Choi outlines it neatly in black and white, or rather inner and outer.[12] Before 1995, there was a recognizable progressive film movement, but it was internal, the *minjung* movement, which was anti-commercial and in its recovery of indigenous art and opposing mass culture; after the Pusan festival begins, *daejung* becomes the operative term, a more expansive movement embracing mass culture. The *minjung* group consists of directors attached to the politicized 1980s who fought the effects of American ideology which propped up a military government. By and large rejecting the government and its relation to the industrialized West, a great many artists made a pronounced turn toward Korea's native aesthetic traditions in painting, dance, literature and music. Cinema joined this in its own way, producing a national image that had little chance of being exported… this in defiance of a miracle economy fueled by exports, for that miracle came at the expense of personal liberty, a widening income gap in the social sphere, and a loss of Korea's core cultural values.

It was after the liberalization that came about with parliamentary government that filmmakers found themselves ready, indeed primed, to open up to foreign influences and to entertain larger audiences. In the 1990s genres and styles from all over were adopted, especially from Hollywood. As had been the case with the fifth generation in China, the Korean filmmakers of the 1990s were intimately familiar with many cinema traditions, through their active participation in clubs or their time spent in film schools (including American ones in a couple cases). There need be no

contradiction here. Kang Je-gyu can be a cinephile fascinated by Michelangelo Antonioni and Jean-Luc Godard while still making blockbusters like *Shiri* and *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* (2004), just as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese are consummate cinephiles while making *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Departed* (2006). But surely something did change when the top filmmakers looked to send their work into the world market whereas many of them before, Im Kwai-Taek at their head, had aimed to foster national filiation among fellow citizens. Jinhee Choi allows little middle ground: films and filmmakers either look inward (as Im Kwon-taek's *Sopyonje* did in 1993) or target the global market as *Shiri* did just five years later. Often called the most important of Korean films (and the one with the largest Korean audience), *Sopyonje* did win an award at the Shanghai festival and later played briefly on a screen in Holland and one in Paris, but that was the extent of its initial career beyond Korea. By contrast, *Shiri* was immediately released in more than fifteen countries. It went global!

This choice between addressing one's fellow citizens and addressing an audience in the larger world is felt almost everywhere except in the so-called centers of media power, and especially Hollywood where most films simply presume comprehensive distribution. By contrast, films in small countries need to reach a larger market. Look at West Africa, or Romania or Slovenia. Korea, I would say, may stand as the clearest case with which to examine this issue. Its cultural singularity is striking; its language is spoken outside the peninsula only by émigrés; its writing script is unique. Terrible circumstances of colonization and of civil war made it "belated" in modernization, belated in developing political institutions and in catching up to modernity. Furthermore, since postwar modernity flew an American flag, many intellectuals and artists must have felt – must still feel – conflicted, given America's massive military and business presence in their midst. What Korean artist would not be troubled by the Americanization of culture in their world? And so, perhaps the most thoughtful filmmakers were content to be left undiscovered, left out of the film festivals of Europe and North America and even of Hong Kong and Taiwan. For they could think of theirs as a fully local national cinema until the mid-1990s when an all-out effort was made from government and industry to go global.

I'm reluctant to call this Renaissance a "success story," as so many scholars do. In market terms, they may be right, but might not the market be stripping Korean films of their role in contributing to the public sphere? If the first wave directors cut their teeth on the country's conflicted political past (Jang Sun-Woo's *A Petal* in 1996, Park Kwang-su's *A Single Spark* in 1995), once Korean filmmakers got a taste of festival fame, many directors largely dispensed with Korean subject matter to take up universal issues with international appeal, topics like sex and revenge. Jang's next film, *Lies* (1999), emulates Alain Robbe-Grillet in mixing soft-core eroticism with a narrative enigma that includes the production of the film as part of its plot. It played in some twenty countries, mainly at festivals, while not particularly engaging its home audience.

It may seem natural to mix marketing questions with those of subject matter, but answers to those questions are multiple. For instance, festival programmers prize unique subject matter. The Chinese fifth generation's reputation was built on cultural exotica, as Rey Chow later lamented,[13] and African filmmakers in the 1980s found the success that had eluded them by "returning to the roots" of their culture, employing versions of oral storytelling, representing esoteric rites, and so on. How else can films with small budgets compete except to bypass the genres that have already been exploited so thoroughly (and with such substantial budgets) by first world industries? Some

have taken lessons from Europe's alternative to Hollywood genres: authorship. Hong Sang-soo, Park Chan-wook, and Kim Ki-duk set themselves up, and are positioned by Korea, to compete with the likes of Olivier Assayas, Cristian Mungiu and Mohammet Haroun. In its twists on genres and in the uniqueness of certain of its auteurs, Korean cinema exists well beyond its borders. Bong Joon-ho proves to be the most interesting example. A sophisticated intellectual, fully informed by art cinema, he nevertheless works with popular genres and sometimes, as in *The Host*, with relatively large budgets ($ 11,000,000, plus a subsequent 3D version). Especially popular in South Korea and across Asia where it could be seen as resurrecting the Japanese sci-fi terror films of the 1950s, *The Host* reached a cross-over audience in the West, attracting fans of the genre as well as fans of this rising auteur.[14]

The Host screened first at Cannes in May 2006, after which it spread up and down the Pacific Rim, starting in Seoul in July, then being rolled out in theaters in Japan, Singapore, Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Echoes of this transnational wave accompanied its festival appearances at Toronto, then New York, where I met the director after the press screening. He understood that although his film adopted the pose of pandering to the Asian taste for cheap genre thrills and contrivances, he was eager for his film to reach the cosmopolitan critics who attend festivals in Helsinki, Thessalonika, and Brussels where it was headed. Festivals like these transcend national interests and stand as powerful city-states, gateways to global distribution either in theaters or DVD.

Actually festivals originated as an "international federation" after WWII, with each nation selecting films for competition like the World Cup. It was only in the early 1970s that festivals took more hand in recruiting films themselves. Then in the late 1980s, Rotterdam and Sundance began to foster and even kick-start films by directors they found promising. All this occurred after 1975 when European festivals were challenged by major new ones in Toronto, Montreal, and Hong Kong. Since then, thousands of festivals have sprouted but none so important, in my view, as the Busan International Film Festival launched with substantial state and Samsung aid in 1995. Simply by announcing a Korean Wave, the festival created something that soon reached the shores of other countries. The so-called "first wave" of the 386 generation proclaimed by the festival[15] seems a misnomer, an advertising slogan, because those films of the early 1990s were scarcely propagated beyond the peninsula. The second wave, however, the one that followed Busan's rise as a major showcase, has indeed gone round the world.

But there's a difference between this post-Busan Korean wave and the canonical new waves of the 1960s and 1980s (France, Japan, East Europe, Latin America, China, and Taiwan). Korean cinema covets the reputation of those new waves but its situation is very different. Not just part of *Hallyu*, this new cinema has been pulled in the wake of Korean TV exports. Whereas, even if the French New Wave may have been an expression of a large youth movement, you can't imagine it having followed in the wake of French TV.

This is not to denigrate the Korean case *a priori*, for distribution patterns and strategies are not the same as they were in 1960 or 1989. The big festivals which were once the chief means of image transportation and national cinema recognition, today seem like dirigibles floating in the sky with advertising signs trailing behind. The same is true for criticism, so important to the "build up" of those earlier cinematic waves. Today things are different; with providential timing the Korean wave has ridden the greater technological wave of distribution in DVD, then digital

download. This technological wave has perhaps put an end to the always suspect metaphor of the wave once and for all. For if films are available anywhere by download or in (often pirated) DVD copies, no buildup is required. Images simply emerge here and there, one place or another; and they do so instantaneously.

We arrive here at a distinction not between Global and World film but between international and transnational, and this is evident on the covers of DVD boxes. The co-presence of languages for audio or subtitles (Japanese, French, Thai, etc.) and the more shocking map of six (presumably incompatible) zones that DVDs negotiate, remind us that cinema may claim to operate globally but that in fact it moves around region by region, country by country. This argues for the use the term "international" rather than world film, since the prefix "inter" recognizes a planned set of relations among nations. (Producers plan their distribution country by country; business agreements and protocols, like the ones that resulted in those six regional zones, are labeled "international.") Something is said to be "transnational," by contrast, when it arrives unbidden, occurring without respect for borders: diseases, terrorism, religions, pop music…and, yes, pirated or downloaded films. To best observe the constitutive by-play between the "local and the global," the international economy of differences among national players may be the goal, but in reality we ought to drop down a level, to cinema's *transnationality*. For this involves a cinema's particular, rather than general, economy, as films moves beyond their home locales. This intermediate scale of magnification – larger than the nation but smaller than the entire world – keeps most pertinent aspects in view even while cinema as a whole, and each film, signifies a bit differently in various places at the same time as well as in the same place at different times.

Given the market logic of capitalism, we ought to expect Korea's near neighbors to be its most important extra-national relations, as films cross short expanses of water to meet viewers who share a great deal as East Asians. But would this be right, given the troubling historical circumstances that make Japan, Mainland China, North Korea and Russia problematic for South Koreans, if only in terms of passports? Perhaps America looms larger? I have tried to begin to map the highly complex paths of image movement by using a particularly compelling example, the Asian ghost film.[16] Like the title character in Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), this genre travels by sea and by land spreading its shadow across many places, though its effects differ place to place. In the PRC, for instance, it has had till lately almost no effect. No ghost films were produced there till 2005, none permitted on screen; ghost films are hardly spoken of in the journals, though one can find pirated DVDs slipping across from Hong Kong. Maybe this is the most appropriate way such films travel, like Nosferatu himself.

Ghost films spread contagiously, sometimes transforming themselves so as to enter a new population, as *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998) did by being literally remade in the USA. *Double Vision* (Chen Kuo-fu, 2002), my favorite example, couldn't penetrate the West, despite money from Warner Brothers and an American actor. This may be been because it relied on Taoist themes, impenetrable to viewers outside Asia. Meanwhile it turned out to be the biggest Taiwanese hit to date in its home country, after *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*, the perfect transnational film. *Double Vision* played well in Japan and, I suppose, in Korea, and to the same audiences that flocked to other Asian ghost films, such as the Korean offering *Sorum* (Yoon Jong-chan, 2001).

Now, do *Sorum* and other Korean genre films spread outward like the wave they are said to comprise, hitting the shores of neighboring lands first and only later reaching the world lying

on the other side of the sea? Do such films progressively mount up on the sea of cinema? Are they propagated through being hosted on one shore before moving to the next? Post-industrial distribution seems to have changed the model, as the DVD and the web have lifted Korean cinema to its current stature through electronic circulation which occurs both more randomly and more instantaneously than a wave.

Perhaps two vocabularies are required, two quite different ways to account for a single phenomenon, as in physics where light is dealt with sometimes as a wave and sometimes as particles. Evidently *Hallyu* behaves like a genuine wave, and the films that are pulled along behind its coveted apparel and culinary tastes as well as TV stars have affected near neighbors first. Korean films have played best in Japan, just next door, and are well known in Mainland China even if not always welcomed by the authorities there. On the other hand, Korean cinema appears less regional to me than films from other East Asian cultures. Here is my scant evidence. Nearly all the 450 Korean films catalogued in Yale's library carry subtitles only in English (with a few offering Japanese and a very few Chinese). Now DVDs from Thailand, Taiwan, and even Mainland China routinely come with subtitles prepared in three or four Asian languages. Adopting English as its second language, Korean cinema seems to have gone global without the intermediate transnational stage that would have spread to Asia first. Korea has not had the patience routinely to solicit Malaysian viewers, for instance, the way so many Hong Kong films do. I may well be wrong here, yet even if Korean cinema is comparatively less regional than, say, Taiwanese or Thai or Philippine cinema, it is unquestionably more cosmopolitan in its scattered reception by urbane cinephiles and cult fans in the US, France, Germany, Latin America and no doubt the Middle East and elsewhere.

Led by the metaphor of contagion, I have focused on transnational distribution and consumption. A different tale of transnationalism might result from a study of production, and here the Korean Film Council obliges by publishing statistics and yearbooks that make it convenient to recognize trends in sources of funding or in the constitution of casts and crews.[17] A quick scansion of these materials reinforces the view hinted at above, that Korea remains a strongly national cinema that turns to the vocabulary and strategies of transnationalism to spread its products. The fact that Korean audiences have been won over by their own films, also confirms that the national paradigm remains secure there. I chose Korea because it most starkly raises the question of a proud national cinema (protected by a state government which subsidizes it and controls competing imports) in an age when nations need to be bigger than themselves; they need to be trans-nations, bleeding over beyond their borders while still believing in their core. The incredible burst of Korean cinema upon the world after 1995 raises another kind of question: has transnationalism as a "third term" between the local and the global been obviated by the ubiquity of world wide web that wraps itself around us? In *Night and Day* (2008), Hong Sang-Soo can have his characters materialize either in Seoul or Paris by pressing a single key on his editing program. They seem ubiquitous. Now he can do the same thing with the movie as a whole, which appears in theaters in Paris and Seoul simultaneously through digital downloading whereby theaters access the digital files through a Key Delivery Message. Moreover, individual viewers watch it anytime, anywhere, by streaming the film to their PCs. The difference is that in the age of transnationalism, films moved by contagion across borders; today they can go viral.

1 Mette Hjort, *On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism*, in Nataša Ďurovičová, Kathleen E. Newman (eds.), *World Cinema, Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, London-New York 2010, pp. 12-33. See also: Mette Hjort, Duncan Petrie (eds.), *Cinema of Small Nations*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2007; Mette Hjort, *Small Nation, Global Cinema*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 2005.

2 Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema. Directors and Directions 1929-1968*, Dutton, New York 1965; Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni, "Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique", in *Cahiers du cinéma*, nos. 216-217, October-November 1969 (eng. ed. *Cinema/Ideology/Criticism*, in Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, Leo Braudy [eds.], *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, pp. 682-689).

3 Kim Kyung Hyun, Youngmin Choe (eds.), *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham 2013.

4 Jung-Bong Choi, "Of Transnational-Korean Cinematrix," in *Transnational Cinemas*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, pp. 3-4.

5 This conference was held at New York University, November 2011 under the direction of Prof. Jung-Bong Choi.

6 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Verso, New York 2005.

7 Steve Rose, "The film is so slow - it's like grandma telling stories," in *The Guardian*, 13 February 2001, pp. 14-15.

8 See Tim Bergfelder, "National, transnational or supranational cinema? Rethinking European Film Studies," in *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2005, pp. 315-331. While this article deals with the European region, it effectively defuses the belligerent discussions pitting global Hollywood against small cinemas. The region comes in as a buffer that expands and contracts in relation to the careers of individual films and of long range strategies.

9 Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Seuil, Paris 1953 (eng. ed. *Writing Degree Zero*, Jonathan Cape, London 1967).

10 Paul Ricoeur, "La structure, le mot, l'événement," in *Esprit*, vol. 35, no. 5, May 1967, pp. 801-821 (eng. ed. *Structure, Word, Event*, in Id., *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1974, pp. 79-96).

11 Eric Donald Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1967.

12 Jinhee Choi, *The South Korean Film Renaissance: Local Hitmakers, Global Provocateurs*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown 2010. Note the terms in her title, "local" and "global."

13 Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, Columbia University Press, New York 1995.

14 By contrast, his foray into global Hollywood, *Snowpiercer* (2013), was a commercial failure, though alert viewers understood how distinctive and interesting it is.

15 386 is a term that became common in the 1990s, referring to those politically minded Koreans who came of age in the 1980s and put pressure on the government for democratic reform. But if the filmmakers formed a wave, it was strictly internal.

16 See my *Ghost Towns: Asian Cities*, in Yomi Braester, James Tweedie (eds.), *Cinema at the City's Edge. Film and Urban Networks in East Asia*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 2010, pp. 37-47.

17 The astute anonymous reader of this essay for *Cinéma & Cie* suggested quite rightly that, beyond consumption, other dimensions of Korean cinema need to be addressed to assess its nationalism, transnationalism, and globalism. As for examining *Hallyu* and Korean culture in the Asia region, a prime English language source is *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* which frequently addresses the topic, occasionally through a dedicated issue (vol. 1, no. 3, [2000]). Internet bibliographies are replete with information on Korean popular culture including cinema. See http://angrykpopfan.tumblr.com/post/25567378491/academic-sources-for-k-pop-hallyu-studies, last visit 30 September 2013. To gain a survey of the best materials available on *Korean cinema*, see Kyu Hyun Kim, Korean Cinema, Oxford Bibliographies Online, Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0152.xml, last visit 30 September 2013.

TRAVELING STYLES
OR THE CHALLENGE OF APPROACHING COMMERCIAL HINDI CINEMA AS WORLD CINEMA

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Abstract

This article proposes a contribution to a methodological and theoretical discussion in contemporary film studies: how to study and teach cinema cultures in the age of globalization? In a first step, the approach to World Literature proposed by literary scholar Franco Moretti is re-visited and discussed in terms of its productivity and limitations. The article then asks if cinematic traditions can be understood in a comparative perspective, as the result of processes of mutual exchange, circulation and friction beyond the confines of a paradigm of national cinema, and along pathways of circulation not necessarily shaped and controlled by the supposedly inevitable forces of Western capitalism. Commercial Hindi cinema is used as a case study – the article in particular discusses the temporal-spatial constellation of *Pakeezah* (*Pure One*, Kamal Amrohi, 1972).

[T]he film is one of the most melodramatic ever made, beautiful and mysterious throughout.
Peter Wollen on *Pakeezah*.[1]

This article proposes to make a contribution to one of the key methodological and theoretical (or should I say conceptual) discussion in contemporary film studies: how to study and teach cinema cultures in the age of globalization?

I use the expression "cinema cultures in the age of globalization" as a placeholder for what was formerly called World or Transnational Cinema. In a way similar to the label World Music, the notion of World Cinema has become a synonym for all non-Western cinemas, a kind of pseudo-genre for the commodification and canonization of the geographical "other." At the same time the concept of Transnational Cinema is more and more turning into an empty signifier since both on the level of production and consumption, more and more films are "transnational" (or regional or local) by definition. Conversely and perhaps paradoxically, while cinema is becoming more "transnational" at the level of production transnational studies tend to underestimate the continuing significance of the national and of the concept of national culture as a frame of reference in both the production and circulation of moving images – as contested and conflicted that concept may be.[2]

The concept of globalization is complicated and contested in itself. Nonetheless I propose that thinking about, and re-thinking globalization may allow us to gain a foothold to address the problems of both World Cinema and Transnational Cinema that I just outlined. I propose to understand globalization here as both a process and a perspective. As a historical process globalization unfolded and unfolds in different phases and shifts, and dates back several centuries.[3] As a perspective on the other hand, globalization is more recent, a concept arising from a new understanding of difference towards the late 20th century, as cultural theorist Arif Dirlik has suggested.[4]

In order to explore new ways of conceptualizing cinema cultures in the age of globalization I will begin by re-visiting the approach to World Literature proposed by literary scholar Franco Moretti and discuss its productivity and limitations in addressing the problems that I outlined.[5] Moretti's approach has been critically adapted to the study of film through the work of the late Paul Willemen.[6] Willemen first used Moretti's concepts of distant reading and of mapping literature on to the accidents of geography for studying South Korean Cinema in 2002,[7] before developing a broader proposal for a comparative film studies from 2006 onwards.[8] For Willemen a comparative film studies is "not an alternative discipline, but a detour in order to re-arrive at a better model of cinematic functioning"[9] and hereby expose the severe limitations of "the Euro-American model of cinema which constitutes the frame for the existing paradigm of film studies."[10] According to Willemen comparative film studies would emphasize "the universal encounter with capitalism" and its effect on cinema.[11] As much I sympathize with Willemen's plea for moving beyond a Euro-American model of film studies, I am somewhat ambivalent about his position of emphasizing the universal encounter with capitalism and its effect on cinema as the *via regia* for a comparative film studies.[12] A strong case can be made that whatever critique of the universalizing tendencies of a Euro-American model of film study Willemen's approach may comport will be undercut by his move of introducing a quasi-transcendental notion of "capitalism" as a new universal that guarantees the underlying unity of cinema, thereby subtly but effectively re-homogenizing the object of study from what remains essentially a Western point of view. Particularly in the light of new studies about the informal economies of cinema outside of the realm and reach of Hollywood and Western cinemas – Ramon Lobato's book comes to mind –, it remains doubtful whether hypostasizing world capitalism as a force with which a "universal encounter" is inevitable produces a useful framework for a comparative approach to the study of film.[13] The subtleness of Willemen's approach to the esthetics of cinema in a comparative perspective needs to be matched with an equally differentiated and heuristically powerful approach to the economics of film.

Another point of contention concerns Willemen's continuing adherence to the basic tenets of apparatus theory. As Christian Metz points out at the end of the key chapter of the *The Imaginary Signifier* (1977), in which he develops the analogy between the cinematic apparatus and the psychic apparatus according to Freud, this analogy is literally topical and contingent upon the accidents of geography: it is a theory developed by an European theorist to explain cinema culture in major European urban areas. It is a theory, cautions Metz, that may lose its explanatory power once we take it beyond the confines of its culture of origin. However, extending the reach of the basic tenets of apparatus theory to cover non-European and non-American cinema culture makes perfect sense if one subscribes to a universalizing reading of the Althusserian variety of apparatus theory. According to such a reading the processes of interpellation through the cinematic text, and thus of the production of subjectivity, occur regardless of any accidents of geography and culture

because they are part and parcel of the "universal encounter" with the forces of capitalism that Willemen evokes, if not the privileged occurrence of that encounter.[14]

My own reading of Moretti's proposals will follow a different path from Willemen's, one that attempts to avert both a hegemonic understanding of capitalism as a homogenizing force of cinema culture and a similarly hegemonic understanding of textual interpellation as the unifying default mode of spectatorship. The question I would like to answer, by taking Moretti as my point of departure, is: how can different cinematic traditions be understood in a comparative perspective as the result of processes of mutual exchange, circulation and friction beyond of the confines of the paradigm of national cinema, and along pathways of circulation not necessarily shaped and controlled by the supposedly inevitable forces of Western capitalism?[15] My reading of Moretti raises a number of critical points that I will address in my concluding section, and in answering my research question I hope to contribute towards the global media theory that film scholar Bhaskar Sarkar calls for in his work on contemporary Indian cinema.

My own contribution will use commercial Hindi cinema as a case study for this discussion. As many scholars of Indian Cinemas have insisted, the diverse and manifold past and current cinematic traditions of the Indian subcontinent represent an ideal testing ground for the shortcomings and limitations of the paradigms of film study that have helped shape, and in turn have been derived from, the Western canon of film classics, most notably the auteur paradigm and the national culture/national cinema paradigm that views great works by great auteurs as transcendent expressions of the essence of a national culture.[16]

While research on the subject has taken great strides in recent years[17] commercial Hindi cinema continues to be treated as a relatively marginal object and to be discussed as either exotic or hermetically specific, as a popular art form that reproduces cultural stereotypes of the "Indian" and Indian culture and defies understanding by Western audiences. Theoretically sound approaches informed by such an understanding argue that Hindi cinema has developed its own language and semiotics, which must then be assessed on their own terms. As Corey Creekmur remarks, in doing so these approaches make a claim of exception that reinforces the normative standard of the aesthetics of Euro-American entertainment films. In order to address this problem Creekmur argues for a model of mainstream entertainment film in film theory that is broad, non-specific and inclusive enough to include commercial Hindi cinema rather than treat it as a deviation from a standard model of cinematic narration.[18] While supporting Creekmur's rejection of theories that attribute to commercial Hindi cinema (or other non-Western cinemas) the status of an exception Bhaskar Sarkar cautions against the denial of cultural specificity that such a model would entail. However, while Sarkar himself abides by the concept of cultural specificity demands that claims of cultural specificity be historicized, and that they should examine the extent to which the culturally specific is shaped both by local cultural traditions and international influence. Averting the pitfalls of a homogenizing notion of "universal encounters" with capitalism, Sarkar emphasizes that processes of exchange and circulation neither merge completely with the nation-state nor align seamlessly with the pathways of global capital:

> *[R]ather, they operate at the level of the translocal-popular – the level which, while largely complicit with hegemonic apparatuses, continues to hold as-yet-unrealized promises of democratic imaginations and interventions.*

Refocusing the analysis in this way, Sarkar argues, holds the promise that

> *[b]y examining this translocal-popular exchange, we can avoid slipping into the problems of exceptionalism, exoticism and containment associated with the multiculturalist paradigm.*[19]

This brings me back to Moretti, who advocates something similar. With respect to literature, he formulates the thesis that the modern novel always arises as a compromise between a foreign form and local material and forms. There is, in other words, always a translocal-popular exchange at work in the gestation of modern literary forms, rather than merely an adaptation of local materials to a prescriptive standard format emanating from a dominant cultural source. In the following, I will argue that we can extend this hypothesis to commercial Hindi Cinema. Paraphrasing an idea of Moretti's, it could be possible to say that the decisive question is not whether or to what degree Indian films can be measured against Western models. Rather, it is important to examine what connection is assumed between the so-called "Eastern" narrative and representational modes and "Eastern" materials, and between "Western" forms of the production of modern (commercial) art and entertainment forms such as Hindi cinema. In the case of Hindi cinema this trade of forms must also be understood as taking place in a field shaped by political and cultural forces related, not least, to the country's colonial past.[20] Accordingly, what may appear to a Western onlooker to be a hermetically specific, but authentic expression of local cultural traditions may well be – even in popular cinema, or rather: particularly in popular cinema – an act of cultural self-assertion, a defiant adaptation of Western film technology to a local or regional agenda of cultural policy and politics through culture. One of the most stunning facts about Indian cinema, Hindi and otherwise, is that it has maintained a home market share of more than 90 percent ever since the introduction of sound and even after the liberalization of the early 1990s which included a liberalization of the markets for cultural goods. Whatever form the translocal-popular exchange of Hindi cinema may take, it is one that remains deeply popular with its home audience.

The problematic that I have just sketched will be discussed here using the example of the spatial constellation in *Pakeezah* (*Pure One*, Kamal Amrohi, 1972). I will first summarize some of Moretti's relevant findings, and then go on to discuss a selection of scenes from *Pakeezah*. Based on this outline I would like to propose a number of elements towards a global theory of popular cinema in film studies that takes into account both the proposals of Creekmur and Sarkar.

One of the key points of such an approach should be that it can contribute to work against what historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has called "asymmetric ignorance."[21] By asymmetric ignorance, Chakrabarty means the problem that generations of thinkers "who shape the nature of social science have produced theories that embrace the entirety of humanity."[22] Nonetheless, these theories are assimilated and dispersed in post-colonial countries. As Chakrabarty laconically states, the problem of asymmetric ignorance is "not simply a matter of 'cultural cringe' […] on our part or of cultural arrogance on the part of the European historian."[23] Rather, it is about "the everyday paradox of third-world social science […] that we find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of 'us,' eminently useful in understanding our societies."[24] In unfolding this paradox, Chakrabarty makes a case for scrutinizing the great European intellectual models to see if they are valid for the so-called Third World. The intellectual movement on the way consists in figuratively declaring Europe a theoretical province. Or at least this is how one might encapsulate – admit-

tedly simplified – his 2000 book *Provincializing Europe*, which has become quintessential to post-colonial theory.[25] In particular, it is important to him to counteract the posture, widely held even among social scientists in post-colonial countries, of measuring social development by the standards of European theoretical models. In these models, for instance, India's absence of an evolving bourgeoisie in the European sense must be thought of as a "lack." The provincializing of Europe, in this case, consists in tracing the universal demand for validity of European intellectual models back to their regional realms of validity. The absence of the bourgeoisie can only be conceived of as a lack in a place where this legally would have to have been put into place. Its lack in African countries or India has to be conceived differently, indeed and first of all not as a lack. In a quite similar way, Franco Moretti calls into question the normative canonical demands of certain European literary traditions, namely French and English literature since the Renaissance. If literary studies measures everything that is produced elsewhere by the heights reached in English and French literature since Shakespeare and Classicism, then, according to Moretti, this overlooks a decisive point: that these traditions, while indeed significant, are in themselves not suitable to provide universal norms because they represent an absolute exception in the history of literature as measured by global standards. Similarly, while Stanley Cavell may be justified in his claim that the classical Hollywood cinema has produced more masterpieces, in absolute numbers, than all of Elizabethan poetry combined, we can still not elevate these masterpieces to the status of a norm against which everything else has to be measured. Where Moretti proposes to provincialize the European tradition, we have to provincialize both Hollywood and the European art cinema.

Franco Moretti's conjectures on world literature and the study of film

Franco Moretti starts his essay with the question of what it means to turn to world. As a specialist in Western European narrative literature between 1790 and 1930 – that is, as a specialist of the grand tradition of the bourgeois novel –, Moretti admits to feeling like a charlatan when he extends his scholarships beyond the geographical bounds of Great Britain or France to address the question of "world literature". Eschewing the traditional Goethean understanding of "*Weltliteratur*" as transnational communication through significant works of canonical literature, Moretti chooses a broader approach and ponders the option of simply reading more books, before concluding that world literature is not simply a new object, but a new problem, which therefore also requires a new critical method. Different from David Damrosch, whose works on world literature have contributed significantly to establishing the respective field, Moretti is less interested in defining individual works that are world literature through their reception than in the global and local circulation of certain aesthetic modes. For his reflections on world literature, Moretti initially draws on a working hypothesis from the history of economy, and more specifically on the work from the school of World-sytems theory.[26] For these, international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously one system and at the same time displays inequalities, that is, a system with a center and a periphery (or semi-periphery), which are linked to one another by increasing inequality that extends into the periphery. The Israeli literary scholar Even-Zohar, for example, negotiates the relationships between "world literature" and national literary traditions by relying on the theory of translation and speaking of "source literature" and "target literature." As for the

idea of mutual influence, he maintains that this does not exist as such: "There is no symmetry in literary interference. A target literature is, more often than not, interfered with by a source literature which completely ignores it."[27] One could argue that Even-Zohar's argument amounts to an application of Chakrabarty's problem of asymmetric ignorance to the field of literature. Moretti's idea of inequality, which regulates the relationships between different cultures according to the model of global capitalism, works in a similar fashion. The fate of a culture (usually of a so-called peripheral culture) intersects and is altered by another culture (usually from the so-called center), which is in turn completely unaware of the other. One could object that Immanuel Wallerstein's model of center and periphery has little or no connection to a post-colonial position like Chakrabarty's, nor is it complex enough to account for the multiple layers of contemporary socio-economic realities, which have long ceased to be organized a singular center-periphery model. Just witness the rapid rise of the People's Republic of China over the last two decades and the massive anxieties the scenario of a multi-polar economic world order generates in the minds of Western observers and policy makers. At the same time, particularly in the field of cinema, the rapid development of what Ramon Lobato proposes to call the informal economies of cinema, which do not follow the topology of center and periphery but evolve laterally and heterotopically to the global pathways of Western-dominated trade instead further complicates the application of the center-periphery model. I will come back to this critique at the end of my article. For the time being, however, I will maintain Moretti's basic conception to explore to what extent the model can prove to be useful.

By bypassing the canon-building devices of classical literary studies and applying the explanatory matrix of social history, Moretti creates a methodological conundrum which he himself highlights by quoting French social historian Marc Bloch: "Years of analysis for a day of synthesis."[28] Rather than proceeding through exemplary cases studies of universally acknowledged canonical texts, literary history, and by extension film analysis and film history, need to be reframed following the lead of Fernand Braudel, Wallerstein and re-built, if you will, on a broad empirical foundation. For the field of film studies, French film historian Michèle Lagny has proposed an approach to writing film history based on a serial analysis of large collection of (genre) films, an approach inspired, like Moretti's approach to literary history, by Braudel.[29] But where Lagny looks for iterations of patterns in chronological series, Moretti proposes to replace the traditional hermeneutics of the close reading of canonical texts with what he calls distant reading.[30] In order to analyze and understand a certain time period of regional literary culture, the method is no longer to closely read a representative sample of influential works, but to read pretty much every book published in that period or area. With this approach, which requires a large amount of data, it becomes possible to discern and analyze entities that are either much smaller or much larger than particular texts, such as patterns of geographical mappings of plots, aesthetic/narrative modes, themes, tropes, or genres and systems. Combined with his assumption that the Western European novel should not be viewed as the norm and rule of literature, but as an exception in the history of literature, this approach allows Moretti to formulate that something like a law of literary evolution can be established:

> *In cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials.*[31]

The modern novel thus does not arise in cultures on the periphery as an autonomous development, but as a compromise between Western formal influence and local material. A review of diverse literary histories confirms this finding. As Moretti writes:

> *Four continents, two hundred years, over twenty independent critical studies, and they all agreed: when a culture starts moving towards the modern novel, it's always as a compromise between foreign form and local materials*.[32]

Let me state, as others have done before, that Moretti introduces a kind of creeping teleology, which undercuts his own claim of a supposedly ab-normal status of the modern European novel. Rather, it would seem that in this passage Moretti posits the modern novel as the *telos* of literary development toward which all cultures sooner or later start to move. Later in the essay, Moretti extends and specifies the formula as follows: "The compromise at hand here is a compromise between a foreign form, local materials, and local forms, or more precisely: a mixture made up of foreign plot, local characters/figures, and a local narrative voice."[33] This leads to a somewhat paradoxical result: against this backdrop, the French, English, or Spanish novel do indeed represent an exception; what passes as typical according to this approach are the other forms of the novel. However, the mixed forms, which are supposedly really typical of the novel as such, only become discernible against the normative idea of the modern novel towards which each culture sooner or later moves, an idea which likely would have to be derived from the European model of the novel. Taking Chakrabarty's point about the need to provincialize Europe seriously one could go one step further and argue that the formula of a mixture of foreign plot, local characters and a local narrative voice already applies to Cervantes *Don Quixote*, generally considered to be the first European novel. *Don Quixote* derives its interest from combining a "foreign" plot (the medieval epic) with local figures (Don Quixote and Sancho Panza) and a local narrative voice (the irony inherent in the open, flexible form of the novel). As such, if we take Moretti's continuing push for a comparative morphology based on large data sets, i.e. systematic examinations of how forms vary in space and time, and of how they travel and circulate in space and time, but provincialize his claims of an exceptional/non-normative status of the European model (which is, as it turns out, really a claim of an exceptional/normative status of the European novel) and combine his approach and this critique with a post-metaphysical, post-universalist understanding of capitalism and global trade, we may arrive at a methodology that proves useful for the study of cinema in a globally comparative perspective.

Commercial Hindi cinema: The case of *Pakeezah*

Against this theoretical and methodological backdrop, I would now like to come to the aesthetics of commercial Hindi cinema and to my original question, i.e how can cinema traditions be understood in a comparative perspective as the results of a process of mutual exchange, circulation and friction beyond a paradigm of national cinema, and along pathways of circulation not necessarily shaped by Western capitalism? I will use Kamal Amrohi's *Pakeezah* as my example, less in the sense of a case study than as an example that allows me to discuss

and determine the parameters of a prospective analysis of a larger set of films. As much as *Pakeezah* deserves to be appreciated as a singular film and celebrated for its artistic success the film serves here as a somewhat random example, chosen for the purposes of methodological demonstration.[34]

The choice of Amrohi's film is specific, however, to the extent that *Pakeezah* exemplifies the problem of the merging of the migration and interpenetration, if you will – of different modes and traditions of representation. The film may be said to exemplify the convergence, and the friction between "Western" film style and "Eastern" practices. This convergence begins at the level of the technical staff. The director of cinematography was Joseph Wirsching, originally from Austria.[35] The collaboration of non-Indian technicians on Indian films, particularly as camera technicians, is not unusual in Hindi cinema history, but it is also not the rule. In his work on early Indian sound film filmmaker and film scholar Riyad Wadia, the great nephew of Homi and grandson of Jamshed Wadia, the founders and studio heads of Wadia Movietone, speaks at length about how the sound film pioneers of the 1930s and 1940s carefully studied and attempted to emulate English and American stunt and adventure movies of that time. The stunt and adventure films that the Wadia brothers produced for their company based on their analysis quickly achieved legendary status in Indian cinema. However anecdotal the evidence, the examples of *Pakeezah* and the Wadia action films exemplify the migration of styles and forms at the level of both personnel and material – and in both cases, these migrations are partially determined by the field of political and cultural forces of late colonial reign of Great Britain in India.[36]

Aside from Joseph Wirsching's involvement, *Pakeezah* is also interesting for the context that I am delineating here because despite its obvious artistic merits, it is considered only a moderately successful film. In particular, critics complain that the film has a disjointed feeling to it and does not hold together, which can in part be traced back to its long production time which stretches over a good thirteen years. As Valentina Vitali writes in her essay "The Families of Hindi Cinema: A Socio-Historical Approach to Film Studies,"[37] the preparations for *Pakeezah* began at a time when the feudal romance was the dominant genre of Hindi cinema.[38] Its completion and first screening in 1972 came at a time of disillusionment, when Jawaharlal Nehru's nationalist modernization project was hitting up against its limits and social fears were running rampant. All of this found its fit expression in the new genre of angry-young-man films with their key actor and big star Amitabh Bachchan.[39] In this sense, *Pakeezah* can be read as a transitional film from the feudal romances of the 1950s to the genre of angry-young-man films of the 1970s.[40] It stands in symptomatically for the transition from Nehru to Indira Gandhi and her economic policy of the so-called Green Revolution, a transition that also included forming a new audience, a new middle class. If we follow Vitali's reading, the aesthetic heterogeneity of *Pakeezah* – which from a critical point of view is of course only a problem if you adhere to a neo-humanistic norm of coherence and unity in attributing value to a work of art – is an expression of different visual regimes built up around the female lead and her spatial positioning. Vitali distinguishes between three scopic regimes: hierarchical, perspectival, and theatrical-frontal. She writes:

> *Its formal uncertainties […] are an effect of the fact that while the film addresses contradictions within nationalist modernisation that had began to become apparent in the 1960s, at the same time the film has not yet worked out the narrative strategies required to erase successfully perception of contradiction.*[41]

Vitali's symptomatic reading of *Pakeezah* has its merits, despite the somewhat literal fashion in which she derives the social and economic underpinnings of the film's form from its production and reception history. Nonetheless I would like to provide another reading, and one that to a certain degree is in opposition to Vitali's. As I would like to argue the form problem of the film, its supposed lack of coherence, is first and foremost a problem of form and not of circumstance. Rather than through the lens of a literalist materialism, I propose to take a clue from German comparative literature scholar Peter Szondi and his groundbreaking analysis of the crisis of modern drama which, in a somewhat more Hegelian/Adornian perspective, takes problems of form to be expressive of conflicts that arise in artistic terms and are resolved through, or remain unresolved in artistic practice.[42] Accordingly, the "jumps" and breaks that characterize the film may be read not so much as the product of a protracted production history, but as the result of a compromise that is indicative of the specific conditions in which commercial films in India emerged, as a narrative cinema that appeared to be at the cultural periphery.

What I mean by this can be best demonstrated through a sequence from *Pakeezah*.

The courtesan Nargis/Sahibjaan (Meena Kumari) and Salim (Raj Kumar), who has fallen in love at first sight with the beautiful dancer and above all with her delicate feet, meet once again. The scene occurs in Salim's tent, where Sahibjaan is led to by chance. A boat belonging to a rich suitor is shipwrecked when he shoots into a herd of bathing elephants in order to sail on. Enraged, the elephants attack the boat. Then follows a leap in time. Sahibjaan, who has apparently escaped, rides toward the shore on a part of the ship that had broken off and finds a tent containing a bed, where she falls down exhausted. At the headboard she finds a diary that tells of an encounter with the feet of a sleeping beauty, for which the writer can find no words. Sahibjaan, however, has no trouble finding the right word to describe this encounter: love. A musical number begins and segues into another sequence. The song is a kind of daydream about love being in the air. The new sequence begins with the courtesan lying on the cot. From off screen we hear the hoofbeats of approaching horses. The courtesan slowly rises; a Spanish-sounding melody begins which then dramatically escalates. Sahibjaan sinks back onto the cot, Salim appears at the opening of the tent, but she cannot see him. There is a cut to his face, then a counter-shot to the courtesan lying on the cot. With the pan from her face and down to her feet, the shot is attributed to Salim as his point of view. There follows a reverse shot back to his face, then a cut back to the henna-painted feet, back to him, then he slowly turns his head away from her. Cut to her face, her eyes are now closed again and her voice resounds as an "inner voice," which we can tell from the faint echo. Sahibjaan speaks as if her daydream were continuing: "Allah, he is close to me and I'm on the verge of suffocating…" It is a sort of imaginary address, in which it is not (yet) clear whether she is aware of Salim's presence. Then the camera changes again to a medium shot, which includes both of them, in which he slowly leaves the entrance to go somewhere behind the tent to light his pipe. With his back to the camera he begins to speak, which could be considered a kind of interior monologue. Salim once again turns toward the tent, and we see the shadowy outline of Sahibjaan sitting up in the bed. Now Salim seems to speak directly to Sahibjaan. Once again we are with her in the tent, listening to him as he directly greets her. Then the camera changes again to an outside shot of him in front of the tent. While Salim is speaking, we alternately see the courtesan in the tent and him, the lover outside in front of the tent. The sequence of shots does not correspond to an eyeline match, such as would have been compulsory in classical Hollywood cinema at this point. At the level of sound

and voice, however, the montage suggests that the two are now speaking to each other. Over the course of the scene, this turns into a dialogue of sorts since she attempts to answer his questions directly. But at the level of the mise-en-scène and editing, the monologic quality of the two speaking positions remains in place, which, as I have mentioned, can be seen as the consequence of not maintaining the eye-line match. Even though the two characters remain in two different spaces, in front of and inside the tent, within Hollywood continuity editing, a crossing of the line would be avoided, since this would rather question the status of the sequence: wish, dream, reality, fantasy? Above all the introduction to the sequence occurs in a kind of "in-between world," which gradually becomes a reality for the characters.

When later in the scene Salim addresses the letter declaring his love, which he had laid at Sahibjaan's feet in the train, her hand, which has been slowly reaching up in the direction of her throat during this off-screen story, makes it clear that she does indeed remember the letter he is talking about. And at once we also hear a male voice, which reads "her" part of the letter out loud. At this moment, however, a dialogue from an earlier scene is replayed, which has to do with the love letter. During this letter episode the music takes on an increasingly dramatic tone, up to the point where it abruptly breaks off. At the same time the kerosene lamp in the tent goes out (close up). Then we see a shot of the setting sun, the next cut brings us (as evidenced by the lighting conditions) to the following morning. The passing of time is palpable, but this abrupt ellipsis is not clearly coded. The two characters are still separated by the wall of the tent, but they are nonetheless shown in a single shot. We get the impression that the couple has gotten closer in the ellipsis. The rest of the scene is no longer kept in suspense. Salim and Sahibjaan appear to have arrived in a common reality. Subsequently he rides away from her, he has something to take care of. On the soundtrack we hear sounds borrowed from spaghetti westerns, mixed together in a clearly melodramatic instrumentation, typical for Hindi cinema at the time.

What interests me initially in the sequence described here is the specific composition of space and time, and the alignment and non-alignment of sound and voice with visuals. To a large extent the sequence progresses in a kind of in-between status: oscillating between the action of the song and the narration, and between subjective and objective narrative position/voice. The scene jumps back and forth between internal and external focalization, between subjectifying sequences of shots and narrative zero-degree, "objective" narration. As for narrative space, the two characters initially move in two different "spaces," which are occasionally linked up at the auditory level. Only at the end they do seem to have arrived in the same space. One could speak of an aesthetics of spatialized interiority, deployed through a use of film style and the formal parameters of film that has no standard equivalent in the narrative conventions of Western cinema. From the normative point of view of Western narrative cinema, this scene is deficient: unclear in its status, not respecting the conventions of the construction of characters with its clear delineations of inner states and physical action, and of the coherence of narrative space as a space of action (the "diegesis" of Etienne Souriau). This effect of "non-clarity" or confusion emerges not only from the disregard for eye-line matches, but also from the acoustic analepses and interior monologues. If we evaluate the use of these techniques in the film without taking heed of the standard solution of Western narrative cinema for a scene of this type, we realize that disregard for eye-line matches, acoustic analepses and interior monologues are all techniques. Rather than deploy a regime of space and subjectivity where cinematic space is constructed primarily as a stage for physical

action with attendant psychological states that may or may not be explained through techniques of focalization and subjectivation, popular Hindi cinema appears to favor a regime of spatiality that is defined by the dynamics and intensity of affect. This spatialized interiority may well be traced back to the narrative form of the love poem, and the scene just analyzed may be read as a transfer and adaption of the paradigm of spatialized interiority of the love poem into the constraints of film. Thus the sequence may be read as a formal compromise, as a negotiated solution, that transfers some of the tenets of regional narrative traditions into an adapted narrative medium, fundamentally changing, as it were, the established conventions of that medium in the process.

Coda

As I indicated above the approach that I am advocating in this article has a number of points of communication with the work of other scholars, such as the work of S.V. Srinivas on pan-Asian processes of circulation and exchange in the example of Hong Kong action cinema in South-India,[43] in which he shows how certain aspects of the Hong Kong martial arts genre are constitutive for popular Telugu film.[44] Bhaskar Sarkar has also made productive use of Srinivas's works for a global media theory. In particular, Sarkar emphasizes the importance of the practice of "borrowing." He writes:

> *Srinivas points to the banality of cinematic "influence" and of attempts to trace it. Originality has never been an absolute or even crucial requirement for Indian (or other) popular cinemas: as a modern cultural medium, cinema has thrived on cross-cultural interaction and pollination. He [Srinivas] calls for a shift of focus to the "processes at work in the act of borrowing," which get "obfuscated" by the "tracking of influence" in its misleading "attention to what is trivial."*[45]

Sarkar himself adds a small case study on the reception of Raj Kapoor in China, once again underscoring that a global media theory should not take Hollywood and its global distribution network as the yardstick against which all other film cultures should be measured. Once again it becomes clear how important it is to liberate an approach like that of Franco Moretti from the terminological corset created by Wallerstein and from its own residual Eurocentrism and to rethink the problem of "world cinema" on the basis of new global socio-economic theories.

Similarly, we need to review the concept of "distant reading" and the postulate of large data sets.[46] It is no coincidence that Michèle Lagny's project of a serial history of film has remained, with a few exceptions, just that: a project. Film is a complex multi-modal art form, and analyzing large sets of films poses even bigger problems both in terms of the quantity of work and the methodology to be used than analyzing large sets of novels.[47] A reductionist approach that focuses exclusively on plot for the sake of expediency, for instance, would completely miss the point of the sequence I just discussed. The call for a distant reading also conjures up the specter, and the pitfalls, of a purely quantitative understanding of empirical research. In addition, then, to a non-reductionist approach to film analysis, a comparative study of film would have to involve a triangulation of methods, in which approaches from the social sciences and the humanities cross-fertilize each other and where contradictions and ambivalences remain admissible. To the degree

that an approach to a comparative study of film inspired by a critical understanding of Moretti can be sustained in the longer term, the key indicator of its heuristic power should be always be something that Dudley Andrew highlights in his own critical reading of Moretti: "A close analysis of key films from any locale should reveal a conflicted cinematic vocabulary and grammar."[48]

Translation: Daniel Hendrickson

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33 *Idem*, p. 65.
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DE-LOCATING "INDEPENDENCE" THE DISCOURSE ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN INDEPENDENT CINEMA AND ITS TRAJECTORIES

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Abstract
This essay examines the ways Southeast Asian Independent Cinema can be located – or, perhaps, de-located –, departing from traditional concepts of film studies, by examining the discourse on this cinematic movement as it is shaped by local and foreign voices. The paper focuses on the nexus of independence, political involvement and regionalism and asks how these meanings are negotiated in their transfer from various previous concepts of cinematic independence and alternativeness into the local context. As Southeast Asian Independent Cinema challenges conventional notions of film studies (the frame of national cinemas; the binary system of Hollywood vs. World Cinema; and the pre-digital cinematic apparatus), it presents an opportunity to rethink and expand traditional concepts and the underlying epistemologies in an innovative, non-Eurocentric way.

Introduction

Across the region of Southeast Asia, forms of independent cinema have sprung up since the late 1990s. Filmmakers in various Southeast Asian countries are working outside the dominant national systems of mainstream studios and state-financed television productions, producing short films, features, documentary, and fiction alike. This is all the more remarkable because many states in Southeast Asia have a history of employing the mass media for efforts at nation-building, circulating homogenized, state-defined images of the nation and controlling media content with rigid censorship systems. While studio systems were predominant in the region for decades, they have been in demise in many countries since the 1970s or 1980s; nonetheless, the mainstream prevails. Its output consists mainly of generic, formulaic works for mass consumption, such as genre movies, telenovelas and the like.[1]

Southeast Asian independent filmmakers typically navigate around the mainstream-dominated areas and state-imposed restrictions by working with alternative modes of production, circulation and exhibition. Production costs are typically kept low by working with grassroots methods, low wages and, sometimes, free labor; funding is often provided by private sources, crowdfunding, sometimes by development funds and grants issued by institutions abroad, or by prize money from festival competitions. Independent films are distributed by small production companies, often the filmmakers' own, and frequently via informal modes of distribution. Many of these production

companies use social media, such as blogs, Twitter or Facebook as a platform for advertising and distributing their movies. Thus, the internet serves as an alternative to working modes of the traditional, often state-controlled production studios. For example, the Malaysian production company Da Huang Pictures, founded by four independent filmmakers, uses its website as information channel, business site, online DVD shop, blog, and publicity channel all at once. Online platforms for streaming movies, such as Youtube, Vimeo, or Mubi, are another common way of circulation, as is piracy. The films are shown at alternative venues and festivals, such as the Substation in Singapore or the Thai Short Film and Video Festival, in semi-formal, "underground," and private locations, such as micro-cinemas, bars, film clubs and art galleries. Another prominent exhibition mode is the international film festival circuit, especially festivals that concentrate on showcasing so-called World Cinema or Asian Films, for example Pusan, Rotterdam, or the Forum section of the Berlinale.

To a large extent, these alternative filmmaking practices and strategies are enabled by the emergence of digital technology and high-speed internet connections in the region, innovations that are crucial since they account for possibilities such as (relatively) low production costs, online distribution, circulation via DVDs or online streaming. In fact, many local filmmakers, scholars and cultural activists see digital filmmaking as a cornerstone for independent cinema.[2] It is widely acknowledged as a gateway for new possibilities and alternative aesthetics owed to digital technology.

In the course of the last decade, this cinema has gained momentum with the establishing of regional festivals and specific websites that serve as platforms and places to meet and gather for the filmmaking and cinema-going community. While the individual cinemas of Southeast Asian countries are still primarily understood as national cinemas, the regional scope seems to have gained importance. "Southeast Asian independent cinema" has become a keyword, a much-discussed entity in the regional film community. Among filmmakers, academics and cinema enthusiasts, it has become a local concern to group the region's cinemas together in order to reflect on independent filmmaking as cultural expression, as strategy, and to carve out common ground and overarching traits, while at the same time acknowledging the diversity of the region and its films, and their modes of representation and production.

For many filmmakers and other participants in the discourse, the element of independence is key in this cinematic practice that is seen as a subversive, political cinema, since it presents alternatives not only to mainstream production and aesthetics, but also to state policies of media content and the representation of national identity. Many films touch on off-limits or sensitive topics, and some projects are directly connected with political activism: the Malaysian film project *Kampong Radioaktif* (*Survival Guide Untuk Kampong Radioaktif*, Liew Seng Tat, Tan Chui Mui, Woo Ming Jin and Yeo Joon Han, 2011) consists of four short films that satirically comment the government's efforts to downplay the long-term effects of radiation towards the local population; the Indonesian *Q! Film Festival* screens queer cinema, aiming to raise awareness for queer issues and HIV, while facing protests by conservative religious groups. Independent cinema is also opposed to commercialism and to Hollywood productions and the local mainstream cinemas that dominate the region. The existence of various cinematic manifestos, declaring independence and the search for an alternative filmic vocabulary, is indicative of the pioneer spirit that motivates much of local independent filmmaking.[3]

The emergence of this cinema has put Southeast Asia on the map internationally. Festival screenings and prizes garnered by filmmakers have suddenly made visible a region that was mostly a blank space on the cinematic map, even in the prevalent narrative of "World Cinema." In their home countries, however, where the wide public turns to Hollywood productions, the local mainstream cinema, or both, independent films have a rather marginal audience. They are, paradoxically, viewed less here than abroad, by foreign audiences, even though they often show a strong concern with local problems and issues.[4] In this way, some filmmakers have become global figures, such as Filipinos Lav Diaz and Raya Martin, Malaysian directors Amir Muhammad and Tan Chui Mui, or Thai directors Aditya Assarat and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. For these reasons, Southeast Asian independent cinema has been described as a trans- or postnational cinema.[5]

Discourse elements and their trajectories

Southeast Asian independent cinema presents a fruitful topic for reflection for contemporary film studies, as it concentrates several novel aspects of cinema: the use of digital technologies, their industrial and aesthetic implications; political marginality; and its location in a part of the world still largely unknown to most film scholars. These novelties challenge classical concepts and traditional epistemologies of the discipline – most obviously, the frame of national cinema, classical apparatus and spectatorship theory, and the concentration of film studies on Western cinemas, namely those of Hollywood and Europe.

This essay examines the current discourse on contemporary Southeast Asian independent cinema, especially the way it is defined and positioned. While studying these (self-) reflections, I shall focus on the linkages between independence, the digital, and the regional/national. This nexus of topics seems especially rewarding to research, because it touches on several currently debated subjects in film studies, namely the nation as frame, the digital turn, and theories of world cinema.

By analyzing some voices that shape this discourse, I aim to unravel some of the various strains that shape it. As I shall explain, the discourse on Southeast Asian independent cinema shows obvious parallels to and borrowings from several discourses in film theory and history. The paper's interest lies in how these traditional discourses are received and modified in contemporary Southeast Asia.

There are several reasons I am interested in this. First, the discourse on cinema has repercussions on filmmaking itself: filmmakers shape their self-concepts and identities in the frame of global film history. How, then, do they relate to certain historical concepts? Most of these concepts originate in different parts of the world, raising the question how geopolitical and cultural differences are dealt with.

Further, non-Western cinema presents an important opportunity to mirror traditional film studies. The transferring of traditional Western theory to other places inevitably raises questions of adequacy and conclusiveness; to examine how these theories are negotiated in other places can offer new impulses as to how they can be rethought and expanded.

Finally, as concepts and discourses travel through space and time, they are transformed. Thus, translocalization processes of discourses and theories are highly informative of how film theory, and knowledge systems in general, work in the present day.

Independence, the digital and the regional

In the discussion of Southeast Asian independent cinema, the question of independence is assigned great importance, whilst at the same time, its meaning appears to be rather vague. In fact, the significance of the term "independence" makes the vagueness of its meaning and the lack of a definition for local cinema all the more striking. As the Australian scholar Benjamin McKay wrote, "maybe a definitive 'definition' is not needed. But we need to recognize that one person's independent is another person's 'mainstream'."[6]

As John Lent points out, the term "independence" is used in different contexts, varying according to place, time and speaker. Lent thus suggests looking at three different entities toward which independence manifests itself in this cinema: government regulation, the mainstream studio systems, and traditional methods and styles of filmmaking.[7] Examined from this variety of aspects, the question of independence seems to touch on various levels, namely that of political involvement, an economical and industrial level, as well as one of aesthetics and narration.

The concept of cinematic independence has several lineages in film history, many of which are referred to in the discussion on Southeast Asian independent cinema: independent US cinema of the 1990s, the European New Waves, Third Cinema, and postcolonial cinema. They all comprise the three levels mentioned above. Each of them links independence to new technologies and new ways of handling film equipment, in order to reduce prohibitive costs and enable filmmaking outside the realm of big production studios and their streamlined, commercialized content and style. Moreover, all of them ascribe, albeit to strongly varying degrees, to political involvement or, in some cases, oppositionalism. In this way, they all propose an "other" cinema, contrasting with and opposing cinematic forms perceived as dominant, mainly those of Hollywood.

In the following, I shall examine several references in the discourse on Southeast Asian independent cinema to various cinematic traditions and concepts from film studies, discussing them under the aspect of their translocalization and their conclusiveness for this new discourse.

Confronting the studio system: The influence of 1990s US independent films

Probably the most customary use of "independent" refers to films produced and distributed outside the big studios, which dominate or even monopolize the film industry in much of Southeast Asia. Perhaps, though, the first impulse to make independent films did not primarily arise from local conditions, but rather followed an imported concept of independence. When asked in an interview if independent cinema reacts in opposition to mainstream, commercial Malaysian cinema, independent filmmaker Amir Muhammad negates and instead ascribes a strong influence to foreign tendencies, especially

> *the hype of independent movies, which you can't deny started in America in the early 90s. So we then got the romantic idea of doing it our own way. So I don't think it was consciously in opposition in that sense, because that would only work if mainstream Malaysian cinema were the only films that we see. But we still watch mainstream movies.*[8]

As Gaik Cheng Khoo, a scholar who has worked on Malaysian independent cinema, points out, the lineage of independence of the studio system reaches back to US independent film of the 1960s, while its origins lie in the European avant-garde film of the 1920s.[9] In the 1990s, a convergence of independence and the Hollywood ideals of glamour, stardom and prestige happened; the bridging of the fine line between mainstream and independent became influential for Southeast Asian filmmakers.

According to this point of view, the divide between mainstream studio industries and independent film seems to be less severely handled than might be expected of an oppositionist movement; instead, there might well be the aspect of independent filmmaking as emulating a cinematic strain from the USA. Furthermore, the divide between the mainstream and the independent probably is less absolute than it used to be, as there has recently been a spillover of elements of independent cinema into more mainstream forms. In some cases, successful independent films have enabled their makers' deals with big studios, offering them opportunities such as commercial releases in local theaters and projects with larger working budgets. Some filmmakers work inside and outside the studio system simultaneously, straddling the borders between the independent and the mainstream. Malaysian director James Lee, for example, shoots independent films as well as Malay genre cinema, such as the 2011 *Sini Ada Hantu* (*Here Got Ghost!*, 2011), a horror film.

This spillover might be among the reasons that some critics speak of a recent demise of independent film. Malaysian filmmaker James Lee points out how the accessibility of digital filmmaking leads to a large amount of films being made with little experience and without realizing the full potential of digital work, and thus to a loss of quality in filmmaking.[10] In this way, "indie" has become a hip label that many young filmmakers strive for, since cheap DV presents the possibility of making features from an early career stage on, and the commercial (and financial) success of some independent filmmakers is a strong incentive. According to "Thaiindie," a group of Thai independent filmmakers, "indie" – the popularized, trendy version of independent filmmaking that has established itself in the course of the late 2000s–, has itself become a kind of formulaic genre with a new "set of rules," a fixed style that has become a sort of commercialized brand.[11]

Aesthetic independence, high/low culture and "indie" commercialization

Filipino film critic Alexis Tioseco has written about the demarcation between mainstream and independent cinema becoming increasingly blurred.[12] While he refers to the situation in the Philippines, this statement can be expanded to many contemporary Southeast Asian film industries: it is nowadays harder to distinguish between the two by the categories of film formats (DV vs. 35mm), length (shorts vs. features), form (alternative vs. formulaic), or distribution (limited vs. wide), since the old framework and its boundaries have been confused. Larger production companies have entered territories previously inhabited by the independent film scene, such as small festivals, and have created sub-labels employing young filmmakers working with lower budgets; meanwhile, previously independent companies are producing films geared toward larger audiences and theatrical releases, often accepting financial backing from production companies or corporations. In sum, convergences have taken place that expand new niches in the film industry

and water down the significance of the term "independence," that, in Tioseco's opinion, "was once like a battle cry, but now it is a whimper, a marketing tool, a hip reference."[13]

According to Tioseco, since industrial or technical determinants have seen shifts in connotation, the question of aesthetics is of particular importance for the notion of independence today. In this understanding, independence is seen as cultural and aesthetic resistance; aesthetics clearly is understood as having a political reach, following the belief that representation forms the spectator's subjectivity by positioning him or her in certain ways, based on classical apparatus and spectatorship theory, as coined by Raymond Bellour and Jean-Louis Baudry.

However, it has meanwhile become a common concern that the aesthetics of independent film, too, has become commercialized. The Filipino movie *Ang Babae Sa Septic Tank* (*The Woman in the Septic Tank*, Marlon Rivera, 2011) spoofs the typical "indie" style: slow editing, voice-over-less, extreme long takes and grainy photography seem to have become a cliché and lost their edge. In positing independence as alternative culture, and in stating the loss of political urgency and artistic significance that comes with the commodification of "indie" culture, a Western truism appears: that of high versus low culture. In this notion that was formed in 19th century Europe and links culture to social class, high culture is seen as a force for moral and political good, as opposed to low, mass and folk culture, which are deemed of inferior value. In current film history, the distinction often resurfaces in the contrasting juxtaposition of arthouse and commercial cinema. Whereas arthouse cinema is understood as eschewing commercialism for an artistic and cerebral focus, and existing for a niche audience of connoisseurs, commercial cinema is deemed nonpolitical, escapist entertainment for the masses. The positioning of Southeast Asian independent cinema as alternative culture thus seems to refer to this art/entertainment divide.

Digital cinema and new aesthetics: "Dogme"

By aligning digital practice with alternative culture, as opposed to commercial culture, Southeast Asian filmmakers follow a notion previously employed by several movements or currents in film history: the use of new, more cost-effective technology to produce films understood as alternative counterpoint to more established cinemas, such as the lighter, more mobile camera types used by the European New Waves or New Hollywood, handheld cameras favored by the Danish "Dogme" movement or, most recently, DV cameras as the choice tool of the sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers. The novel qualities and handling of these technologies entail an aesthetic and narrative agenda that stands in contrast to that of the according mainstream and that usually features alternative modes of representation and viewer positioning, novel narratives, and the eschewal of the star system.

In his manifesto "The twelve Bowowows of Impurity," Khavn de la Cruz, a Filipino independent filmmaker, directly alludes to the Danish avant-garde movement "Dogme 95," founded by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, and its manifesto and "vow of chastity."[14] Like its Danish predecessor, Khavn's manifesto establishes filmmaking rules based on traditional filmmaking parameters – photography, lighting and color, sound recording, mise-en-scène, narrative conventions, and the like – and advocates the use of low-cost equipment and simple solutions, instead of elaborate technology and high-profile work standards. Khavn calls his manifesto a

"bastardization" of the "Dogme" credo, counterpointing the original aim of "chastity" with that of "impurity." While the Danish manifesto establishes a clear set of rules stating rigid imperatives, Khavn sets up his "rules" as options that allow the filmmaker the widest possible range of creativity and self-expression, the utmost goal being to "just make your film, now." [15]

Political activism: Third cinema, postcolonialism, anti-imperialism

Another recurring notion in the history of independent cinemas is the alignment of their alternativeness with political involvement. In this way, cinema is understood as a mode of cultural and aesthetic resistance against established authorities holding power. Since many Southeast Asian nations are ruled by authoritarian governments and are struggling for democracy, the main authorities contested by alternative films are the state powers. Independent cinema resists state ideologies by speaking about taboos and sensitive issues, and challenges state control by dodging censorship, sometimes even making fun of it. Singaporean filmmaker Royston Tan's short film *Cut* (2004), for instance, is a satirical medley of pop songs and dance scenes making fun of the Singapore Board of Film Censors after it pressured him to cut his feature film *15* (2003). Here, digital filmmaking plays a vital role, as it often enables avoidance of state-approved channels of distribution and exhibition, for example by internet streaming or homemade DVDs, and by creating publicity via social media.

The notion of cinema as political activism, means of resistance and a pathway to freedom can be traced back to Third Cinema. The 1970s Latin American movement aimed to inspire mass revolutionary activism and to counterpoint commercial-escapist films as well as art cinema, by founding a cinematic movement and aesthetic adequate for the economic and political situation of the at the time so-called Third World. Southeast Asian independent cinema, or some of its veins, has repeatedly been read as a possible descendant following the politicized, communitarian and radical spirit of Third Cinema.[16] However, while acting as oppositional voices, various filmmakers or institutions in fact partially depend on state funding. For example, the state-funded Bangkok Art and Culture Centre regularly houses screenings of independent films; the Substation, a Singaporean alternative cultural center, is partially supported by the state, as is the Thai Short Film festival. As Mariam Lam points out, while Vietnamese independent film exists in the form of non-mainstream cinema, the Vietnamese state is involved in all Vietnamese films, thus shifting the definition of independence away from an economical level.[17] The fact that state funding and independent filmmaking are not separated and, in some cases, not separable, relativizes the open oppositionalism and radicalism proposed by Third Cinema, and blurs political positioning. It might be indicative that the alignment with Third Cinema has been constructed by foreign or diasporic critics rather than by local activists, many of whom are involved in and perhaps depend on the complexities of state participation in the funding of film and film culture, and in the negotiation of their own political and economical positioning.

Another aspect of Third Cinema as political resistance is anti-imperialism, a mindset that might seem conclusive to the postcolonial situation of most of Southeast Asia. Digital technology is sometimes seen as a vital tool for the empowerment of local film culture, since it enables local filmmaking with much lower budgets than the use of 35mm stock would require. As Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz says in an interview:

> *Digital is liberation theology. Now we can have our own media. [...] The issue is not anymore that you cannot shoot. You have a Southeast Asian Independent Cinema now. We have been deprived for a long time, we have been neglected, we have been dismissed by the Western media. That was because of production logistics. We did not have money, we did not have cameras, all those things. Now, these questions have been answered. We are on equal terms now.*[18]

Here, the rise of Southeast Asian independent film is described as an opposition to Western cinema as an agent of cultural hegemony, echoing an essential concern of Third Cinema. Seeing Southeast Asian cinema as a reaction to more dominant cinemas – mainly Hollywood, but also other, more prominent cinemas, such as those of Japan, Hong Kong or India – is a powerful strain in the discourse.[19] However, the resistance towards hegemonic powers claimed by Third Cinema activists has since shifted, as various present-day independent Southeast Asian filmmakers receive contributions from foreign funds and festivals, and other institutions that support film in economically weaker regions, such as the "Hubert Bals" Fund of the Rotterdam Film Festival, or the *produire au sud* workshop run by the Nantes Film Festival.

As the structure of global cinema has profoundly changed since the 1960s, the cultural and political positions constitutive of Third Cinema have shifted. Cultural hegemony, eurocentrism, and capitalist forces are no longer fixed to certain parts of the world, but have become delocalized and, in some cases, even absorbed into non-Western epistemologies, economies and value systems. As Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt write, "Empire" can no longer be located geopolitically, but has become a conglomeration of various entities and practices. Therefore, traditional anti-imperialist strategies can no longer be applied against individual nations.[20] While Third Cinema remains a key reference point in the discourse on non-Western film cultures, the changing coordinates that locate the discourse, cause a re-adjusting to the present-day landscape of global cinema. In the case of Southeast Asian independent cinema, this entails a redefining of the notion of independence, aligning itself with institutions offering contributions, and negotiating the transnational positioning that this entails. It also raises the question of current hegemonies and new power centers that are not located in a geographically determined space, but are delocalized, such as transnational funding institutions, the politics of major film festivals, and the influence of critics and academic institutions.

Transnationalism, regionalism, scapes – and the nation

The notions of transnationalism and regionalism figure prominently in the discourse on Southeast Asian independent cinema, as digital technology figures as a way to transcend national boundaries and to establish regional and global networks. In line with communitarian values, the regional frame is thought to help locate the individual national cinemas on the map of global cinema and to bolster their presence, making the region visible as a whole. Several groups, institutions and networks involved with Southeast Asian independent film operate transnationally, such as the websites *Criticine* and *Southeast Asian Film Studies Institute*, the Luang Prabang Film Festival or the Singapore-based Southeast Asian Film Festival.[21]

Several Asian postcolonial critics have theorized regionalism as an alternative conceptual framing to anti-imperialism.[22] In the wake of the concept of the nation as imagined community and

of the questioning of the frame of national cinema, the concept of regional cinema seems to offer a promising point of departure. Tilman Baumgärtel describes the digital and regional aspects of this cinema with a concept developed by Arjun Appadurai.[23] In Appadurai's approach, "scapes" are boundary-crossing spaces created by various contemporary cultural global flows: a mediascape refers to the global reach of media and their ability to disseminate information throughout the world; a technoscape refers to the ability of technology to transcend borders and boundaries.[24]

On the levels of representation and of audience reception, though, the national continues to be of high relevance, and the national cinemas of the region are still very much acknowledged as such. The nation as an authoritative, repressive power is often contested; since many films comment on political issues and social injustices that are specific to their home countries, and often indirectly to avoid censorship, viewers need a fair level of contextual knowledge to understand the various levels of meaning.

Thus, the concept of the national seems to persist as an important entity and frame of reference, side by side with the concepts of the regional and the transnational, as Southeast Asian filmmakers deal with a simultaneous multiple spatial and geopolitical positioning. This multiple positioning is characteristic of present-day cinemas in general, and of their move beyond the binary divide of local and global, as they are embedded in transnational cultural and economic flows and the complex frameworks they entail. In this way, transnational cinemas open up a communicative space that can be inhabited by local and foreign audiences at the same time. In this vein, local writers have suggested an understanding of Southeast Asian independent cinema as cosmopolitan or cosmopolitical.[25]

Conclusion: From traditional concepts toward a vernacular

While the conjunction between digital cinema (or other, previous technological innovations), alternativeness and independence forms an underlying pattern for the discussed cinematic concepts, it also shapes the link by which Southeast Asian independent cinema (partially, in some cases) aligns itself with these concepts. By doing so, this cinema positions itself in relation to global film history, carving out its own meaning based on other discourses, rhetorics and credos.

Various strains of traditional film theory and history are employed in the discourse, either explicitly or implicitly, and are followed rather informally. Some of them, such as US independent cinema or spectatorship theory, serve as loose points of reference; others are parodied, as in the example of "Dogma." Still others are adopted partially and in a negotiated way, such as Third Cinema, anti-imperialism, and transnationalism. In all cases, the preexisting concepts are modified in order to gain flexibility. They are not absorbed blindly and totally, but instead adapted to local contexts, meanings, conditions and concerns, and thus made useful for local purposes, creating an own, vernacular branch of film discourse.

These transformations point toward the general situation of contemporary, transnational cinema. Notions such as alternativeness, independence and transnationalism can no longer be clear, unambiguous stances, and anti-imperialism and anti-commercialism in the original senses are no longer valid concepts, as old binary systems have become unfixed and replaced by more complex, globalized force fields.

Outlook: Widening the scope of film theory

Because it combines several novel aspects of contemporary cinema – the digital turn, multiple spatial frames, and non-Western cinema –, the cinematic movement and discourse I have portrayed here point toward aspects of traditional film theory that need to be reconsidered or updated. In this sense, the flow of discourse from the West to Southeast Asia described above would change direction: what do the modifications that traditional theory concepts undergo elsewhere say about the state of film studies today?

Since many traditional paradigms of film studies depart from Western-based epistemologies, they currently find themselves facing delimitations of reach and of adequacy. As the West's dominance as representational norm and epistemological center is challenged, calls for a repositioning of global knowledge systems are being made.[26] Among the major contested fields are those based on Western notions of subjectivity, individuality and perception, such as auteur theory, classical apparatus theory and psychoanalysis. The classical canon of film history has been criticized for omitting a large part of world cinema; the contextualization of non-Western film in terms of history, language and culture is seen as an often lacking aspect, as are adequate approaches toward non-Western cinema.[27] At the same time, the digital turn begs the question how cinema is redefined in its practices of production, distribution and exhibition, as well as in its aesthetics.[28] Also, the rise of coproduction leads to a questioning of the concept of national cinema, backed by wider scholarly reflection on the concept of the nation as Western construct.[29]

The topic presented in this essay suggests several challenges to traditional film studies. Most obviously, inquiring into the cinema of a geopolitical area largely unknown to Western film studies expands the usual canon of films as well as of theory to a less Eurocentric focus. As Lúcia Nagib suggests, world cinema understood in this way is not a niche opposed to Hollywood or to well-known Western cinemas, but the all-inclusive sum of global cinemas.[30] Much of Southeast Asian independent cinema is produced and circulated digitally. This entails new pragmatics and aesthetics. The conventional working modes of production, distribution and audience reception are becoming historical, and are increasingly replaced by new industry structures, modes of working and viewing habits. Further, as this cinema is transnational, regional and national at once, it departs from the category of nation as sole entity, as well as from later approaches that declare the nation an obsolete category and suggest a distinct change of paradigm, fully replacing it by transnationalism.

This cinema's discourse on independence, with its processes of selecting, reflecting and adapting or rejecting traditional concepts, points to aspects of these concepts that need revision. Among these aspects are the consideration of unfamiliar or newly formed industry structures such as those in Southeast Asia; changes in the filmmaking, distribution and viewing practices due to digital technology; the positioning of the area in relation to global cinema and the transnational industry; and the political engagement of postcolonial areas that connect to the global (and often Western-lead) festival circuit. Previously shaped notions of cinematic independence and political cinema mentioned in the analysis, such as those of Third Cinema, anti-imperialism, or apparatus theory, no longer fully apply to recent developments and have become historic lines of thinking. To this effect, the transformation they undergo in the Southeast Asian discourse is exemplary for changes in film studies in an age of post-eurocentrism, the digital turn, and of cinematic "relocation."[31]

Like all knowledge systems, film theory is not bound to one place, but travels and shifts. As its concepts circulate, their contexts and meanings fluctuate, and they are subjected to processes of exchange and entanglements. They thereby enter into a state of fluidity where their terms and epistemological backgrounds constantly need to be rediscussed and thus find chances of reconnecting to the present. As Lúcia Nagib put it, "world cinema, as the world itself, is circulation"[32] – as is discourse on it.

1 For overviews on the film history of individual Southeast Asian countries, see: John A. Lent, *The Asian Film Industry*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1990; David Hanan (ed.), *Film in South East Asia: Views on Film in Ten South East Asia-Pacific Countries*, Seapavaa, Hanoi 2001; Anne Tereska Ciecko (ed.), *Contemporary Asian Cinema: Popular Culture in a Global Frame*, Berg, Oxford 2006.

2 See: Eloisa May P. Hernandez, *The Beginnings of Digital Cinema in Southeast Asia*, in May Adadol Ingawanij, Benjamin McKay (eds.), *Glimpses of Freedom. Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, Ithaca 2012, pp. 223-236, p. 227.

3 Examples are: Khavn de la Cruz, *Four Manifestos*, in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 2012, p. 119-124; or the *I Sinema Manifesto*, in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p. 151.

4 This is a paradox shared with other independent cinemas from countries with strict censorship policies, such as China's Sixth Generation.

5 See: Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p. 22.

6 Benjamin McKay, "Toward New Ways of Seeing Southeast Asian Cinema," in *Criticine*, 29 January 2006, http://criticine.com/feature_article.php?id=25, last visit 21 May 2013.

7 John A. Lent*, Southeast Asian Independent Cinema: Independent of What?*, in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p.13.

8 Benjamin McKay, "A Conversation with Amir Muhammad," in *Criticine*, 13 October 2005, http://www.criticine.com/interview_article.php?id=18, last visit 10 May 2013.

9 Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Just-Do-It-(Yourself): Independent Filmmaking in Malaysia," in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2007, pp. 227-247.

10 Eloisa May P. Hernandez, *The Beginnings of Digital Cinema in Southeast Asia*, cit., p. 234.

11 *Idem*, p. 224.

12 Alexis A. Tioseco, *Like the Body and the Soul*, in May Adadol Ingawanij, Benjamin McKay (eds.), *Glimpses of Freedom. Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, cit., pp. 183-184.

13 *Idem*, p. 183.

14 Khavn de la Cruz, *Four Manifestos*, cit., p. 119; Lars Von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, *Dogme 95. The Vow of Chastity*, in Andrew Utterson (ed.), *Technology and Culture. The Film Reader*, Routledge, London-New York 2005 (1995), pp. 87-88.

15 Khavn de la Cruz, *Four Manifestos*, cit., p. 122. Critics have pointed out that the "Dogme" credo was mapped out with a certain irony, and that its criticism remains abstract and vague (Mads Egmont Christensen, "Dogma and Marketing," in *P.O.V.*, no. 10, December 2000, http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/section_4/artc1A.html, last visit 29 July 2013; Niels Weisberg, "Great Cry and Little Wool," in *P.O.V.*, no. 10, December 2000); some suspect that the rigidity in its phrasing served as a way to attract publicity and to provoke (Ove Christensen, "Authentic Illusions – The Aesthetics of Dogma 95," in *P.O.V.*, no. 10, December 2000). While one might argue that Khavn's text reflects "Dogme"'s irony by mirroring its rigidity, still the contrast between the texts remains obvious.

16 May Adadol Ingawanij, *The Thai Short Film and Video Festival and the Question of Independence*, in May Adadol Ingawanij, Benjamin McKay (eds.), *Glimpses of Freedom. Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, cit., p. 180; Joel David, "Review: May Adadol Ingawanij, Benjamin McKay (eds.), *Glimpses of*

Freedom," in *Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, December 2012, p. 531; Cameron Bailey, quoted in Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p. 6.

17 Mariam B. Lam, *The Postcolonial Condition of "Indochinese" Cinema from Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos*, in Sandra Ponzanesi, Marguerite Waller (eds*.), Postcolonial Cinema Studies*, Routledge, London 2012, p. 87.

18 Tilman Baumgärtel, *"Digital is Liberation Theology." Interview with Lav Diaz*, in Id. (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p. 177.

19 Benjamin McKay, "Toward New Ways of Seeing Southeast Asian Cinema," cit.

20 Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2001.

21 www.criticine.com; http://southeastasiancinema.wordpress.com, last visit 21 May 2013.

22 See Mariam B. Lam, *Circumventing Channels. Indie Filmmaking in Post-Socialist Vietnam and Beyond*, cit., p. 108. Lam especially mentions the work of Naoki Sakai, Gayatri Gopinath, and K.H. Chen.

23 Tilman Baumgärtel (ed.), *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, cit., p. 24ff.

24 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernities at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1996.

25 Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Just- Do- It- (Yourself): Independent Filmmaking in Malaysia," cit., p. 227; Z.H. Raju, "Filmic Imaginations of the Malaysian Chinese," in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, no. 1, 2008, p. 74.

26 In keeping with Negri and Hardt's notions of "Empire" mentioned earlier, "the West" here refers to an ideology rather than a geography (Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, *Empire*, cit.).

27 See: Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism Multiculturalism and the Media*, Routledge, London-New York 1994; Saer Maty Ba, Will Higbee (eds.), *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2012.

28 See: Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," in *Necsus. European Journal of Media Studies*, no. 2, 2012, http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-relocation-of-cinema, last visit 22 May 2013; Barbara Flückiger, "Das digitale Kino: Eine Momentaufnahme," in *Montage/av*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, pp. 28-51.

29 See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1991.

30 See: Lúcia Nagib, *Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema*, in Stephanie Dennison, Song Hwee Lim (eds.), *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*, Wallflower, London 2006, pp. 30-37.

31 Francesco Casetti has used the term relocation to describe a new kind of filmic experience in the wake of a transformed media environment (Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," cit.).

32 Lúcia Nagib, *Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema*, cit., p. 37.

TRANSNATIONAL SUBJECTS IN A MULTIPLE EUROPE
AUF DER ANDEREN SEITE AND *ALMANYA: WILLKOMMEN IN DEUTSCHLAND*

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to address the different production strategies and formal solutions proposed by two European films by German-Turkish directors, *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven*, Fatih Akin, 2007), and *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland* (*Almanya: Welcome to Germany*, Yasemin and Nesrin Samdereli, 2011). The article will analyze the role of the spatial configurations and the temporal fragmentations in the representation of cultural conflicts and problematic identities. Both narratives address migration and border crossing issues, exploring the contemporary relations between (neutral) Germany and (exotic) Turkey. However, the approaches of the two films to these issues are very different, also because of the context of production and distribution. The analysis of these films will therefore be conducted in relation to the European cinematographic market, spatial-temporal configurations, and border thinking. It will be shown how European cinema responds to deep changes on imaginary, economic, and social levels, representing geopolitical mutations through narrative, formal, and productive choices.

Contemporary European cinema has often addressed geopolitical changes and their effects on hegemonic imaginaries. In the last twenty years, the idea of a solid state, defined by its national borders (geographical as well as cultural) and producing a shared identity for its inhabitants, has been radically challenged. The strengthening of the European Union's agreements, the definition of its institutions, and its expansion toward Eastern states have contributed to a change in imaginaries and identities. The representation of transnational connections in film and media has assumed a pivotal role in popular narratives, and migrants from inside and outside of Europe have been at the center of many stories.

The web of interconnections between diasporic subjects has problematized the idea of belonging; the notion of a "national identity," representable through cinematic narration, has been repeatedly challenged. The concept of the nation, however, far from having been erased or considered useless, has acquired new meanings in relation to local/global categories and the transnational approach.[1] Germany is among the countries that have historically contributed to the construction of the European concept of national identity.[2] Due to its internal division, produced by post-war negotiations, and the role that guest workers had during the booming economy of

the 1960s, Germany today has to face many conflicts between the various identities within its geographical boundaries. Moreover, contemporary German cinema shares production processes and imaginaries with other "national cinemas" in Europe.[3] European and German cinema are no longer famous only for their "auteur films;" nor is genre cinema only synonymous with mindless entertainment. Hegemonic imaginaries and popular modes of production include the staging of cultural conflicts, problematic family bonds, and articulated spatial and temporal configurations.

With this in mind, I would like to address the fragmentation of temporality and the spatial dialectics proposed by two contemporary films: *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven*, Fatih Akin, 2007), and *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland* (*Almanya: Welcome to Germany*, Yasemin and Nesrin Samdereli, 2011). Both narratives address migration and border-crossing issues, exploring contemporary linkages between Germany and Turkey. However, the approaches of the two films are very different, in their stylistic choices and in the context of their production and consumption. An analysis of these films will be conducted in relation to the European cinematographic market, spatial-temporal configurations, and border thinking. In doing so, this paper aims to show how European cinema responds to deep changes on imaginary, economic, and social levels, representing geopolitical mutations through narrative, formal, and productive choices.

The transnational scenario: Production strategies and the role of film festivals

Directed by second-generation Turkish-German filmmakers, *Almanya* and *The Edge of Heaven* avail themselves of the institutional funding offered by the German Federal Film Board, the *Filmförderungsanstalt* (FFA). They are therefore included in the category of national cinema; in this way, they contribute to the blurring of the cultural boundaries traditionally posed by institutional bureaucracy.[4] However, their representation of "local" cultures and their distribution patterns are very different. *The Edge of Heaven* emphasizes regional locations (Bremen, Hamburg, Istanbul, Trabzon), in order to "provide access-points for the international and global cinema markets, which includes the national audience."[5] *Almanya* is more oriented toward a national market and distribution, as is also shown by its visualization of the "exotic" Turkey and the "institutional" Germany.

In European cinema, localization is a conscious strategy to help the film meet the market, through the production of identities. The construction of an ongoing relation between the regional, the national, and the transnational is pursued by contemporary films in order to elaborate a wider European scenario, of which international film festivals become a celebration. Thomas Elsaesser underlines how "the festival circuit […] holds some of these manifestations of post-national cinema together, giving them a European dimension, at the same time as it makes them enter into global symbolic economies, potentially re-writing many of the usual markers of identity."[6]

The Edge of Heaven was presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007, where it won the Prix du Scénario; the same year, Fatih Akin won the European Film Award for Best European Screenwriter for this film. *Almanya* was presented out of competition during the 61st Berlin International Film Festival of 2011, and it was nominated in other competitions in Germany and in the US. Both are part of a wave of films made by directors and screenwriter of foreign (especially Turkish) descent,

usually co-produced by private and public service institutions, presented in international festivals and narrating the "ordinary multiculturalism" dominating contemporary Germany.[7] Therefore, they both contribute to a transnational imaginary for European cinema; however, they fulfill different needs in the same national market, and are differently distributed in the foreign market.

With *The Edge of Heaven*, Akin situates himself in the tradition of European auteur cinema, especially through the casting choices: the character of Susanne is interpreted by Hanna Schygulla, an actress who has often appeared in films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Already *Gegen die Wand* (*Head On*, 2004), Akin's previous film, made references to Fassbinder, namely to *Angst essen Seele auf* (*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, 1974).[8] With its art cinema references and worldwide distribution, *The Edge of Heaven* is representative of European cinema as "world cinema." It is a cinema that positions itself between art film and mainstream productions;[9] it is usually a product of cultural hybridity and of a transnational scenario, both at the productive level and in its narrative choices.[10] *The Edge of Heaven* programmatically addresses issues of belonging and exclusion, questioning institutional borders. It can be compared with other films and audiovisual narrations that aim to entertain the audience by interrogating cultural conflicts and global networks.[11] The constant exchange between the global and the local is one of the main themes of Akin's film, and contributes to the display of power relations. The random encounters between the characters mirror a complex balance of political and cultural positions.

Almanya is part of a wider group of European comedies that directly address the clash of cultures. There are many examples of this subgenre from different national cinemas: from the French *Chouchou* (Merzak Allouache, 2003) to the Italian *Into Paradiso* (Paola Randi, 2010), from the British *Bend it Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002), to the Swedish *Jalla! Jalla!* (Josef Fares, 2000). The previous work of the Samdereli sisters with the German sitcom *Türkisch für Anfänger* (*Turkish for Beginners*, 2006-2008) already underlined their interest in the interlacing of familial bonds with cultural conflicts. Exponents of the last generation of filmmakers with diasporic backgrounds, the Samderelis are particularly interested in positioning themselves at the core of the multicultural Germany, embodied by a new Berlin whose representation can be likened to that of many other European metropoles.

Poststructuralism and scattered temporalities: Virtualization and representation

To say that European cinema addresses the problematic identities generated by changes in geopolitical assets is obviously not to consider films mirrors of "reality." Film studies, in the wake of (or against) poststructuralism, have often discussed the links between phenomenal experiences and their cinematographic (i.e., linguistic, discursive, aesthetic) representation. Therefore, many have underlined how cinema contributes to the construction of individual and collective imaginary scenarios, and its narratives negotiate different positions in relation with hegemonic discourses.

An important contribution to the debate about webs of power and their performance comes from Rey Chow. The theorist starts from Martin Heidegger's reflection on the world conceived as a picture. However, according to Chow, the contemporary world is not only a picture: it is a target, violently caught in the space between vision and representation. In her analysis, the world's virtualization and visualization come together: everything knowable exists only inside the

representation.[12] The "world picture" is mediated by violent technologies of vision and control, and power chains are particularly constrictive. In a context dominated by economic globalization and cultural conflicts that are only too "real" and dangerous, Chow considers it essential to reformulate referentiality. The processes of the world's representation that make meaning accessible do not produce de-materialization through virtuality, nor the relativity of equivalent differences. Global media products and comparative studies also use two main paradigms: "Europe and Its Others" and "Post-European Culture and the West."[13] To overcome the duality of these spatial categories, media and film studies have to relocate audiovisual narratives in their historical positions, and they have also to address these narratives' specific inner temporal configuration.[14]

Space and time share a similar role in the films' production and consumption, and they are essential to the narrative interpretation as well. Because it aims to belong to the global art cinema, *The Edge of Heaven* adheres to a complex spatial-temporal configuration that rejects any simplistic dualism. *Almanya* also represents historical knowledge about cultural conflicts, but its domestic target influences the construction of Germany as a "neutral" space of belonging, ironically opposed to the "exotic" Turkey. Moreover, *Almanya* produces the historical past as a private and nostalgic narrative, playing with the association between Turkey and the past (sometimes in the sense of backwardness). In fact, it follows the journey of an extended family of Turkish origin from Germany to their native land. This journey is intertwined with several other narrative strands: the love story between Hüseyin and Fatma, Hüseyin's migration in Germany as a guest worker in the 1960s, and finally the family reunion. The voiceover of the young niece, Canan, narrates both the present and the past, directly addressing the audience. The visualization of the characters' dreams, thoughts, fantasies, and desires, and the photography chosen to recall the nostalgic past in Turkey, are in conflict with the occasional envisioning of everyday life in Germany. In this way, we are always oriented in space and time, but the representation refuses to adhere to a "verisimilar" style.[15] The past is playfully created as a "traditional past" through costumes and scenography, and the present is also affected by the fantastic, magical, and metaphoric flavor that permeates the film.

The Edge of Heaven instead dislodges the narration flow, disorienting the audience by going backward and forward in time.[16] Akin's film thereby interrogates the contingency of possible becomings and underlines the network interlacing the lives of the different subjects in labyrinthine patterns. The film narrates the intertwining stories of six characters: it begins by following the old Ali, a Turkish guest worker in Bremen, and his relationship with the Turkish prostitute Yeter. Ali kills her during a violent argument; his son Nejat goes to Istanbul to find Yeter's daughter, Ayten. However, in the meantime, Ayten has gone to Bremen to escape the Turkish police and find her mother. In Germany she meets Lotte, and they fall in love. However, Ayten's request for asylum is refused, and she is sent back to Turkey, where she has to face a prison sentence for terrorism. Lotte follows Ayten and casually rents a room in Nejat's home, though he will never know that she is Ayten's girlfriend. While she is trying to recover Ayten's gun, Lotte is robbed and killed by a group of children; her mother Susanne goes to Istanbul to retrieve her body. Inspired by long talks with Susanne, Nejat finally decides to forgive his father for Yeter's murder and to join him in Ali's hometown Trabzon, while Susanne decides to help Ayten as Lotte would have done.

Temporality is thus exposed in its complexity and in its randomness, questioning the European tradition of narrative as a structure to organize time.[17] The main narrative paths (the one involving Nejat and the one following Ayten) begin on 1 May of the same year and proceed in parallel, but

they are narrated one after the other. Therefore, time's perception is contradictory; on the one hand, a linear conception of time still endures and gives the audience the potential to reconstruct the narration flow. On the other hand, categories such as "the past" or "the future" are exhibited in their cultural construction, and are part of the differential temporality dominating postcolonial theory and poststructuralism. In particular, the scattered temporalities experienced by migrants are a byproduct of the diasporic and global scenario, where past, present, and future always coexist as representations.[18]

In any case, the temporalities of *Almanya* and *The Edge of Heaven* are reflected in their different approaches to the spatiality of Germany and Turkey. Both films reject the staging of "Turkish" characters as minoritized victims of migration and global economy, but they propose different solutions for the power relations and hegemonic positions of the subjects.

European cinema, world cinema: On the Other's side

The Edge of Heaven spatially represents the transformation from migrant (as opposed to "native") to "alien" (as opposed to citizen). Ali and Yeter are part of the first waves of migrants – people who came to Germany in search of better economic opportunities and, incidentally, of the institutional respect of human and civil rights. Their home is Bremen, visualized as a comfortable space inhabited by traditional families. Ayten, instead, belongs to the generation of asylum seekers: aliens who escaped from political persecution.[19] She brings to Hamburg the violence and harshness of the political conflicts experienced in Istanbul. Ayten's discourses on Turkish reality reproduce the position of "globalism," according to which gendered and political violence is "primarily an effect of global capitalism without accounting for the ways in which global manifestations of power differ from as much as they intensify earlier and more traditional forms of patriarchy within the nation-state."[20]

Proving Ayten wrong in her explanation of political relations, the film proposes instead a different discourse on the border. As observed by Rosa Linda Fregoso in a different context, the visual and narrative emphasis on power asymmetries, and on the clash of cultures, is useful to scatter the dialectic between the victims and their persecutors, creating a new space for agency and activism.[21] In other words, cultural production from and about the border narrates and represents the agency of excluded citizens, contributing to the production of social transformation and political action. This is the reason why this section is called "On the Other's side," a reference to the German title *Auf der anderen Seite*. The film aspires to produce a discourse that belongs to what Ella Shohat and Robert Stam call "polycentric multiculturalism:" a perspective that calls for a strong refusal of Eurocentrism in favor of a "constitutive heterogeneity," a counterhegemonic position that emphasizes hybridization.[22] The characters are taken in their institutional and hegemonic cultural positions; their multiplicity reflects the scattered geography of *The Edge of Heaven*, and they participate in the production of multifaceted perceptions of Germany and Turkey at a time when there was widespread political and institutional debate on the admission of Turkey in the European Union.

In 1999, Turkey obtained the status of candidate for EU membership; however, before obtaining full membership, its governments had to demonstrate that certain key political and juridical

changes had taken place. From 1999 to 2005, some of these transformations were effectively realized, and the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey, which are still unconcluded. At the very heart of the cultural debate was the possibility for the EU to truly influence the politics of an external government, and to change through diplomacy the precarious condition of human and civil rights in a non-member state.[23] This problematic issue is verbalized in *The Edge of Heaven* in an argument between Ayten and Susanne.

In this brief sequence, the shot scale constructs a complex space inside Susanne's house. The sequence begins with an establishing shot of the kitchen, where Susanne is sitting at the table. This placid, still, repetitive space is invaded by Ayten and her aggressive voice, while she moves around. The conversation begins neutrally, with Susanne asking Ayten about her political stances; but when Susanne suggests that the European Union can offer progress and freedom, Ayten declares that she does not trust the leaders of this institution because they are just looking for new space to expand global colonialism. While uttering this line, Ayten moves off-screen; after the cut, she is framed in a close-up (fig. 1), as is Susanne in the counter-shot (fig. 2). They are definitely divided, and the familiar space of the kitchen is constructed around this opposition. The sequence ends with Susanne looking through the window, while Lotte leaves with Ayten; the glass separating them, and the longing connoted in many point-of-view shots in this film, mark the irreconcilable division between the European Susanne, who believes in democracy and progress, and the Turkish Ayten, who underlines the importance of fighting for everyone's rights.

Figs. 1-2

Ayten and Susanne will find visual and emotional reconciliation only at the end of the film, after the death of Lotte. When Susanne visits Ayten in the prison the shot/counter-shot structure includes the two women in the same frame, even though they are physically separated by the glass and the bars of the parlor. Later, they will meet again in Nejat's bookshop, with a restored establishing shot framing them both, gradually transformed into a medium full shot through a slow zoom in (fig. 3). Susanne will probably never be able to replace Yeter for Ayten, nor will Ayten become a substitute for Lotte, but the two women are able to bridge the gap that divides their positions emotionally.

The Edge of Heaven thus proposes an opposition between the placid Europe, where political fighting is by now far away, and Turkey, where there is an ongoing struggle for human, civil, and political rights.[24] This opposition is also sketched through the different representations of the two parades on 1 May. The first one is a reassuring demonstration in Bremen, small, tidy, and including families (fig. 4).


Figs. 3-4

It is framed with shots from an anthropomorphic point of view and is observed by Ali on his way to the red-light district. It is therefore proposed as a constitutive part of the civil society, a ritual that is part of the holiday. The second one is a mass demonstration in Istanbul, full of menacing youths in masks, and initially framed through surveillance shots from the police helicopter (fig. 5). The visual importance accorded to the police underlines how political activism is perceived by Turkish institutions as threatening and disturbing.[25]

Fig. 5

The crossing of the borders between Europe and Turkey cannot bring, in the contemporary reality of a global economy and institutional linkages, a euphoric celebration of multiplicity and hybridization. The construction of the cultural bridge connecting Ayten and Susanne is painful, and implies a reconsideration of the characters' political stances. If Nejat, strengthened by culture and education, and holding German-Turkish citizenship, can easily travel across the two borders and settle down anywhere he likes, in Istanbul Lotte is made vulnerable by her "foreign" look and inability to speak Turkish, and thus she becomes a victim of Turkey's poverty. In a similar way, Ayten is exposed to institutional control because of her illegal status in Germany, as also denoted by her inability to speak German, and she becomes a victim of European institutions and legislations.

The female characters' fight against the position of victim that they are forced into can only partially succeed.[26] *The Edge of Heaven* does not take a simplistic position in the debate on citizenship, international relations, multiculturalism, and global economy. The frequent border crossing between Germany and Turkey, visualized through the airports, on the one hand proposes a traditional perception of the geographical and institutional borders across nations and their citizens. On the other hand, it makes explicit the cultural interrelations connecting and constructing the two spaces, and their mutual dependency.

The "idyllic chronotope" of Turkish *Heimat*

In a similar fashion, *Almanya* openly interrogates the double German-Turkish citizenship in contemporary society; but its answers are more reassuring, as its objective seems to be the homogenization of cultural differences proposed by liberal multiculturalism.[27] As a comedy, it proposes itself as film entertainment, made for the German market and eventually distributed abroad.[28] In fact, while *The Edge of Heaven* includes dialogue in German, English, and Turkish, *Almanya*'s dialogue is exclusively in German,[29] although a Turkish-language version has been made for the Turkish community in Germany.

Almanya refuses the problematization of values and cultures as painful, preferring instead to exhibit the clash-hybridization of cultures and religions through the playful visualization of certain characters' dreams, nightmares, and fantasies. This refusal of the "realistic" style usually associated with social-problem films,[30] both in the past and the present, is one of *Almanya*'s most interesting formal choices. According to Hamid Naficy, Turkish transnational cinema traditionally proposes a claustrophobic representation of a gendered space.[31] By contrast, in *Almanya* even the nightmares are portrayed in an ironic fashion, while the film's spatial representation is characterized by the presence of landscapes and outdoor settings. Moreover, no space is forbidden to any of the Turkish-German characters, neither in Germany nor in their paradoxically unknown *Heimat*, Turkey.[32]

At a narrative level, *Almanya* depicts a common phenomenon among the old guest workers and their families: spending the holidays in their homeland. If Turkey is repeatedly defined by the German word *Heimat* by the grandfather Hüseyin – in an ironic reversal of the tradition[33] – it is also depicted as an exotic space to be discovered by the second-generation members of the family, Canan and Cenk. Germany is presented as a familiar place, where there is no need for spatial contextualization. Turkey instead is visualized through many full shots framing the landscape, punctuated by Turkish flags and minarets. This *Heimat* is natural and maternal, a site for the lost past, and filled with a sense of belonging: Turkey is a receptive land, where everybody can feel at ease.[34] Turkey therefore corresponds to the "idyllic chronotope," the visualization of an imagined homeland in Hamid Naficy's "accented" cinema.[35] This natural space is characterized even in contemporary times by its backwardness, but also by the beauty of its landscapes (fig. 6). The "idyllic" representation is particularly evident in the visualization of flashbacks, when Canan narrates the story of the family to Cenk. While Turkey is dominated by a yellow sunlight, the host land is initially grey and obscure. Only after the whole family moves to the new land does Germany become cozy and even sunny.

Fig. 6

The photographic manipulation of light is not the only strategy to enhance the constructed and private quality of the past. *Almanya* proposes an interesting relation between archival documentary footage about Germany's economic miracle, fantastic images, images from dreams or nightmares, and memorial images. All of these levels intertwine, underlining the personal dimension of the shared public past. The archival footage celebrating the German economic miracle – and the role of migrant workers in it – is connoted as an epic narration, not as a documentary. It is part of a fairytale about Hüseyin's social ascent. On the other hand, Turkey is described, in Canan's words and in Cenk's visualized fantasies, as an uncorrupted, traditional world. Germany is more multifaceted, as it can be the land of the future and of consumer pleasures (see Muhamed's dreams about Coke, fig. 7), but it is also a place of imposition of different traditions, as shown in Hüseyin's nightmare about the Nazi employee at the migration office, and in Muhamed's nightmare about the zombie-Jesus (fig. 8).


Figs. 7-8

In this reconstruction, history is a shared experience, where the personal level directly corresponds to the construction of a multicultural society, without conflicts or oppositions. The most important sequence in this sense is the one showing the ceremony "Deutschland sagt danke," celebrated by Chancellor Angela Merkel on 1 October 2008. Even though the Samdereli sisters have stated that they only find it interesting to show this ceremony because they are narrating the migration history of a guest worker,[36] this finale heavily contributes to the idea of pacification in the history of migration workers in Europe. "Deutschland Sagt Danke," meant that German institutions officially recognized the role of guest workers in the economic development of the 1960s. However, the discourse formulated by Hüseyin, and repeated by Cenk, returns the thanksgiving to these German institutions. Hüseyin is grateful because Germany has given to the Turkish people the possibility to migrate and construct a better life for themselves and their families. *Almanya* hence proposes an ideal society, where host institutions give everyone the same chance to improve their condition through hard work and respect for the law.

Both of these films are exemplary of wider trends in contemporary European cinema. *The Edge of Heaven* refers to art cinema, addressing a transnational audience and adhering to some formal solutions that emerge in other narrations pertaining to world cinema as well. Its aesthetics and style significantly intertwine on the local and the global levels, interrogating the problematic identities deriving from worldwide power relations. *Almanya* is more attentive to the national dimension; it does not differentiate among regional aspects, but enhances institutional multiculturalism. Yet, both films address the changes in geopolitical assets that derive from globalization, interrogate victimization and marginalization as well as a more positive hybridization, and productively compare cultural positions and different discourses across national borders.

1 Regarding vacillating borders in Europe, see Étienne Balibar, *The Borders of Europe*, in Pheng Cheah, Bruce Robbins (eds.), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1998, pp. 216-229.
2 The reference here is to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 1983.
3 It is not possible to investigate here the complex networks of identities and positions, in relation to hegemonic discourses about migration or multiculturalism, and their representation in the European cinema. A few volumes have been dedicated to this issue, some of which have a productive comparative approach. For instance, see: Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2005; Luisa Rivi, *European Cinema After 1989: Cultural Identity and Transnational Production*, Palgrave Macmillan, London-New York 2007; Daniela Berghan, Claudia Sternberg (eds.), *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, London-New York 2010.
4 For an analysis of national and European funds of migrant cinema, see Anne Jäckel, *State and Other Funding for Migrant, Diasporic and World Cinemas in Europe*, in Daniela Berghan, Claudia Sternberg (eds.), *European Cinema in Motion*, cit., pp. 76-95.
5 Thomas Elsaesser, *Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe*, in Id., *European Cinema*, cit., p. 82. For the international distribution of *The Edge of Heaven*, see the national specification of the film's revenues, available on the website http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=edgeofheaven.htm, last visit 30 September 2013.
6 *Idem*, p. 83.
7 See Sabine Hake, Barbara Mennel (eds.), *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium: Sites, Sounds, and Screens*, Berghahn, New York-Oxford 2012.
8 See Noah Isenberg, "Fatih Akin's Cinema of Intersections," in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, Summer 2011, pp. 53-61.
9 It is interesting to notice that it received distribution support from the European Cinema Support Fund Eurimages. See www.coe.int/dg4/eurimages/default_en.asp, last visit 30 September 2013.
10 See Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema as World Cinema: A New Beginning?*, in *European Cinema*, cit., pp. 485-513. See also the anthology: Rosalind Galt, Karl Schoonover (eds.), *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010.
11 See for instance *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñarritu, 2006) or the TV series *Touch* (2012-2013). On the complex geopolitical scale produced by "world cinema," see Kathleen Newman, *Notes on Transnational Film Theory: Decentered Subjectivity, Decentered Capitalism*, in Nataša Ďurovičová, Kathleen Newman (eds.), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, New York-London 2010, pp. 3-11.
12 Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*, Duke University Press, Durham 2006, p. 62.
13 *Idem*, p. 88.
14 *Idem*, pp. 68-69.
15 I refer to the idea of verisimilitude and realism "as a relationship between text, reality and audience that changes as does the culture in which it operates" (Louis Bayman, *Melodrama as Realism in Italian Neorealism*, in Lúcia Nagib, Cecilia Mello [eds.], *Realism and the Audiovisual Media*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2009, p. 47). For the use of a magical realist perspective in *Almanya*, see also Daniela Berghan, *Far-Flung Families in Film: The Diasporic Family in Contemporary European Cinema*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2013, p. 70.
16 For an analysis of contemporary cinema whose narrative plays games with the audience, see Thomas Elsaesser, *The Mind-Game Film*, in Warren Buckland (ed.), *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2009, pp. 13-41.
17 See Allan Cameron, *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2008.
18 Regarding postcolonial temporality, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London-New York 1994.
19 Ibrahim Sirkeci, Jeffrey H. Cohen, Pinar Yazgan, "Turkish Culture of Migration: Flows between Turkey

and Germany, Socio-Economic Development and Conflict," in *Migration Letters*, vol. 9, no. 1, January 2012, pp. 33-46.

20 Rosa Linda Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2003, p. 18.

21 *Idem*, pp. 25-27.

22 Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Introduction*, in Id. (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 2003, pp. 7-8.

23 On the diplomatic and political relations between Turkey and the European Union, see Elena Baracani, *Unione Europea e democrazia in Turchia*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2008.

24 Fatih Akin has declared that Turkey is always something foreign to his characters. Quoted by Rob Burns, "On the Streets and On the Road: Identity in Transit in Turkish-German Travelogues on Screen," in *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2009, p. 16. See also Daniela Berghan, "No Place Like Home? Or Impossible Homecomings in the Films of Fatih Akin," in *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2006, pp. 141-157.

25 Rob Burns, "On the Streets and on the Road," cit., p. 18.

26 It is not possible to fully develop here the gender issues implied by the film's victimization of the female characters; the debate around globalization, transnationalism, and feminist practices cannot be summarized in a few lines. For essential references and the reconstruction of the relations between feminist film theory, gender studies, and global feminism, see Veronica Pravadelli, "Cinema e Feminist/Gender studies oggi: percorsi molteplici tra teoria e storia," in *Imago: Studi di cinema e media*, *Cinema e Feminist/Gender Studies oggi. Nuove prospettive dal 2000* (edited by Veronica Pravadelli and Ilaria A. De Pascalis), vol. 3, no. 6, 2012, pp. 9-21.

27 Many theorists have criticized liberal multiculturalism; see for example Minoo Moallem, Iain A. Boal, *Multicultural Nationalism and the Poetics of Inauguration*, in Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, Minoo Moallem (eds.), *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 1999, pp. 243-263.

28 For the distribution of *Almanya*, see the national specification of the film's revenues, available on the website http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/intl/?page=&country=IT&id=_fALMANYAWILLKOMME01, last visit 30 September 2013.

29 It is interesting to notice how, in the narration of the past, the Turkish characters speak German correctly, while the German characters use a German-like gibberish.

30 For a discussion on nationalism, realism, and cinema, see Francesco Pitassio, *Making the Nation Come Real: Neorealism/Nation: A Suitable Case for Treatment*, in Ansgar Nüning, Vera Nüning, Birgit Neumann (eds.), *The Aesthetics and Politics of Cultural Worldmaking*, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, Trier 2010, pp. 21-36.

31 Hamid Naficy, *Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre*, in Ella Shohat, Robert Stam (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*, cit., pp. 213-218.

32 See Daniela Berghan, *Far-Flung Families in Film*, cit., pp. 70-71.

33 For the concept of *Heimat* and its role in the foundation of national and European identities, see David Morley, Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes, and Cultural Boundaries*, Routledge, London-New York 1995, particularly Chapter 5, *No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home(Land)*, pp. 85-104.

34 See Daniela Berghan, *Far-Flung Families in Film*, cit., p. 73.

35 Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford 2001, p. 155.

36 See their interventions during the press conference at the Berlin International Film Festival, available on the website http://www.traileraddict.com/trailer/almanya-willkommen-in-deutschland/biff-press-conference, last visit 30 September 2013.

PERIPHERAL REALISMS
THE REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMIC OF CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN CINEMA

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Abstract

This article concerns the redefinition of realism from the perspective of its impact on contemporary Brazilian cinematography, commenting on and analyzing the stylistic strategies of filmmakers who are situated at the margins of the traditional centers of film production in Brazil. My focus will be on films from the Northeast, and even more specifically those produced in the state of Pernambuco from the late 2000s. For instance, a brief overview of the most recent production by directors such as Gabriel Mascaro, Marcelo Pedroso, Marcelo Lordello and especially Kleber Mendonça Filho shows that this "realist turn" breaks with a naturalist and caricatured tradition of filmmaking in Pernambuco (as it is the case of the previous regional cycle in the state). A more detailed analysis of Mendonça Filho's *Neighbouring Sounds* (2012) will be helpful to demonstrate under what conditions this rupture occurred and how it is related with the emergence of a peripheral aesthetics of realism.

Since the 1990s, following a tendency towards self-referentiality and metalinguistic artificiality in the postmodern cinema of the 1980s, realism has witnessed a re-emergence. Contemporary cinema has been marked by a return to a form of Bazinian aesthetics that is structured on the integrity of time and space. However, despite common features, the cinematic realism of the late 20th and early 21st century cannot be entirely reduced to a filmic neoclassicism, or even to a revival of Bazinian notions of realism, or Siegfried Kracauer's ideas about cinema as the amortization of physical reality. Some scholars have referred to the diverse manifestations of contemporary realism as a "cinema of flux,"[1] others have identified an "expressive minimalism"[2] that operates under the generic rubric of "world cinema," or transnational world cinema.[3]

My aim in this article is to trace the reaffirmation of realism from the perspective of its impact on contemporary Brazilian cinematography, commenting on and analyzing the stylistic strategies of filmmakers who are situated at the margins of the traditional centres of film production in Brazil. My focus will be on films from the Northeast, and more specifically those produced in the state of Pernambuco since the late 2000s. Through specific case studies I argue that the renewal of the national film culture in Brazil has been brought on precisely by regional interventions, and to illustrate how contemporary cinema is submitted to a transnational logic. This suggests an interesting paradox: transnational influences promote a new regional order, and end up displacing established hierarchies

between margins and the centre. This does not imply that the notion of national cinema has become obsolete, but it demonstrates the need for analysis that takes into account the changes in cinema's geopolitical imaginary, both in the aesthetic sense, and in the conditions of production.

One significant characteristic of the cinematic realism that emerged at the end of the 1990s is its confrontation with mainstream narrative. In opposition to action-driven films centred on upwardly mobile social classes, this strain of contemporary cinema is often concerned with the banal, with the small lives of small people, with the everyday in the social peripheries, even when sometimes using and referring to techniques and resources from hegemonic filmmaking practices. This preoccupation with the representation of peripheral subjects and allusions to regionalism and localism has become a marker of a contemporary global aesthetics (as said above, we could call it "world culture," "transnational cinema") which needs to be distinguished from an idealistic recuperation of Third Cinema practices.

The strain in world cinema one could call "peripheral cinema" came to prominence with films such as Abbas Kiarostami's *Through the Olive Trees* (Iran, 1994), Jafar Panahi's *The White Balloon* (Iran, 1995), Walter Salles's *Central Station* (Brazil, 1998), Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores Perros* (Mexico, 1999), Fabián Bielinky's *Nine Queens* (Argentina, 1999) and Wong Kar Wai's *In the Mood for Love* (Hong Kong, 2000). As this list indicates, peripheral cinema is not defined by aesthetic or thematic homogeneity. But in some ways, an adhesion to realism unites these films. And most of them undoubtedly go back to the themes and interests of the original Third Cinema (the subaltern, the excluded, the "wretched of the earth"), addressing them, of course, differently, attenuating and subduing the politically engaged tone, and updating the "third-Worldism" that marked many films from 1960s and 1970s. Refraining from explicit political campaigning, contemporary world cinema explores more subtle and hidden aspects of the social fabric, and is concerned with the politics of everyday life, articulating and affirming an aesthetics of the banal. There is thus a shift from the type of allegory that characterized Third Cinema towards more disinterested and disaffected modes of realism.

What particularly interests me in approaching contemporary cinematic forms of realism is the way in which the Barthesian notion of an "effect of reality" can be triggered. In conventional narrative cinema, elements such as wide shots of cities or landscapes, tracking shots of interior sets, or scenes without dialogues, often correspond with long detailed descriptions and superfluous minutiae that Barthes identified as a characteristic of realistic literature. These apparently meaningless inclusions constitute an attempt to achieve a pure representation of the real, namely the effect of reality:

> *in other words, the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very signifier of realism: the reality effect is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.*[4]

The "other realisms" of contemporary world cinema (expressive minimalism, cinema of flux, transnational cinema, peripheral cinema), however, mark an extension, an intensification of the reality effect, up to a point where it occupies the centre of the film, it almost becomes the film itself.

In some cases amounting to a "cinema of tedium," contemporary world cinema frequently relies on the static image, on stupor; on other occasions, it inscribes multiple fragmented actions,

profoundly banal and minimal. This is a cinema of gesture, then: small gestures that advertise some kind of symbolism, foreshadow hidden meaning, but rarely promote straightforward explanation.

In order to assess the films produced in Pernambuco and more specifically in the city of Recife (capital of the state), it is important to stress the continuity between the context of contemporary world cinema that I have mapped above and the local specificities of film production in the Brazilian Northeast. The second half of the 1990s witnessed a renaissance in the audiovisual arts in Brazil. The film industry boomed, while the press and academic discourse identified a *Retomada* (*Retaking*), a very heterogeneous movement that nonetheless had many critics drawing parallels with Cinéma Nôvo of the 1950s and 1960s. One of the principal characteristics of this phase in Brazilian Cinema was the emergence of multiple peripheral perspectives, not only in terms of content and narrative (which may be considered an extension of the Cinéma Nôvo project), but also with respect to a proliferation of decentralized modes of production. Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo did not cease to be the chief axis of production and distribution for the industry, but other regions and, more fundamentally, other Brazilian cities (Recife, Fortaleza and Belo Horizonte) have come to be more present in this context. It is also significant that the roles that these peripheral regions have played in Brazilian culture since the late 1990s is much more decisive and prominent than previously, not only in film, but also in popular music (as can be attested by the popularity of musical idioms such as *axé* from Salvador or *manguebeat* from Recife) and in other arts.

It is important to note that this regional renaissance is not unprecedented in Brazil's cultural history during the 20th century. For instance, the state of Pernambuco had been an important centre for film production in the 1920s and early 1930s. The *Ciclo do Recife* (Recife Cycle) movement, resulting in thirteen feature films and some documentaries, or *filmes naturais* (natural films), was one of the most relevant of the regional cycles of silent film in Brazil, represented by with filmmakers such as Edson Chagas, Gentil Roiz, Jota Soares and films like *Retribuição* (1923-1924), *Jurando Vingar* (1925), *Aitaré da Praia* (1925) and *A filha do advogado* (1926) being the most prominent of them. A second major phase in Pernambuco's film history was the Super 8 movement in the 1970s, with Firmo Neto, Geneton Moraes Neto and Jomard Muniz de Britto as leading figures producing mostly experimental and alternative films.[5] By the 1980s, a new generation of film artists came to the fore with video documentaries and short films: Paulo Caldas, Lírio Ferreira, Cláudio Assis, among others. However, it was only in the second half of the 1990s that film production in Pernambuco became properly consolidated, following the mainstream success of *O Baile perfumado* (*Perfumed Ball*, 1996), by Paulo Caldas and Lírio Ferreira, one of the first feature films to be produced in the state after a long hiatus since the *Ciclo do Recife* and the experimental Super-8 Boom of the 1970s.

The emergence of a peripheral filmography in the 1990s was prominently associated with a broader sense of regionalist affirmation, arguably even more evident at the time in popular music, particularly the phenomenon known as *manguebeat* (or *manguebit*). The latter originally referred to a pop music movement (later extended in a more or less fashionable manner to the visual arts, cinema, and a *Zeitgeist*) that emerged in Recife in the early 1990s. One of the basic principles of this aesthetic was eclecticism, combining borrowings from global culture with clearly "vernacular" aspects.[6] In fashion, for instance, the recurrence of adornments, patterns, and prints from manifestations of popular culture and folklore was noteworthy. A regionalist emphasis is one of the main features of the generation of filmmakers that began their careers in the 1980s and 1990s; examples include *Baile Perfumado* and *Amarelo Manga* (*Mango Yellow*, 2003) by

Cláudio Assis; *Árido movie* (2005) by Lírio Ferreira and *Cinema, aspirina e urubus* (*Cinema, aspirins and vultures*, Marcelo Gomes, 2006). These film's avowed regionalism was frequently combined with a tendency towards naturalism that emphasized the grotesque, especially in the films by Cláudio Assis and Lírio Ferreira. Without ceasing to be realistic, the mainstream cinema of Pernambuco sought to assert a kind of filmic "accent"[7] through caricature, difference, and excess of local character.

It is precisely in reaction to folkloric localism, grotesque and caricatured Northeastern excesses, the praise of the "hysterical," the popular vein and vernacular realism that the next generation of Pernambucan filmmakers counterpoises a new sensibility of the banal.[8] Although still committed to regionalist themes and characteristics, more recent films by young filmmakers from Pernambuco break with the excessive folklorism of their older colleagues, straying from the hinterland, abandoning the direct connections with manguebeat and avoiding the road movie (all of these elements abounded in the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s), privileging documentaries and markedly urban realistic fictions.

Most of the new generation of filmmakers, which comprises directors such as Marcelo Pedroso, Gabriel Mascaro, Daniel Bandeira, Tião, Marcelo Lordello and Leonardo Lacca, are in their late twenties and early thirties. Many of them have had a university education, almost all of them graduated from the Communications and Media Departments of the Federal University of Pernambuco. One of the latter is Marcelo Lordello, whose directing career began with the short *Garotas de ponto de venda* (*Selling Point Girls*, 2007), a documentary set in the world of sales promoters in supermarkets in Recife. Tactfully expressing its critique of the perverse (but also absurd) contours of transnational capitalism, the film manages to be simultaneously ironic and delicate, respectful and irreverent:

> *Lordello faces a challenge: to show an individual character that seems effaced by the brand for which they work. Distracted looks, moving feet indicating impatience, the moment when the head flies between a client and another – the filmmaker knew precisely how to convey a sense that behind the company's automated speech that these girls adopt and do not get tired of repeating, there is a particular and autonomous subject, working and trying to get ahead with their lives.*[9]

Lordello expanded on the sense of rejection of regionalism and has sketched in a more incisive manner his poetics of banality in another short, this time a fictional one, called *Nº 27* (*Number 27*, 2008), about a boy who has an episode of diarrhea in school and soils his clothes (fig. 1).

Fig.1 – *Nº27* (Marcelo Lordello, 2008)

With its classically composed shots and the teenagers' disaffected performances (suggesting a Bressonian inspiration), *Nº 27* presents an everyday "incident" that transforms into a catastrophe, demonstrating how easily the universe of banality can turn into a territory of horror: the young protagonist, the number 27 in a school list of names, tries unsuccessfully to avoid the bullying by his peers by locking himself up in the school bathroom instead turning everything worse. In spite of the humorous potential of the subject, the use of fixed shots and a general composition that favours claustrophobic angles and silences make no way for laughter and lightness.

Lordello's first feature-length documentary, *Vigias* (*Watchmen*, 2010), registers the transformations of late capitalism in Recife, following the nocturnal work journeys of seven janitors/watchmen in middle class apartment buildings, from their arrival at work until dawn. In *Vigias* Lordello broadens his preoccupation with the ordinary, expanded and elongated time, and the unimportant minutiae of common people, accentuating the aversion to baroque caricature, and adopting minimalist traits that feature prominently in a certain strain of Asian and Latin American cinemas since the early 1990s, with the likes of Jia Zhang-Ke, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Martín Rejtman, Lucrecia Martel and Lisandro Alonso, among others, serving as models for the mixture of low key naturalism, long shots and elaborately designed frames.

In 2012, Lordello released his first fiction feature, *Eles voltam* (*They'll come back*, 2012), once again about a teenager, this time a girl, left by a roadside with her brother. The contrasts between the comfortable life lead by the protagonist's family and the people she meets in her way are somewhat similar to those presented in the Mexican film *Y tu mamá también* (2002), by Alfonso Cuarón, but the feeling of strangeness is much stronger than a discourse of class difference. In *Eles voltam* there is a high occurrence of long shots (especially in its opening sequence), but as his other films, the open spaces are always in dialogue with the carefully framed details (hands, feet, objects, corners of rooms). Despite its portrayal of the sugar cane plantations and the small coastal towns, there remains no trace of regionalist emphasis. Instead, it focuses on the apathetic protagonist, a sort of young urban zombie among these wide landscapes and the small interiors of both the poor houses that she visits or the tight cubicles of upper middle class mall stores.

From the same production team as Lordello, Leonardo Lacca directed in 2008 a short film called *Décimo Segundo* (*Twelfth*), about a young man visiting a friend (possibly a former girlfriend, it is not clear) in an apartment on the twelfth floor (fig. 2).

Fig. 2 – *Décimo segundo* (Leonardo Lacca, 2008)

The plot is as simple as that: she makes coffee for him. In Lacca's film, there are no off-screen distractions, there is only the total visibility of the minimal, the long shots of tedium. The effects of de-dramatization and automatic gestures seem to indicate the influence of the expressive

minimalism and the absorption of general traits of contemporary world cinema, almost as if the film had been tailor-made for "artsy" film festivals.

Perhaps the most jarring example of "recifense new wave" is *Amigos de risco* (*Risky Friends*, 2008), the first feature by Daniel Bandeira (fig. 3).

Fig. 3 – *Amigos de risco* (Daniel Bandeira, 2008)

Similar to Scorsese's *After Hours* (1985), this extra-low budget picture focuses on the surprises in ordinary life, the terror of the banal and the melancholy humour of peripheral urbanity through the misadventures of two friends from the lower middle class in Recife. They meet a third friend, a kind of con artist, during a night out in the suburbs. While bringing up local colour (with its accents, the viaducts and peripheries of Recife and the "typical" exotic soundtrack) and aligning itself with a certain tradition of representation of violence in Brazilian cinema, *Amigos de risco* covets the universalism of banality and the appeal of the common, but infusing them with wit and joyousness.

Two other friends from the same production's company as Bandeira's, Marcelo Pedroso and Gabriel Mascaro, also comment on the state of contemporary Brazil through the lens of the banal, although with diverse modes of approaching it. In the documentary feature *KFZ 1348* (2008), they trace the history of an old VW Beetle found in a junkyard in Recife. The search for its eight owners, from the *paulista* entrepreneur who first bought it to the junkyard proprietor in the outskirts of Recife, leads them to very different places and contexts in the country, somewhat recalling *In Those Days* (*In jenen Tagen*, Helmut Käutner), a 1947 German drama film with a similar premise. Because of the very nature of its device and the succession of characters and situations that it entangles, the film is not as minimalist as the other examples I mentioned previously; nevertheless it has a lightness of tone that avoids unnecessary ostentation or excessive rhetoric (figs. 4-6).

Fig. 4 – *Pacific* (Marcelo Pedroso, 2009)

Fig. 5 – *Avenida Brasília Formosa* (Gabriel Mascaro, 2010)

Fig. 6 – *O som ao redor* (Kleber Mendonça Filho, 2012)

On his own, Pedroso has directed other documentaries, among them the medium-length *Balsa* (*Ferry Boat*, 2009), chronicling a day on a ferry that carries passengers and cars along the coast of the state of Alagoas. As if incorporating the rhythm of the ride, the film resembles the observational slowness of Jia Zhang-Ke or the Argentinean filmmaker Lisandro Alonso insofar as

it bursts with apathy, while it drifts away. A more disturbing foray into banality is *Pacific* (2009), made exclusively from footage taken by middle class passengers on a cruise ship travelling to the island of Fernando de Noronha (fig. 4).

> *The cruise promises seven days of beautiful scenery, free drinks and much, much entertainment for the tourists. Final destination: the paradise of Fernando de Noronha, where they spend the day before returning to the ship for the New Year's party. Along the way, the video cameras do not stop working: each enraptured gaze, each interjection, every dance step and every sip of beer, everything seems to have been registered.*[10]

The film engenders narratives from the pre-existing material, a material composed of kitsch, sentimentality, embarrassment and excess. The urge to inscribe their images into a sort of audiovisual universal grammar makes the passengers devote themselves to either precarious copies or even conscious parodies of popular images and genres (Broadway musicals, teen comedies, the film *Titanic*, videoclips, National Geographic, Jacques Cousteau's documentaries, among others). In its complete dependence on images produced by others (Pedroso was not on the cruise and the images were collected by his assistants only at the end of the trip), the film draws attention to the precariousness and clichés of amateur filmmaking, but once assembled these images gain strange and melancholy contours, unveiling the opposite of the banal in its own banality.

Gabriel Mascaro's feature film *Avenida Brasília Formosa* (*Defiant Brasilia*, 2010) charts the transformations of a very poor Recife seaside neighbourhood, brought about at the time of Lula's government (2003-2011), and is a particularly productive case study to consider the relationship between the contemporary cinema from Pernambuco and everyday life, and different modes of realism (fig. 5). A modern avenue (which lends the film its title) was built in a favela in the first half of the 2000s, a supposed improvement that eventually resulted in the dislocation of many of its inhabitants to a housing project in another district far away from the sea. Alluding directly and insistently to popular forms of spectacle and entertainment (reality shows, soap operas, *brega* music, Brazilian gospel music), Mascaro devises a fictional narrative with the people of Brasília Teimosa and overlaps the documental registers of his characters with moments in which they are performing the dialogues written for the film. The Argentinian cultural critic Beatriz Sarlo[11] has referred to the proliferation of stories of everyday life, and the multiplication of individual memories as signs of what she calls "the subjective turn," especially in contemporary theory, but which also thrive in media discourse with increasing popular interest in reality shows and gossip magazines. Paradoxically, *Avenida Brasília Formosa* constitutes itself almost like an antidote to these very mediatic discourses when it appeals to the genuinely intimate and simple minimal stories (and this also true for most of this more recent film production, not only in Pernambuco, but also from other peripheral centres of production such as Ceará, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul), breaking away from the fake glamour and affirming the beauty and incommensurability of being in the world.

In the beginning of 2013, Mascaro released *Doméstica* (*Maid*), a documentary which explores similar strategies used by Pedroso in *Pacific.* Seven teenagers are invited to film the maids in their households and the director functions simultaneously as curator and editor, but never intervenes in the filming process. This film deepens in a more sophisticated way the political concerns and

the discourse on class relations that were present in most of Mascaro's films, especially in *Um lugar ao sol* (*High Rises*, 2008), about a group of residents of luxury apartments in three Brazilian capitals. Absorbing and at the same time departing from the influence of Eduardo Coutinho's documentaries and João Moreira Salles' *Santiago* (2007), film about the butler of Salles' family, *Doméstica* reveals not only the tensions, affections and disparities between the servants and their young masters, but also the relationships between the filmmaker and his subjects, building an intricate and interesting filmic artefact that addresses themes like work, gender and its own form.

My final example is a film which so far has received the widest international dissemination and success among the films by the new Pernambucan generation of filmmakers: *O som ao redor* (*Neighbouring Sounds*, 2012), by Kleber Mendonça Filho (fig. 6). Slightly younger that his *árido movie* colleagues and older than the filmmakers that started in the 2000s, Mendonça was relatively well known in Brazil previously for his work as film critic and for short films (particularly *Vinil Verde* [*Green Vinyl*, 2004], and *Recife Frio* [*Cold Recife*, 2009], a sci-fi mockumentary). It could be argued that his more mainstream approach to filmmaking (and even his greater familiarity with the world of filmmaking via his activity as a critic, his travels around the world of film festivals and his job as a curator for a local art cinema) puts him closer to established names of Pernambucan and Brazilian cinema than the younger generation, but his refusal to adhere to the regional caricatures of the *árido movie* reveal a work that is not so easily classifiable in terms of generation or cycles, as his predecessors apparently were.

Since its entry in the Rotterdam Festival at the beginning of 2012 and following its Brazilian release in January 2013, *Neighbouring Sounds* has been collecting awards and international critical prestige. There are two recognizable levels in the impact that the film has had, especially in Brazilian media: the first concerns the timeliness and the urgency of its themes (high urban density, violence, rural decadence, the persistence of a slave-owner mentality among Brazilian elites, class differences and the legacies of the archaic sugar cane social order in the contemporary metropolis, to mention a few); the second has to do with a well structured narrative, a formal precision and the details that compose its *mise en scène*.

The film focuses on a group of residents in the district of Setúbal, an enclave of middle-class buildings in Recife. It opens with a collection of archival black and white photos depicting scenes from the sugar cane plantations in Pernambuco, functioning almost like a cinematographic epigraph inspired by Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*, 1933) with Serge Gainsbourg's *Cadavres en Série* as the soundtrack. This sets the tone for a rather sociological stance for the film, that from then on stays in the present and fragments itself in various mini-plots concerned with the daily lives of at least half a dozen protagonists and with an accentuated attention to mood, details and social observation. The ensemble cast is comprised mostly by non-professional actors, the most notable exceptions are the landowner patriarch Francisco, played by W. J. Solha, the housewife Bia, played by Maeve Jenkins, and Clodoaldo, the security guard performed by Irandhir Santos, one of the most visible actor from the Brazilian Northeast in contemporary cinema. But none of them are really famous, soap opera names or even local celebrities (like the *árido* scene used to do with *manguebeat* musicians), what adds a bit more of the sense of proximity to reality, to the everyday life in urban Brazil.

Also differently from previous *árido movie* features, *Neighbouring Sounds* does not resort to the usual images of Recife (aerial shots of its bridges, scenes in its older streets in the city centre with

its colourful colonial churches, derelict buildings or lively and exotic markets, like the city we see depicted in *Baile Perfumado*, *Amarelo Manga* or *Árido Movie*). It opts instead for open shots of the monotonous high rises near the Boa Viagem beach – as if to prove Mendonça's commentary that bad architecture is very photogenic[12] – and nondescript middle class interiors filled with gadgets and electric appliances. The banality of the street chronicle and the multiple characters threads form the basis of *Neighbouring Sounds*' critical vision of the city, the Brazilian Northeast and of the country as a whole, as if these minimal elements were the direct instruments for reading the wider context. But, evidently, its preoccupations are not only thematic. It dismisses the framework of the conventional cinematic treatment in favor of a specific tempo, a particular narrative rhythm and atmosphere, but at the same time retaining some traces of popular strategies of genre and plot (vengeance, love, crime, comedy, for instance, are all present, but in very small doses).

The film explores the seemingly undistinguished, modern, vulgar and eventually very ugly (and not in an exotic manner) settings precisely to expose and highlight the tensions, the peculiarities and the historical implications hidden under the apparent normality. There is in *Neighbouring Sounds* a curious articulation between its well marked – and occasionally very obscure – regionalisms and the highly recognizable and universal issues it addresses. The balance between these two realms is performed, among other characteristics, by an ability to combine the mundane and the bizarre, the down-to-earth and the aloof, the "normal" and the extravagant in terms of the characters, their storylines and the settings, in a way blurring and deliberately playing with genre conventions.

Neighbouring Sounds recycled some of the subjects, characters, locations and approaches from his previous short films, especially *Eletrodoméstica* (2005), about a housewife who finds solace in the company of her domestic appliances. But besides these internal quotations, what probably reinforced the international attention and critical acclaim was the ways Mendonça used his diverse cinematographic references. It is clear that the director wanted to show off his repertoire and there are many examples throughout the movie, some of them explicitly connected with the realist classicism, popular genre conventions and the Hollywood mainstream. As in the many wide shots that shows the suburban landscapes of Recife and in the mixture of ordinary settings with a impending sense of horror, the director acknowledged the influence of the low-budget films by John Carpenter,[13] something that is especially evident in the nightmarish scenes in the second half of the movie. Another probable parallel could be drawn with Robert Altman's films, especially in relation to their multi-layered plots and profusion of characters. In fact, several critics have stated the similarities between *Neighbouring Sounds* and films like *Short Cuts* (1993) and *Magnolia* (1999) by Paul Thomas Anderson.[14] One could also recognize in the film some western modes, mainly in the way that the security guards are typified and framed, like taciturn urban cowboys, and in the final confrontation between the patriarch and the two vigilante brothers.

But the main references and affinities that *Neighbouring Sounds* has are within the general framework of contemporary visual aesthetics, they are clearly connected with the widespread realism in world cinema as described in the first part of this essay. Whether in the form of allusions or as a general mood, as direct quotations or almost imperceptible details, it is that general accent of contemporary realisms that is implied in the film. When commenting about Romanian cinema in an interview, Mendonça Filho alludes to the notion of the mundane as a driving force for himself and for cinema in general:

> *I am profoundly interested in the union of film and the mundane. I think the definition of cinema would be to extract the fantastic from the mundane. So, allying with this idea is fundamental to me. The absolute mundane: like people's kitchens, living rooms, laundries... The problem – and this happens in most of realistic movies – is when the mundane is handled in a mundane manner. This never happens in Romanian films.*[15]

And it is not hard to see the similarities between Corneliu Porumboiu's sense of absurd and humour in the scenes of the television debate in *East of Bucharest* (2006) and in the residents' meeting sequence in Mendonça Filho's film, when various characters discuss the fate of a lazy night porter in a middle class residential building. Or to detect Lucrecia Martel's influence in the composition of the nervous sound atmospheres and the design of strange domestic universes, especially in the portraying of Bia's family. But probably one of the most direct "homages" in the film is to Elia Suleiman, whose nonsensical sketches serve as inspiration for a number of scenes, notably the one in which two sisters fight hysterically over HD television sets, the one with the sudden appearance of a lost Argentinean in the street or the other when a woman descends from a car to vomit in the middle of the street very late at night. There is indeed a profusion of quotations and slightly occluded references, which also involve self-allusions, popular songs, film segments and an occasionally didactic tone, but they do not get in the way of the narrative, even in its multilayered form.

In relation with Brazilian cinema and more specifically that of Pernambuco, though, the connections are perhaps not that explicit. While *Neighbouring Sounds* draws on some of the features of the *árido movie*, for example when it humorously explores its characters' idiosyncrasies and the local customs, it clearly departs itself from the grotesque or the folkloric. Hence, Mendonça has greater affinities with his younger counterparts, especially in his penchant for the slow paces of most banal episodes of his characters. Instead of their documentary emphasis, however, Mendonça infuses his everyday snapshots with a narrative flair closer to mainstream genre than to experimental cinema even if *Neighbouring Sounds* does not fit straight genre conventions. Thriller, western, urban social drama, horror movie: being a bit each, its narrative seeks to illuminate, reveal and scan violence and paranoia in Brazilian middle classes.

The examination of the issues that are in the centre of Mendonça's concerns – urban tensions, class and race relations, the politics of everyday life – become an intrinsic part of his stylistic approach, at the same time very specific and personal and in tune with the regional developments in Brazilian cinema and the global aesthetics of realism. He reveals, thus, sensitivity to both the aesthetics of contemporary culture and the ethics of the world around it. An interesting counterpart to previous international successes of Brazilian cinema like *Cidade de Deus* (*City of God*, Fernando Meirelles, Kátia Lund, 2002) or *Tropa de Elite* (*Elite Squad*, José Padilha, 2007), *Neighbouring Sounds* privileges surprise, curiosity, ambiguity or discretion in the place of the expected clichés of Brazilian society, even when dealing with its very familiar tropes (the discussion on masters and servants, the permeability between classes, even the *jeitinho brasileiro*: they all appear in the film, but always in an unusual way). The resulting style of this option seems to be an affirmation of cinema as an art that compels us to look at the world with new eyes, to rediscover the world (or in this case, to rediscover Brazil). And if in the last few years, the very debate about everyday life and the real and its appropriations in film (both fictional and documentary) seem to be frayed

with overuse and somehow give the impression of overexposure, the idea of banality implied and questioned in films like *Neighbouring Sounds* and the other recent examples from Pernambuco mentioned above resignify in very interesting manners the cinematic effects of reality and different forms of realism. They bring about extensive dialogues between the peculiarities of a regional scene and articulation of transnational modes, styles and circuits, they expand the images of Brazilian cinema beyond the parameters of national symbols, notwithstanding their eventual recurrence.

1 Luiz Carlos Gonçalves de Oliveira Jr., *O cinema de fluxo e a mise en scène*, USP, São Paulo 2010.
2 Gonzalo Aguilar, *Otros mundos. Un ensayo sobre el nuevo cine argentino,* Santiago Arcos, Buenos Aires 2006.
3 See for example: Linda Badley, Barton R. Palmer, Steven Jay Schneider (eds.), *Traditions in World Cinema,* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006; Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, Belén Vidal (eds.), *Cinema at the Periphery*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2010; Denilson Lopes, *No coração do mundo. Paisagens transculturais*, Rocco, Rio de Janeiro 2012; David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World Cinemas*, Continuum, London-New York 2011; James Chapman, *Cinemas of the World: Film and Society from 1895 to the Present*, Reaktion, London 2003; Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 2012; Valentina Vitali, Paul Willemen (eds.), *Theorising National Cinema,* British Film Institute, London 2006.
4 Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language,* University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1989, p. 148.
5 Alexandre Figueiroa, *Cinema pernambucano. Uma história em ciclos*, Fundação de Cultura da Cidade do Recife, Recife 2000.
6 Nara Aragão Fonseca*, Da lama ao cinema. Interfaces entre o cinema e a cena mangue em Pernambuco*, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife 2006.
7 Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001.
8 Some directors of the previous group attempted to tone down regionalist exaggerations, even if still clearly operating within the borders of localist accent – as in the case of *Deserto Feliz* (*Happy Desert*, 2008) by Paulo Caldas and *Viajo porque preciso volto porque te amo* (*I travel because I have to, I come back because I love you*, 2009) by Karim Ainouz and Marcelo Gomes.
9 Hermano Callou, "De fato 2 (descrições)," in *Janela Crítica,* http://www.janeladecinema.com.br/edicoes_anteriores/2008/janelacritica/2008/11/de-fato-2-descries_18.html, last visit 24 March 2013 (my translation).
10 André Brasil, "Pacific, o navio, a dobra do filme," in *Pacific. Textos para debate,* Fundarpe, Recife 2011, pp. 42-50 (my translation).
11 Beatriz Sarlo, *Tiempo pasado. Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires 2005.
12 Paul Sbrizzi, "A Conversation with Kleber Mendonça Filho," in *Hammer to Nail*, http://www.hammer-tonail.com/interviews/a-conversation-with-kleber-mendonca-filho-neighboring-sounds/, last visit 3 October 2013.
13 Stephen Dalton, "*Neighbouring Sounds:* Rio Festival Review," in *The Hollywood Reporter*, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/neighboring-sounds-rio-film-festival-378836, last visit 3 October 2013.
14 Jonathan Robbins, "Interview: Kleber Mendonça Filho and Emilie Lesclaux," in *Film Comment*, http://filmcomment.com/entry/interview-kleber-mendonca-filho-neighboring-sounds, last visit 3 October 2013.
15 Leo Sette, "Filmando ao redor," in *Cinética*, http://www.revistacinetica.com.br/entrevistakmf.htm, last visit 3 October 2013 (my translation).

MOVING PICTURES AND PEOPLE ACROSS THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *SIN NOMBRE* AND *THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA*

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Abstract

The declining sovereignity of nation-states intensifies the symbolic functions performed by physical borders. The frontier between Mexico and the U.S. is one of these ideologically charged places: it plays a defining role in national identities and narratives, and contributes to their hybridization. Nevertheless, in films involving a partnership between the U.S. and Mexico, critical discourse is predominantly shaped by separate "national" paradigms. The paper considers as case studies two films concerned with border narratives: *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005) and *Sin nombre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2009). Their critical reception is traced by examining reviews, articles and interviews both in the U.S. and in the Mexican press. The central premise of the two movies is, in fact, a journey towards the opposite side of the frontier (South-bound in the former, and North-bound in the latter). Concerns regarding the permeability of the national territory – which characterize contemporary surveillance culture – are filtered through the movies' genres and their different *mise-en-scène.* Migration emerges as the primary geopolitical framework through which the films are interpreted: the emphasis lies on the economic dimension and/or the "national security" issues; hence, the dynamics of cultural hybridization are significantly overlooked.

Journeys between Mexico and the United States are a long-established cinematic trope: as Adrián Pérez-Melgosa has recently shown, throughout the history of this medium a continuous flow of "transnational affect" has been carried by moving images across the American continent.[1] As part of a complex network of cultural productions dealing with the frontier, "border films" play a fundamental part in shaping opposed national identities, while paradoxically contributing to the hybridization of cultures. These cinematic journeys are deeply involved in contemporary issues of geopolitics and international relations, to the extent that "each appearance of a new policy to regulate relationships between Latin America and the U.S. shows rhetorical strategies similar to those present in a series of films concurrently produced."[2] My paper will focus on two films among the many that, in the last decade, have portrayed journeys between Mexico and the U.S.: *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005) and *Sin nombre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2009). In particular, I will address the critical reception of these two movies, highlighting how the discursive formation that stems from "border films" is also embedded in geopolitical dynamics.

In addition to the journeys depicted in the movies, the other relevant *movement* is that of films themselves – as they are distributed internationally, shown in festivals and theaters, and in their subsequent life on multiple media platforms. Focusing on the specific interpretive community of film reviewers and journalists, it is possible to highlight a key passage in this process: as Ulf Hedetoft has argued, film critics act as "mediatic gatekeepers," and play a fundamental part in determining the national belonging of a cultural product within public discourse. This categorization, in turn, further contributes in shaping the films' reception among the wider audience.[3]

My primary sources are a sample of 94 articles which appeared in the U.S. and Mexican press. These can be roughly divided in the following categories: movie reviews (45); interviews with the director, screenwriter, or cast member (19); reports of festival award ceremonies (15); reports of film pre-production (8); editorial pieces discussing the film in relation to other political issues (7). The articles were either all published at the time of the films' commercial releases, or else they coincided with their screenings at international film festivals – in particular, the 2005 Cannes Film Festival for *The Three Burials*; the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and Guadalajara International Film Festival for *Sin nombre*.[4]

Borrowing Janet Staiger's expression, we could define reviewers as "perverse spectators:" [5] their interpretations depend only to a certain extent – if at all – on the normative reading suggested by the filmic text. Rather, the critics emphasize selected elements of the films, according to both individual and contextual factors. Staiger claims that a key operation in cinema reception is that of "rehierarchizing" cultural elements.[6] I find her suggestion particularly useful for the purposes of this paper. My goal will be to observe how reviewers interpret *The Three Burials* and *Sin nombre* – and in particular what elements they stress, omit, or rehierarchize while providing a national categorization of the films, and discussing issues of migration and cultural identity.

The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada

In *The Three Burials*, Melquiades (Julio Cesar Cedillo) is an undocumented Mexican migrant whose accidental murder along the Texan border is concealed by patrolman Mike (Barry Pepper). When Melquiades's friend and fellow cowboy Pete (Tommy Lee Jones) discovers the circumstances of the murder, he forces Mike to exhume the corpse, and carry it on a perilous South-bound journey. They travel across the desert in the attempt to locate Melquiades's family and home village in Mexico, and to give him a proper burial there. The journey proves to be transformative both for Pete, who reconsiders his ruthless treatment of migrants, and for Mike, who has to face the unreliability of the information provided by Melquiades.

The Three Burials is the directorial debut of Tommy Lee Jones. In a career spanning over four decades, the Texan actor has built for himself a loner, tough guy star-image, upon which this movie builds and expands. As all reviews point out, Lee Jones conceived the project as a creative partnership with acclaimed Mexican screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga, whose previous works included internationally awarded films such as Alejandro González Iñarritu's *Amores perros* (2000) and *21 Grams* (2003). In interviews and public appearances, both Lee Jones and Arriaga have stressed the equality in their working relationship, which has been described as "an excellent

example of Anglo-Hispanic co-operation."[7] The balance of this relationship, though, seems to shift in the accounts of reviewers from the two different countries.

In the U.S., the majority of articles focus on the leading role of Tommy Lee Jones, as well as on his transition behind the camera and his successful effort in directing actors.[8] By highlighting Lee Jones's domineering and intimidating *persona*, the articles depict him as "in control" of the set.[9] Some accounts emphasize the friendship between director and screenwriter, based on the common passion for hunting in the border area; in doing so, they implicitly draw a parallel between Lee Jones and Arriaga on the one hand, and the characters of Pete and Melquiades on the other. Conflating Lee Jones's directorial role and the character he plays onscreen, the articles seem to deny the central premise of the film, which is to undermine the dominant position of the Anglo man in the Hollywood western genre. As Camilla Fojas shows in her study of Hollywood portrayals of the Southern frontier,[10] *The Three Burials* stands in a revisionist position with regard to the genre: the film exposes and subverts U.S. fantasies on Mexico, and their foundational role in American identity. Fredric Jameson has argued that in the age of globalisation "individual narrative representations through which the national destiny can be fantasized" undergo significant changes in their form and structure.[11] Such a deconstruction of the "national allegory"[12] is not registered by U.S. reviewers of *The Three Burials*: on the contrary, the "hierarchical interracial and transborder relations"[13] between the protagonists of the film remain largely unnoticed.

Conversely, in Mexico most of the critical attention for *The Three Burials* was raised by the award to Arriaga's screenplay at the 2005 Cannes film festival. This event was framed as the recognition of a national talent in a highly prestigious setting. Nevertheless, the commentaries are quite paradoxical: Mexico's "pride" often seems dependent on foreign recognition, as in the "praise" to the Mexican cast received from Lee Jones.[14] Overall, these reviews highlight the national belonging of successful professionals in the film industry, but do not touch upon the Mexican identity of the film's characters, and the related issues of immigration and discrimination (which on the contrary are widely discussed in U.S. articles).

The Mexican press' celebration of Arriaga's success is quite striking, considering that *The Three Burials* was a U.S. and French coproduction.[15] In comparison, similar achievements by other co-productions which actually involved Mexican companies were substantially overlooked – such as Rodrigo Plá's *La zona* (2007), which garnered awards both at the Venice Film Festival (2007) and at the Toronto International Film Festival (2008). One possible explanation for this different treatment is that, whereas *La zona* overtly criticizes surveillance culture and the class system within the country, *The Three Burials* displaces social conflict into foreign territory.

An interrelated element was the film's positioning within the contemporary debates on U.S. immigration policies. *The Three Burials* was released at a particularly delicate moment:[16] the construction of the security wall along portions of the U.S. Southern frontier was being planned, within the framework of the militarization of the border area. In her poignant analysis of the wall's political effects, Wendy Brown writes: "by shifting migration to more geographically challenging areas, the barrier has dramatically increased both migrant deaths and the rate of permanent, rather than temporary migration into the United States."[17] Embedded in the surveillance culture that followed the events of 9/11, these policies "set the stage for the abuse of power by police and rise of paramilitary groups."[18] With its focus on the violent actions of a border patrolman, the film was interpreted as a protest against the U.S. government projects[19] – a reading that seems influenced

and facilitated by Lee Jones' public statements.[20] Additionally, Sony Classics studios re-released the film in occasion of the economic boycott organized by undocumented immigrants on the 1 May 2006, and destined five percent of the profits to the protests' organizers.[21]

In both cases, the U.S. press coverage of the film makes no mention of the responsibility of the Mexican government in the policies concerning immigration, therefore treating the issues as internal affairs, rather than as a matter of international relations. Another striking absence is the failed recognition of the transnational affective ties exemplified by the return of Melquiades's body to Mexico. Adrián Félix has analyzed the implications underlying the practice of the posthumous repatriation of migrants in the light of the widespread references in Mexican popular culture to the desire to return to the homeland.[22] By downplaying this aspect, the articles simultaneously remove *The Three Burials* from this broader cultural framework, and overlook one of the central devices of the movie's potential engagement with global audiences.

Sin nombre

Sin nombre details the North-bound journey of migrants from Central America and Mexico, in their attempt to reach the United States traveling on freight trains. Among them, we find Sayra (Paulina Gaitan): her father has returned to his native Honduras with the goal of bringing her with him to New Jersey. We also meet Casper (Edgar Flores), a teenager who is escaping from the violent Mexican gang of Mara Salvatrucha with which he is affiliated. On the train, migrants are exposed to robberies and physical dangers, such as the risk of falling on the tracks. Sayra and Casper help protect each other along the journey, but at a river crossing, while the girl makes it to the opposite shore and enters the U.S., the boy is reached by a gang member and fatally shot.

Sin nombre was also the debut feature for then 31-year-old Cary Fukunaga.[23] In the articles on the film, one of the most frequently scrutinized issues is that of the director's mixed "identity." Fukunaga's complex background is defined through several and at times contradictory labels. Whereas U.S. articles tend to frame him as a "national" director ("California-born, NYU-schooled"[24]), there is a tendency of the U.S. Spanish-language press to highlight the diversity of Fukunaga's origins.[25] Such discrepancies eloquently show the relational aspect of identity: as Stuart Hall puts it, cultural identities are "the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture," therefore they do not constitute "an essence but a *positioning*."[26]

In this specific case, the origin of the director appears relevant because, in the journalists' discourse, it is supposed to guarantee the "authenticity" of the film: in other words, it is inextricably connected to the dialectics between "realism" and "entertainment." This symbolic opposition is what most clearly differentiates the Mexican from the American reviews. Critics from south of the border praise the accurate portrayal of teenage gang life,[27] and of the difficulties and dangers of the migrants' journey. Most of them relate this accuracy to the fact that, while researching for the screenplay, Fukunaga embarked on the same perilous journey.[28] Such an aesthetic judgement minimizes the formulaic aspects of the plot, which draw consistently on the tropes of migration narratives in recent cinema;[29] the sanction of the film's aesthetic value and "originality" can be

seen as a self-legitimating strategy that simultaneously validates the reviewers' position[30] and inscribes the film into the canon of national cinema.

U.S. articles also highlight the "authenticity" of the film which "feels very real,"[31] but at the same time they compare such a characteristic with what they identify as its other constitutive if somewhat diverse element: melodrama. On the one hand, due to its brutal depiction of violence and the attention to the details of the immigrant experience, *Sin nombre* is framed as a "political" film:[32] its "documentary" look, achieved through a reliance on long shots and natural lighting, certainly contributes to this.[33] On the other hand, the focus on the romance between Sayra and Casper, as well as the carefully crafted *thriller* plot, relate to the conventional structures of Hollywood genres. A review compares *Sin nombre* to a high-grossing film which also dealt with the reunion of a hispanic immigrant family: "where Patricia Riggen shamelessly milked *Under the Same Moon*'s melodrama, Fukunaga's startlingly impressive first feature is almost ruthless."[34] A complex set of symbolic oppositions is at play here. First of all, we find a gendered and hierarchical division of roles and genres – an opposition between feminine emotional excess *versus* the more culturally legitimate masculine restraint, and between the escapism of melodrama and the "ruthlessness" of the political film. Secondly, these categories also imply a contrast between what is considered American and non-American cinema. *Sin nombre*, then, appears troubling because it stands both within and outside of the paradigms of American cinema – it acts, in a way, as an intruder.[35] Nevertheless, the hybrid cultural condition of the film is hardly ever recognized.[36]

A different approach can be observed in Mexican reviews which try to locate the film within a discourse of pride for the resurgent national cinematography.[37] For instance, they emphasize the role of producers Diego Luna and Gael García Bernal,[38] who supported *Sin nombre* with their company Canana; but the same reviews often omit the fact that the project was developed within the Sundance Labs, and the film's visibility was guaranteed by the awards for directing and cinematography at the 2009 Sundance film festival. Hence, *Sin nombre* is rarely discussed as a U.S. and Mexican productive partnership. Only during its pre-production a certain degree of economic collaboration between the two countries was acknowledged.[39] Once the film was released and its plot and aesthetics took center stage, the public discourse around *Sin nombre* became increasingly concerned with the attribution of a singular national framework. To understand this shift, Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model still seems relevant: the moments of production and reception of a cultural text are not necessarily characterized by the same power relations, and therefore each one of the different practices that articulate the process of communication "retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms and conditions of existence."[40]

As a general tendency, the reviews and articles on *The Three Burials* and *Sin nombre* show a few common features on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border: they discuss and re-frame the films' meanings in the light of several extra-filmic elements, such as the background of the directors, screenwriters, cast members and crews, as well as the circumstances of the films' production. Both movies are perceived as being composed of heterogeneous, conflicting cultural elements: in addressing their aesthetic value, the critics suggest (often implicitly) a resolution to these underlying tensions. Their judgement, then, is closely related to contextual factors.[41]

The most recurring signifier around which this resolution occurs is that of the "nation." This can undoubtedly be related to the territorial dimension of the newspapers, and to the role that traditional media play in maintaining a sense of imagined social homogeneity, even in the age of

globalization.[42] As Andreas Hepp writes, suggesting a "transcultural approach" to media reception, "the borders of the cultural thickenings people belong to do not necessarily correspond with the territorial borders, while at the same time territories still have a high relevance as a reference point of constructing national community."[43] This ideological ambivalence helps to explain the insistent concern of the media on physical national borders: also in its cinematic representations, the U.S.-Mexico border is "a space that resonates with trauma, a wound that refuses to heal, and so it becomes the object of tremendous cultural work."[44]

According to Wendy Brown, the recent global tendency to erect spectacular barriers along the borders is a way to compensate for the declining sovereignity of nation-states: "[t]he new walls often function theatrically, projecting power and efficaciousness that they do not and cannot actually exercise and that they also performatively contradict."[45] Walls such as the one on the U.S.-Mexico frontier do not secure political or economical boundaries – in fact, they often aggravate the conditions of insecurity that they are supposed to minimize. Nevertheless, widespread consensus on their necessity can be attributed to the sense of stability that they deceptively promise.[46]

The overarching geopolitical dynamic that shapes the two films' reception, then, is the pattern of migration between the two countries. As Fojas writes, media coverage of the border area often "den[ies] the realities of economic and political interdependence between Mexico and the United States and act[s] as symbolic blockades to cross-border dialogue."[47] I would argue that, among the articles that I have considered, this is particularly true in the case of film reviews, whereas interviews with directors and reports of the films' production tend to partially acknowledge such an interdependence. Where the disavowal is most evident is in the discussion of the hybrid cultural status of the two movies: as I have pointed out, the formal and narrative features of the two films cannot be contained within a singular aesthetic tradition, but the reviews tend to overshadow the degree to which both films exceed and redefine national paradigms.

Furthermore, in its framing of the potential spectatorship for *The Three Burials* and *Sin nombre*, the discussion of the films does not fully recognize the potential link between their narrative, and those subjects who lead predominantly transnational lives (for instance, those who possess dual citizenship).[48] A few articles mention the potential appeal of these movies for the *latino* community in the U.S., whose very presence is a "challenge to the neat binary opposition between Anglo and Latin America."[49] On the whole, however, "American" (as in belonging to the United States) and "Mexican" are construed as two distinct and unequivocal categories. In this sense, the articles mostly provide negotiated readings of the films – although the "particular and situated logics"[50] to which these readings respond do not give them an oppositional value, but rather deploy the categories of the hegemonic viewpoint. Regardless of their diverse political attitudes towards migratory issues and policies, in fact, the articles frame migration either as a primarily economic phenomenon, and/or as a "national security" issue; but they fail to discuss its cultural implication, and the profound transformations of subjective and collective identity that it sets in motion.

1 Adrián Pérez-Melgosa, *Cinema and Inter-American Relations. Tracking Transnational Affect*, Routledge, London-New York 2012.

2 *Idem*, p. 5.

3 Contemporary cinema is caught in a "tension between its transnational forms of production, dissemination

and (sometimes) contents, and its routinely national modes of reception, decoding and interpretation, based on national identities, cultural history and aesthetic traditions, as well as on particular readings of the world informed by a given national *habitus* and certain foreign stereotypes." Ulf Hedetoft, *Contemporary Cinema: Between Cultural Globalisation and National Interpretation*, in Mette Hjort, Scott Mackenzie (eds.), *Cinema and Nation*, Routledge, London 2000, p. 262.

4 The period considered for *The Three Burials* is the month of May 2005 (Cannes Film Festival), and the months between December 2005 and February 2006; for *Sin nombre*, the articles date to the period spanning from January to April 2009. I have focused on general-interest newspapers, positioned across the political spectrum and based in diverse locations within the two countries – for Mexico, *El Norte*, *El Universal*, *Excélsior*, *La Jornada*, *Milenio*, *Mural*, *Reforma*, *Unomàsuno*; for the United States: *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Denver Post*, *Deseret News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*; despite their relatively limited outreach, I have included some U.S. based Spanish-language newspapers: *El Diario La Prensa* (New York), *El Mensajero* (San Francisco), *El Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale), *La Voz Nueva* (Denver), *La Opinión* (Los Angeles).

5 Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York University Press, New York 2000.

6 On these aspects, see in particular chapter 2, *The Perversity of Spectators: Expanding the History of the Classical Hollywood Cinema*, in *Idem*, pp. 28-42.

7 "[U]n excelente ejemplo de cooperación anglo-hispano," Hernando Olivares, "Western con realismo magico," in *El Sentinel*, 25 February 2006.

8 See for instance Susan King, "In a word, 'fascinating;' Tommy Lee Jones proves an unconventional director in his first time out, 'Three Burials,'" in *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 2005; the focus on Lee Jones is so strong that one reviewer writes: "Tommy Lee Jones has gotten such a huge bolt of attention off '*The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*,' it's easy to forget the screenwriter. That would be a mistake and an injustice." Stephen Hunter, "'Three Burials': A Jones for Justice on the Border," in *The Washington Post*, 10 Febraury 2006.

9 Sam Allis, "In his latest film, Jones is just where he likes to be: in control," in *Boston Globe*, 2 February 2006.

10 Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits. Hollywood on the Southern Frontier,* University of Texas Press, Austin 2008, in particular pp. 187-195.

11 Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1992, p. 37.

12 For a critical discussion of Jameson's concept, which was was originally formulated in relation to Third-World literature, see Imre Szeman, *Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization*, in Caren Irr, Ian Buchanan (eds.), *On Jameson. From Postmodernism to Globalization*, Suny Press, Albany (NY) 2006, pp. 189-211.

13 Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits*, cit., p. 25.

14 See Adan Garcia, Gustavo Arechiga, "Elogia Tommy a mexicanos," in *Mural*, 8 October 2005; and Elizabeth Hernández, "El cine mexicano se ve bien bonito en el extranjero," in *El Universal*, 23 May 2005.

15 Although the credits do not list Mexico among the countries of production, a reviewer ironically asks: "Estados Unidos/Francia y – por que no? – Mexico" ("United States, France and – why not? – Mexico"), Gustavo Moheno, "Obra Maestra," in *Reforma,* 18 November 2005.

16 See for instance Noe Sotelo, "El cine ha sido muy conservador," in *Reforma*, 24 February 2006.

17 Wendy Brown*, Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2010, p. 38.

18 Anna Ochoa O'Leary, "Close Encounters of the Deadly Kind: Gender, Migration, and Border (In) security," in *Migration Letters*, vol. 5, no. 2, October 2008, p. 113.

19 For example in Stephen Hunter, "'Three Burials,'" cit.

20 In several interviews, Lee Jones voiced his opposition to the immigration policies of the Bush administration. See Don Bain, "A timely tale of border relations/Un cuento apropiado sobre relaciones fronterizas," in *La Voz Nueva*, 21 June 2006.

21 Nora Alicia Estrada, "'Los Tres Entierros de Melquiades Estrada,' dirigida por Tommy Lee Jones. Alistan en Los Ángeles su 'Día sin Mexicanos,'" in *El Norte*, 30 April 2006.
22 Adrián Félix, "Posthumous Transnationalism: Postmortem Repatriation from the United States to Mexico," in *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2011, pp. 157-179.
23 Fukunaga's script obtained the support of the Sundance Labs for his script for *Victoria Para Chino* (2004), "a short movie based on the true story of a group of immigrants smuggled into Texas in a refrigerated truck only to be abandoned there," causing the death of 19 of them. Ellen McCarthy, "Director Is Making a 'Nombre' For Himself," in *The Washington Post*, 3 April 2009.
24 Dan Zak, "A Disarming Debut," in *The Washington Post*, 3 April 2009.
25 Among the labels attached to him, we find: "cineasta americano-japonés" ("Japanese-American filmmaker") and "mitad japonés y mitad sueco" ("half Japanese and half Swedish"); the most elaborate account reads: "Cary Joji Fukunaga, de raíces asiáticas y escocesas, creció en Oakland, en el Este de la Bahía. No lleva sangre latina, pero tuvo un padrastro chicano y una madrastra argentina" ("Cary Joji Fukunaga, of Asian and Scottish roots, grew up in Oakland, in the East Bay. Latin blood is not in his veins, but he had a Chicano stepfather and an Argentinian stepmother"), Katia Fuentes, "Sin nombre, una historia como la tuya," in *El Mensajero*, 29 March 2009. The reference to the missing *sangre latina* unveils widespread cultural expectations that, given the topic of the film, a specific "ethnic" origin of the director would be demanded.
26 Stuart Hall*, Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation*, in Robert Stam, Toby Miller (eds.), *Film and Theory. An Anthology*, Blackwell, Malden (MA) 2000 (1989), p. 707.
27 Several reviews include passages such as this one: "No hay nada falso en la descripción de los infiernos sociales en los que se desarrollan las pandillas centroamericanas" ("There's nothing fake in the portrayal of the social hell in which central American gangs develop"), Ernesto Diezmartínez, "Un ángel con cara sucia," in *Reforma,* 15 May 2009. See also Carolina Martínez, "Gana realidad a ficción," in *Mural*, 8 June 2009.
28 For instance, see Ana Cristina Enríquez, "Vive director su propia película," in *Reforma,* 9 March 2009.
29 An overview of these narrative tropes is in Thomas G. Deveny, *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*, Scarecrow, Blue Ridge Summit (PA) 2012.
30 Similarly to the strategies described by Pierre Bourdieu in *La Distinction*. *Critique sociale du jugement*, Minuit, Paris 1979 (eng. ed. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, London-New York 1984).
31 Jeff Vice, "'Sin Nombre' tells harsh and vivid tale," in *Deseret News*, 17 April 2009; see also Reed Johnson, "Crossing borders. Director Cary Joji Fukunaga found the gritty essence of 'Sin Nombre' by following the immigrants' tracks," in *Los Angeles Times,* 8 March 2009.
32 Hernando Olivares, "De lo políticamente correcto al cine documental-cormercial," in *El Sentinel*, 25 April 2009.
33 Dan Zak, "A Disarming Debut," cit.
34 Steven Rea, "Stark brutality of crossing the border," in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 April 2009.
35 Writing from the U.S. city with the largest community of *latinos*, the *Los Angeles Times* reviewer opts for a metaphor that explicitly recalls the surveillance of the U.S.-Mexico border: he describes Fukunaga as "a post-racial filmmaker, who can slip easily past the stolid walls of movie genres and steer clear of the cultural sentinels who stand guard over language barriers." Reed Johnson, "Crossing borders," cit.
36 According to Marwan M. Kraidy, the hybridization of cultural products offers "foreign media and marketers transcultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities." Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2005, p. 148. For a different perspective, see Homi Bhabha's important theoretical contributions on hybridity as a strategy of resistance in postcolonial and global scenarios: Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London-New York 1994.
37 See for instance Nora Alicia Estrada, Ana Cristina Enríquez, "Llegan a EU rudos y con nombre," in *El Norte*, 9 March 2009; Dalila Carreño, Carolina Martínez, "Entienden el alma y la vida de los Maras," in *Reforma*, 17 May 2009.

38 On the star figure of Gael García Bernal as "symbol of a transnational, post-national, and diasporic new Mexican cinema" (p. 20), see Sergio de la Mora, *Cinemachismo. Masculinities and Sexuality in Mexican Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin 2006.

39 See for instance Liliana Lejarazu, Jesús Díaz, "Unen fuerzas Canana y Universal," in *Reforma*, 7 December 2007; John Jurgensen, "Filmmakers: An Outsider's Look Inside Mexico - A U.S. director's immigration drama wins backing from Mexican cinema stars," in *Wall Street Journal. Eastern edition*, 13 March 2009.

40 Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding", in Id., Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*, Hutchinson, London 1980, p. 128.

41 Such dynamics has been widely discussed in ethnographic studies on intercultural media reception, starting from the seminal work of Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*, Oxford University Press, New York 1990; an overview of the development of these studies can be found in Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences. The Ethnography of Media Consumption*, Sage, London-Thousand Oaks (CA) 1993; for a discussion of the ethnographic approach in the context of globalization, see Marwan M. Kraidy, Patrick D. Murphy (eds.), *Global Media Studies. Ethnographic Perspectives*, Routledge, London-New York 2003.

42 See David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, and Identity*, Routledge, London-New York 2000.

43 Andreas Hepp, "Transculturality as a Perspective: Researching Media Cultures Comparatively," in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2009, http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1221/2657, last visit 4 August 2013. The author refers to the concept of "cultural thickening" as formulated in Orvar Löfgren, "The Nation as Home or Motel? Metaphors of Media and Belonging," in *Sosiologisk Årbok,* no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-34.

44 Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits,* cit., p. 13. Here the author is referring to Gloria Anzaldúa's fundamental book *Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco 1987.

45 Wendy Brown, *Walled States*, *Waning Sovereignty*, cit., p. 24.

46 *Ibidem*, see in particular chapter 4, *Desiring Walls*, pp. 107-134.

47 Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits*, cit., p. 2.

48 On this aspect, see Michael Peter Smith, Matt Bakker, *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY) 2008.

49 Adrián Pérez-Melgosa, *Cinema and Inter-American Relations*, cit., p. 143. The all-encompassing category of *latino* or Hispanic is problematic when applied to subjects with diverse backgrouds; furthermore, the critics' discourse significantly overlooks the subjects who identify with Chicano culture, whose deconsruction of current ideas of "nation" is even more radical.

50 Stuart Hall, *Encoding/Decoding*, cit., p. 137.

CONCEPT-COGNITIVE MAPPING
THIRD CINEMA AS CARTOGRAPHY OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

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Abstract

This article returns to the experimental theory and practice of Third Cinema as developed in the late 1960s in parts of Latin America. It focuses on two of its aspects that have not been systematically researched: Third Cinema as conceptualizations and maps of global capitalism. In doing so this article takes up and reconfigures Fredric Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping" and introduce the theory concept-cognitive mapping. This latter theory aims to contribute new thoughts and perspectives to ongoing debates on aesthetic forms capable of a critical grasp of the mechanisms of advanced capitalism.

Introduction

Third Cinema theory developed in the late 1960s in parts of Latin America. This theory was concerned with experimental filmmaking that aimed to conceptualize and contribute to the liberation from neocolonial capitalist oppression. A key idea was to reveal, through cinematic means, the complex transnational and intra-national soft structures that sustain a given neocolonial situation. Third Cinema was written off during the 1990s – finally, it seemed, crumbled in an era of defeat for grand revolutionary, emancipatory projects. The project of Third Cinema had been conceived as a contribution to the goals of "national liberation," Third World emancipation, and socialist revolution at all levels of society. However, Third Cinema theory cannot only be reduced to those larger goals. What I consider to be the core ideas of Third Cinema – cinematic "research" and "conceptualization" of the deeper causes of neocolonial oppression – have lost none of their relevance in today's globalized world.

Mike Wayne, who has written the only (widely) published monograph on Third Cinema since 1982, calls for the revival of its revolutionary spirit.[1] Two recent edited volumes have instead aimed to "rethink" the notion of Third Cinema.[2] Most of their contributions do so by either contrasting – often a stereotypical idea of – early Third Cinema to later films more concerned with postcolonial issues such as diasporic or hybrid identities, or by perpetuating overly inclusive definitions that risk diluting the term.[3] The present article focuses instead on two aspects that have not been systematically researched: Third Cinema as conceptualizations and maps of global capitalism. In

doing so it will take up and reconfigure Fredric Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping" – which deals with the problem of artistic forms capable of grasping the increasingly "unrepresentable" nature of contemporary capitalism – and introduce in its place what I call concept-cognitive mapping. This concept contributes new thoughts and perspectives to ongoing debates on aesthetic forms capable of a critical grasp of the mechanisms of advanced capitalism.

Third Cinema

Third Cinema theory was first made public in "Hacia un tercer cine" ("Towards a Third Cinema") published in 1969 in the cinema journal *Tricontinental*.[4] The Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino wrote the essay reflecting on the making of their theoretically driven landmark avant-garde documentary *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, 1968). Third Cinema developed in light of some key inspirations. Frantz Fanon's analyses of the neocolonial condition were central, and so was a selection of Marxist aesthetic theory – Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin – that was remixed and adjusted.[5] The cinematic inspirations included Santiago Álvarez, Fernando Birri, Jean-Luc Godard, Soviet Montage Cinema, militant Cinéma Nôvo, Italian Neorealism, Joris Ivens, and Grierson's notion of social documentary. Although, as Paul Willemen pointed out, many of these inspirations, especially the latter three, regarded ways of producing films rather than their "actual trajectories and philosophies."[6] It is well known that early Third Cinema emphasized radical and experimental forms of production, distribution, exhibition, and audience engagement. However, the actual filmmaking focused on "discovering and inventing film forms and structures that serve a more profound vision of our reality," in which the "world is scrutinised, unravelled, rediscovered."[7]

Solanas and Getino continued to clarify and expand upon the concept in a series of articles and interviews during the decade that followed.[8] In an effort to straighten out some misconceptions, Solanas, in a text published in 1978, explained that it is "the way the world is conceptualized and not the genre nor the explicitly political character of a film which makes it belong to Third Cinema… Third Cinema is an open category, unfinished, incomplete. It is a research category."[9] While still often misconstrued as dogmatic, Third Cinema never offered universal aesthetic prescriptions: Solanas and Getino regarded aesthetic forms to lack already given political functions independent of historical and social context. Functioning forms must be developed through "methodical exercise of practice, search, and experimentation" within a specific piece of social-political reality.[10] As the result of cinematic research and conceptualization of neocolonial Argentina in the late 1960s, *The Hour of the Furnaces* merged various forms and genres: a new kind of Marxist essay film, documentary, found footage, dialectical montage, satire, text quotations, etc. "[A]ny militant form […] is valid," write Solanas and Getino, as long as it constructs "a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions."[11]

Third Cinema, as Paul Willemen writes, must "address the existing situation in all its often contradictory and confusing intricacy with the maximum lucidity."[12] Central here is to examine the causes. Shedding light only on effects is to fail to be sufficiently critical and analytical which can lead to only slight reforms and not to any real transformations of society. On this point Lukács' theories on art capable of analyzing the deep socio-historical causes that determine a situation was

an important influence. Lukács held out a certain idea of realism against modernism. Since Third Cinema (resonating with Brecht's critique of Lukács) did not consider genres or forms to have fixed functions, what is of relevance here is not the realism/modernism debates (which continued to be central in the European militant cinemas of the 1960s and 1970s). Relevant are his ideas of what it means to grasp the deeper causes that determine a given social situation. Lukács' more specific distinction between realism and naturalism is informative on this latter point. Naturalism, he argued, accurately depicts historical details, but only the details of historical surface effects, not their deeper causes. Instead of revealing social reality as an open process susceptible to change, naturalism gives resigned depictions of a society already finished.

Third Cinema was conceived in opposition to First Cinema – i.e. cinema based on the Hollywood model, seen as perpetuating the ideology of U.S. finance capital – but also the shortcomings of Second Cinema, i.e. art- or auteur cinema. Second Cinema, argued Solanas and Getino, only succeed "in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice" and "dealt only with effects, never with cause."[13] Second Cinema at its most political therefore risked institutionalization as "the youthful angry wing of society," following how "virulence, nonconformism, plain rebelliousness, and discontent are just so many more products on the capitalist market" which "give an air of democratic broadmindedness to the Syste[m]" to which Solanas and Getino contrasted the aim of Third Cinema: making "films that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs."[14]

Maps, nations, globalization

First, Second, and Third Cinema are (non-dogmatic) theoretical categories, not the cinemas of the First, Second and Third world. Third Cinema can be produced anywhere – within or across nations. Nonetheless we should be wary of misuses of the term: Third Cinema filmmaking can be far removed from its geographical points of origin, but not from its basic principles. There are political films made in the West that are clearly related to militant Third Cinema – especially those explicitly concerned with mapping global capitalism, from Luc Moullet's *Origins of a Meal* (*Genèse d'un repas*, 1978) to Noël Burch and Allan Sekula's *The Forgotten Space* (2010). Remarkably, in discussions of these kinds of films the connections to Third Cinema are seldom if ever acknowledged.

In an article from 2012 Audrey Evrard describes Moullet's *Origins of a Meal* as having invented approaches that in many regards actually originated much earlier with Third Cinema. She argues that Moullet's film had a broad international outlook on exploitation which differed significantly from "the militant agenda that motivated France's political documentary cinema throughout the 1960s and early 1970s" with its "self-serving focus on European working classes."[15] Moullet's film investigates instead "an intricate network of local, regional, national and international mechanisms" in which "multinational corporations pursue financial profits."[16] Evrard describes the films as "tying together issues of colonialism, imperialism and globalization" and writes that "the intellectual significance and continued relevance of the film to today's debates lies in Moullet's persistent reliance on colonialism as an ideological grid relevant to the understanding of globalization."[17] By including the South Luc Moullet is argued to undertake "a geographical,

social and political repositioning of the filmmaker as engaged global citizen,"[18] without references to Third Cinema. Evrard, however, very pertinently references Jameson's notion of cognitive mapping in her description of *Origins of a Meal* as "an attempt to demystify the unfathomable dimension of global capitalism" at the outset of neoliberal globalization in the late 1970s. There is a tendency in her discussion of this aspect to hold up as most important the scenes in which the Western filmmakers self-reflexively turns the camera "on their own hypocrisy" as an "ethical responsibility."[19] In a lot of scholarly writing in which there is a reference to cognitive mapping, the latter is equated with reflexivity of some kind – often in the sense of forms that are reflexive about the unfathomability of the world system. But the concept – despite Jameson's own somewhat broad use of the term – entails going far beyond reflexivity. Therefore I would like to revisit the notion of cognitive mapping.

Capitalist society has become so intricate that it is no longer possible for individuals to make a mental map of their place within the world system. We may know it through abstract concepts, but we are unable to grasp the world system within the realm of subjective psychological experience – conscious representation is replaced by a vague geopolitical unconscious. This creates a sense of social disorientation, which cripples progressive political agency and utopian imagination. Jameson writes about a "need for maps" – social and spatial – that could organize the "totality" into a coherent experience.[20] Traditional forms of Marxist art, while developed in line with principles of elucidation and orientation, are no longer sufficient to map this complex terrain. Jameson also sees a more general "crisis of representation" – no existing forms of figuration seem capable of the task. So what can radical political art achieve? Keep finding new forms for expressing the very absence of that which cannot be represented? Jameson argues that already in the time of imperialism capitalism had become complex enough to cause difficulties for realism, since "the truth of [an] experience no longer coincided with the place in which it takes place," which caused the emergence of "the various modernisms" that were concerned with "forms that inscribe a new sense of the absent global colonial system on the very syntax of poetic language itself."[21] But cognitive mapping – which relates to the era of globalization in which capitalism has taken a quantum leap in intricacy and abstraction – is irreducible to such reflexive inscriptions of absence. For Jameson, however, successful cognitive mapping is a speculative idea: he cannot himself imagine the aesthetic forms of such a map – although he prescribes the continued relevance of allegory, given that the whole system could not possibly be mapped in all its literal extensiveness.[22]

A Third Cinema theory relevant for the intricate globalized world cannot avoid grappling with the basic problem of cognitive mapping. However, Jameson's own somewhat traditional understanding of the parameters involved seems to lead to a deadlock. In the section below titled "Concept-cognitive mapping," I will supplant much in his understanding as I introduce a different approach. Suffice it to say at this point that I will introduce concept-cognitive mapping through a dialogue with Gilles Deleuze's theory of what a concept is, as well as with the idea of conceptualization in Third Cinema. Concept-cognitive mapping, as we will see, conceptualizes and regards films that constitute autonomous critical thought. This approach to the problem is thereby less about instrumentally representing the (unrepresentable) world system for a viewing mind and more about the ability of the film itself to think the system. The concept-cognitive map should not aspire to some (hardly imaginable) depiction – allegorical or otherwise – of the totality.

Rather, it conceptualizes the junctures between a specific political situation and the system of intricate globalized causes. This is demanding but not unimaginable.

Third Cinema tends to focus on the junctures between the nation, the nation state and global capitalist forces. While neoliberal globalization has famously made nations states relatively powerless, the analysis of the relation between the infrastructure of the state and global capitalist forces has lost none of its pertinence. Even the old Third Cinema focus on national culture remains relevant – although the national resistance movements of the times have faded. According to the stereotype, early Third Cinema had an essentialist appreciation of national culture. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that they "assumed the fundamental coherence of national identity."[23] Informed by Fanon, however, national culture means in Solanas and Getino the creation of a new culture, not a step back to some pre-existing essence. In Fanon the people is described in multitude-like terms as "a dense, subterranean life in perpetual renewal," and national culture as "the outcome of tensions internal and external to society as a whole and its multiple layers."[24] Decolonialization and liberation means removing what obstructs culture from functioning as a living process. Fanon hereby opposes not only the colonial system itself and the empty nationalisms propagated by the national bourgeois – the caretakers of the old colonial structures of exploitation – but also certain "colonized intellectuals." They all tend to glorify a static fantasy image of the past – focused on exotic rituals, traditions, costumes, etc. – that freezes the present.[25] The intellectual in favor of the liberation of culture must instead breath real life into the past so as to open up the present – a "present no longer turned inwards but channeled in every direction."[26] While these directions clearly extend to the international plane in Fanon's speculations around a new humanism and a "new man,"[27] a first step entails liberation from the restricting neocolonial national infrastructure. The neocolonial economic structure – which is basically still intact – does not invest in or develop the neocolonized country as a whole. It enriches only a small corrupt "national bourgeoisie" in service of exploiting European companies. One way of upholding this system was (is) to divide and conquer among ethnic groups in order to curb any real, productive and democratic national unity from occurring that could threaten the – international – economic setup. The neocolonial infrastructure has not in essence been altered by neoliberal globalization for most of the countries in the Global South.

Third Cinema's Fanon-inspired concern with the nation is a perspective that is simultaneously global. "Testimony about a national reality," Solanas and Getino wrote, "is also an inestimable means of dialogue and knowledge on the world plane," with the aim of "breaking out of the Balkanization on the international, continental, and national planes which imperialism is striving to maintain."[28] In this sense Third Cinema may be seen as a defined subcategory of radical "world cinema."[29] Solanas and Getino wrote this in the late 1960s and not in our age of "Empire" in which nation states have become increasingly powerless. This does not however change the fact that testimony about national reality is still needed, given the remaining neocolonial infrastructures. Powerlessness, furthermore, is not necessarily the same as irrelevance.

Despite their decreased autonomy, nation states continue to be a key element for the analysis of global capitalism also in the era of neoliberal globalization. As David Harvey argues, while their institutions and practices have been subjected to a "radical reconfiguration" that has made them "porous (particularly in relation to capital flow)" and "profoundly anti-democratic," the state still "plays a crucial role" as repressive "territorial systems of political administration."[30] This entails

that international corporations and institutions like the IMF, which are outside democratic control, frequently influence state policymaking directly. From *The Hour of the Furnaces* to *Memories of a Plunder* (*Memoria del Saqueo*, 2004), Third Cinema has an established tradition of dealing with transnational capitalist forces that through the help of a small local administration – i.e. the corrupt national bourgeois – exploits relatively weak nations, and is thereby fundamentally attuned to map and conceptualize such relations.

Solanas filmmaking is normally divided into three periods: *The Hour of the Furnaces* was made during his first militant period, in which the nation was at the center of the analysis of neocolonial structures. In his second period Solanas made "neobaroque" fiction films like *Sur* (1987) with a somewhat more vague political content. Kathleen Newman argues in a 1993 article that *Sur* revealed "the extent to which globalization ha[d] already erased the nation as a viable political ensemble."[31] In a later film like *Memories of a Plunder*, which marks out the third phase in his oeuvre, Solanas not only returns to a more militant documentary-based cinema, but also to the analysis of the mechanisms of neocolonial global capitalism through the prism of a – now neoliberalized – nation.[32]

While lacking its avant-garde audacity, *Memories of a Plunder* openly aligns itself with *The Hour of the Furnaces* in both form and content. The connection between the films underlines the many continuities between the 1968 and 2004 regarding neocolonial structures of exploitation – debt traps, exploitation through foreign finance capital with the aid of corrupt local elites, ideological warfare, etc. Memories superimposes itself over *Hour* to form a more historically layered map of neocolonialism. A Third Cinema grasp of global capitalism must entail a grasp of its colonial and neo-colonial history – a progressive keeping-alive of memory in opposition to static or narrow renditions of the past that freezes the present.

Katerina Kitidi and Aris Hatzistefanou's *Debtocracy* (2011) compares the situation in Greece after the 2008 financial crisis to what happened in Argentina a decade earlier. The film aligns itself with *Memories of a Plunder* – most directly by reusing some of its footage. Argentina is held out as "Greece's mirror image on the other side of the Atlantic," that had been turned by outside forces "into yet another experimental laboratory for Neoliberalism." In both cases, huge, and actually illegitimate, debts are created and upheld by the "vicious workings of financial markets" and institutions like the IMF. Of particular interest here, I argue, is Greece's relay-like position at the geographical and economical "periphery" of Europe. Greece is an example of how parts of Europe are starting to resemble countries in the Global South, just as many countries in the Global South are moving in the opposite direction.

The Global South is for many reasons key for any mapping of contemporary global capitalism. There is the centrality of colonialism in the genealogy of globalization. There is also the need to map the material "Real" of informational capitalism – i.e. the outsourcing of material production to the South as the West has become increasingly "immaterial." But other kinds of ongoing transformations add new reasons. George Soros, the famous financier, predicted in 2008 that "the current financial crisis" was "less likely to cause a global recession than a realignment of the global economy, with a relative decline of the US and the rise of China and other countries in the developing world."[33] And indeed, many previous peripheries are now more clearly turning into new economic centers.

Concept-cognitive mapping

Nevertheless the problem remains: How can political art critically grasp the deeper mechanisms of advanced global capitalism? This is a problem in need of new ideas and perspectives in order to get out of the impasses of reflexivity and the sense of impossibility. While the basic problem of cognitive mapping remains, many of the parameters of Jameson's theory must be bracket or fundamentally reconfigured in order to find productive solutions. Jameson's basic concern is to regain a lost sense of linear history, and a phenomenological grounding of knowledge, and the restoration of a representational function in art vis-à-vis global capitalism. What I call concept-cognitive mapping, in contrast, conceptualizes advanced capitalism through film forms that think.

The theory of concept-cognitive mapping has one foot in debates on how to find aesthetic forms capable of mapping contemporary capitalism, and the other foot in a "minor" tradition within film theory of regarding film as its own kind of thinking or intelligence, in which Deleuze is central.[34] I should add here that there have been efforts to rethink cognitive mapping through other aspects of Deleuze's thought. Regarding film, Steven Shaviro has aptly suggested the need for "affective mapping." In his conception, this regards maps of "what it feels like to live in the early twenty first century," and films that express "a kind of ambient free-floating sensibility that permeates our society today."[35] I argue that such expressions are mere reflections of precisely the state that requires mapping. They mirror contemporary capitalisms most given forms and affects without providing any new critical orientation.

Jameson on his part contrasts concepts to cognitive mapping. He equates concepts with scientific concepts, which he describes as abstract "ideal discourse, like a mathematical equation" that "model the real independent of its relations to individual subjects."[36] Concept-cognitive mapping refuses the premise that concepts are necessarily abstract in this "mathematical" sense, and partly aligns itself instead with a Deleuzian understanding in which "the concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing."[37] Deleuze and Guattari emphasize differences between philosophical concepts and science/social science. Philosophy creates concepts while science/social science produces "functives" [*fonctives*]. Functives establish functions on the actual plane of reality, while concepts are created from penetrations into reality's deeper, more "problematic" registers. Jameson can thereby be said to oppose social scientific functives and phenomenological experience/affect. This Jamesonian opposition does not have the same relevance for concept-cognitive mapping given its different understanding of the very notion of concepts. However, there are elements of functives included in concept-cognitive mapping. Its filmic concepts rigorously crystallize aspects spanning analytic rationality, affects, events, functions, potentials, and problematic multiplicities.

Concept-cognitive mapping in this sense has more affinity with the Latin American avant-garde of or around Third Cinema. Cuban filmmaker/theorist Tomás Gutiérrez Alea discussed political films as a "creative elaboration" of real events that "emphasize a deeper meaning with an analytic objective" in which "the cognitive aspect takes primacy."[38] But this is a primacy of cognition and reason that must remain intertwined with the affective. In opposition to the culture industry's masterful ability to orchestrate emotionality at the cost of lucidity and understanding, Third Cinema, as Paul Willeman wrote, had to reverse "the hierarchy between the cognitive and the emotive, while of course maintaining the need to involve both."[39]

In Jameson, it seems, the cognitive map would not think. Rather, it would cure the sense of

disorientation in the individual viewer, which would set free her utopian imagination and lead her to think. In contrast, concept-cognitive mapping emphasizes the film itself as imaginative cognition – i.e. film-thinking. In his 1969 Third Cinema related manifesto, "For an Imperfect Cinema," Julio García Espinoza wrote about art as "having its own cognitive power" and film more specifically as having to be the "opposite of a cinema which 'beautifully illustrates' ideas or concepts which we already possess."[40] Solanas and Getino themselves wrote about the importance of avoiding "film language as a mere idealized illustration of a fact."[41] Of course, the concepts of a Third Cinema film are developed in dialogue with already existing theory. The concepts are still the film's own – even a voice-over, such as Solanas' in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, is a *filmic* voice-act that is also inseparable from its complicated relation to the moving images. The film is in this sense not merely a practice but also its own kind of theoretical contribution. It is only with these caveats in place that we can agree with Shohat and Stam's description of the "persuasive power" of *The Hour of the Furnaces* as deriving "from its ability to visualize ideas, to give abstract concepts clear accessible form."[42]

Third Cinema's forms and concepts must first of all emanate from experimentation and research within the depths of a specific situation. Correspondingly, Deleuze and Guattari understand concepts as "connected to problems without which they would have no meaning" – and since the problems that give meaning to concepts are multiple and variable, one must create new "concepts for problems that necessarily change."[43] "Problems" also contain potentials that must be grasped by the concepts. What's more, when Solanas and Getino write about constructing "a throbbing, living reality" through film they mean conceptualizing its hidden revolutionary capacities. For Third Cinema and Deleuze alike, conceptualizations must grasp the inherent potentials for transformation within social reality, but they must also themselves be acts that contribute to its transformation. Deleuze and Guattari even understand concepts as providing "the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come."[44] Solanas and Getino argue that the film must attempt "to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification," which they also describe as "discovery through transformation."[45]

Concept-cognitive mapping must be able to grasp not only the literal determining causes, but also the problematic registers of reality. Alea defines "cinematic realism" as the creation from the filmed material of "a 'new reality'" that has the "ability to reveal […] deeper, more essential layers of reality itself."[46] Concept-cognitive mapping is irreducible to a "realism of abstractions." It requires film-concepts capable of a realism of problematic multiplicities – the latter regards the realm of potential as well as certain "delirious" causes such as finance capital[47] – that are simultaneously uncompromisingly critical, analytical and pedagogic on the level of causes (and not just effects). How to put together forms capable of both a realism of problematic multiplicities and a critical pedagogy of causes on a global scale? This is certainly quite a challenge. So while concept-cognitive mapping alters the parameters of cognitive mapping, it must perhaps remain partly speculative. The theory and practice of Third Cinema, however, as I have tried to show, is one of the most cogent resources. Not only for its rich tradition of aesthetic-political approaches, but also because of its long concern with the economic-political relations between the North and the Global South as well as the increasingly central South-South relations.

1 Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Pluto, London 2001.
2 Anthony R. Guneratne, Wimal Dissanayake (eds.), *Rethinking Third Cinema*, Routledge, London-New York 2003; Frieda Ekotto, Adeline Koh (eds.), *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity*, Lit, Berlin 2009.
3 Jonathan Buchsbaum shows that already in the 1980s – referencing the influential texts of Teshome Gabriel and the Edinburgh conference on Third Cinema in 1986 in which supposedly the term no longer even referenced the Latin American films and theories – the term had in some cases become so inclusive that it basically signified "all films with social and political purpose." Jonathan Buchsbaum, "A Closer Look at Third Cinema," in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2001, pp. 153ff.
4 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, "Hacia un tercer cine," in *Tricontinental*, no. 14, October 1969, pp. 107-132. The term Third Cinema, however, appeared a few months earlier in an interview in the Cuban film journal *Cine Cuban*, in March of 1969. The non-abbreviated English translation is reprinted as *Towards a Third Cinema*, in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema: Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, vol. 1, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1997, pp. 33-58.
5 For an informative discussion of the differences and continuities between the Marxist tradition and Third Cinema, see Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, cit., pp. 25-46; and Paul Willemen, *The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections*, in Jim Pines, Paul Willemen (eds.), *Questions of Third Cinema*, British Film Institute, London 1989, pp. 10-14.
6 Paul Willemen, *The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections*, cit., p. 5.
7 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., pp. 48, 56.
8 Getino gives a certain overview of their subsequent texts in *Some Notes on the Concept of "Third Cinema"*, in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema: Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, cit., pp. 99-103.
9 Solanas quoted in Paul Willemen, *The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections*, cit., p. 9 (emphasis).
10 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., p. 48.
11 *Idem*, pp. 47, 46.
12 Paul Willemen, *The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections*, cit., p. 20.
13 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., p. 33.
14 *Idem*, pp. 39, 42.
15 Audrey Evrard, "Framing the World Economics in a Tuna Can: Luc Moullet Tracks the *Origins of a Meal/Genèse d'un repas* (1978)," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 54, Fall 2012, http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/evrardMoullet/text.html, last visit 8 August 2013.
16 *Ibidem*.
17 *Ibidem*.
18 *Ibidem*.
19 *Ibidem*.
20 Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *New Left Review*, no. 146, July-August 1984, p. 91.
21 Fredric Jameson, *Cognitive Mapping*, in Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana/Chicago 1988, p. 349.
22 The world system is described as "a being of such enormous complexity that it can only be mapped and modelled indirectly." Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 1995 (1992), p. 169.
23 Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Routledge, London-New York 1994, p. 318.
24 Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove, New York 2004, p. 177.
25 *Idem*, pp. 154f, 168f, 158f.
26 *Idem*, pp. 167, 174.
27 *Idem*, p. 178f.
28 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., p. 46. On the level of (clandestine) production, Solanas and Octavio wrote about a need for "Group-level co-operation between different

countries," and "international gatherings to exchange experience, contributions, joint planning of work." *Idem*, p. 51.

29 For a theoretically astute orientation on the various meanings of the concept of world cinema, from the most commercial to the more radical, see Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema*, I.B. Tauris, London 2012.

30 David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*, Verso, London 2006, pp. 28, 106, 27, 43, 105.

31 Kathleen Newman, "National Cinema after Globalization: Fernando E. Solanas' *Sur* and the Exiled Nation," in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1993, pp. 69-83.

32 Joanna Page notes how many contemporary Argentinian films reflect a new "radical critique of neoliberalism that […] involves a reassertion of the nation as a strategy of resistance," in *Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2009, p. 6. This is not necessarily the same as the analytic or conceptual rigor aimed for by Solanas: The "New Argentine Cinema" that was established in mid 1990s strongly reacted against the didactic aspects of Third Cinema. Many of these films therefore tend to refuse to provide for the viewer with a sense of knowledge in favor of a focus on subjective experience with vague or indirect connections to larger structures.

33 George Soros quoted in Radhika Desai, *Geopolitical Economy: After US Hegemony, Globalization and Empire*, Pluto, London 2013, p. 1.

34 Thomas Elsaesser, *Working at the Margins: Film as a Form of Intelligence*, in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Harun Farocki. Working on Sightlines*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2004. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [1985], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2003.

35 Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect*, O-Books, Winchester-Washington 2010, pp. 2-6, 36-38.

36 Fredric Jameson, *Cognitive Mapping*, cit., p. 358.

37 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Columbia University Press, New York 1994, p. 21. The restricted space here does not allow a discussion of the complex questions of whether/in what sense Deleuze's film books – which charts the many different ways that films can think – finally finds films to be capable of forming concepts.

38 Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewers Dialectic [1984-1986]*, in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema: Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, cit., p. 117.

39 Paul Willemen, *The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections*, cit., pp. 12-13. See also Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewers Dialectic [1984-1986]*, cit., p. 120.

40 Julio García Espinoza, *For an Imperfect Cinema*, translation reprinted in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema: Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, cit., pp. 73, 81.

41 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., p. 47. Illustrating already given concepts, albeit in very dynamic ways, was arguably the case with the intellectual montage cinema of Eisenstein – an approach that Third Cinema is often inaccurately understood to merely copy when utilizing its montage techniques.

42 Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, cit., p. 263.

43 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, cit., pp. 16, 28.

44 *Idem*, pp. 32-33.

45 Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, *Towards a Third Cinema*, cit., p. 47 (in italics in the original).

46 Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewers Dialectic [1984-1986]*, cit., p. 122.

47 Capital itself can be described as what Deleuze calls a "problematic multiplicity." The connection between this concept and Deleuze and Guattari's conception of capital is made by Daniel Smith in his "Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Badiou and Deleuze Revisited," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2003, p. 435.

THE RHETORIC AND AESTHETICS OF WORLD CINEMA
FILM STUDIES AS A PLACE FOR THE "PERSISTENCE OF GEOGRAPHY" IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

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Abstract

This article aims at considering the world cinema "perspective" in contemporary film studies as an approach that adopts a cartographical rhetoric and a worldist aesthetics. This reveals a nostalgia for the geographical discourse, which has many implications and can be even considered reactionary. Indeed, being the effect of a sort of osmosis between "cartographic cinema" and "cartography of cinema," world cinema promotes a worldview that is allegorical of the old modernist cinematic mission of making the whole world visible. By reinserting geography in contemporary film studies and in the filmic texts today, it is compensative of new anxieties about film referentiality and the difficult mappability of informal film distribution. On a broader level, a symptomatic reading of world cinema shows how its geographical/geopolitical gaze tries to overcome a crisis of authority and of representation, and the "crisis of the cartographic reason."

I use the expression "world history" reluctantly, because it easily induces a state of intoxication that is at best appropriate only when world history really becomes the history of everybody's world. On the radio, for example, when people hear the oft-repeated announcements "This is Paris" or "This is London," the mere mention of such cosmopolitan cities serves the same function as cheap booze.

When all geographic hideouts have been photographed, society will have been completely blinded.

Siegfried Kracauer[1]

World cinema is a highly successful concept in contemporary film theory. It has been noted that the fortune of the phrase may be the result of its remarkable ambiguity. World cinema, in fact, can alternatively refer to "the cinema of the whole world," to non-Hollywood and non-First World cinemas, or specifically to alternative and adversarial cinematic expressions that question the American and European political and cultural hegemony. However, world cinema is rather defined by having a certain way of looking at cinema production, reception and film history than by its

filmic referents. Thus, world cinema is considered to be a particular "methodological approach" to the study of contemporary cinema, an approach demanded by the very nature of the contemporary mediascape.[2]

I suggest to consider world cinema as the expression of a gaze that produces "imaginative geographies," even if intentionally flexible and polycentric. Taking into account this global overview recommended by recent film theory means to consider a particular *worldist* aesthetics, conveyed through a specific rhetoric, which is ideologically not innocent. What I want to argue here is that the fascination inspired by the notion of world cinema probably resides more than in the particular objects it intends to designate and precisely in the term "world" and in the geographical imagination it implies. Above all, it lies in the fact that it is an approach that reinserts geography in film studies as well as in the filmic texts themselves, which necessarily leads to a few considerations about the relations between geography and cinema, on the historical evolution of that relationship, and on its deep implications. A similar theoretical approach argues for the ability of cinema to represent the world, and it is consequently confident in its own capability, as a literary genre, to adequately describe it as a whole (*film theory as cartography*). That is indeed what geography is expected to do, according to the ancient Ptolemaic definition: to provide a view of the whole Earth. Moreover, that is what cinema – a medium with an old cartographic vocation – was originally supposed to do: making the whole world visible, subjected to men as an image, and also intelligible.

A geographical enthusiasm can be easily traced throughout the writings of those scholars and theorists who advocate for the concept of world cinema. Although I do not intend to examine these texts in all their complexity, a brief review of a few major arguments addressing the topic may provide an example of the pervasiveness of this geographic discourse. Dudley Andrew in *An Atlas of World Cinema* is particularly explicit:

> *This is the pedagogical promise of* world cinema*, a manner of treating foreign films systematically, transcending the vagaries of taste; taking the measure of "the foreign" in what is literally a freshly recognized global dimension. Such an approach examines overriding factors, then zeroes in on specific "cinema sites" – provides coordinates for navigating this world of world cinema. […] Why not conceive an atlas of types of maps, each providing a different orientation to unfamiliar terrain, bringing out different aspects, elements and dimensions? Each approach, or map, models a type of view: hence, the Atlas.*[3]

Thus, political maps should describe the "cinematic power" of each nation in terms of feature films output (e.g. Abbas Kiarostami put Iran "on the map" in Cannes). Chromatic demographic maps should represent "the availability of images region by region" ("demographic studies serve as military maps in strategy sessions in the boardrooms of CEOs and cultural ministers"). Linguistic maps should account for the different cinematic vocabularies and grammars "set against one universally recognized language of the movies, Classical Hollywood's Latin." Orientation maps should consider "the film *as* map – cognitive map – while placing the film *on* the map," examining its specific geo-political orientation. Furthermore topographical maps should try to represent "that which is hidden," or radically different, "deeply foreign" films.[4]

This cartographic concern recalls the powerful modernist project which obsessively strived to cover and to *enframe* the world in its entirety.

Is there a "nomadic" cinema that can refuse to be mapped? Andrew notes that the recent availability of Nigerian video films that were previously considered "unmentionable, unviewable, unmappable" seems to contest this claim. Consequently, film scholars should

> *look for a different cinema, whether in the hope that a purer vision may be available, or a purer people. Many of us will be racing to examine this vibrant phenomenon, to be the first to tell our peers about it, the first to explore its (hopefully idiosyncratic) use of the medium, its special cultural function – in short the first to map it.*[5]

No region of the world is condemned to be *obscured by clouds* forever, and sooner or later all the blank spaces on the world cinema map will be filled.

Such is the "larger vision"[6] of world cinema, which is defined, in the words of Lúcia Nagib, as "a positive, inclusive, democratic concept" that insists on the interconnected character of cinematic productions from all over the globe, with an "all-encompassing," and again, "democratic vocation."[7] This approach, while advocating to defend all cultural specificities, actually overlooks the possibility of existence of a true cinematic otherness that is *unattainable* to the scholar, sacrificing it to the cause of global evidence and interconnectedness: "World cinema is simply the cinema of the world. It has no centre. It is not the other, but it is us. It has no beginning and no end, but is a global process. World cinema, as the world itself, is circulation."[8] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith too affirms, in similar terms, the virtues of the theoretical approach I am considering:

> *[…] this is a history of world cinema. This is a fact of which I am particularly proud […]. On the one hand the book tells the history of the cinema as a single global phenomenon […]. But it also, on the other hand, tells the history of many different cinemas, growing in different parts of the world.*[9]

However, given the size of the task, a sort of *caution* is typical of this kind of discourse. Many scholars maintain that world cinema requires a polycentric approach, a multitude of perspectives:

> *The sheer diversity of world cinema, the number of films made (many of which do not circulate outside national borders), and the variety of cultural and political contexts in which the world's cinemas have emerged, means that it would be foolish or arrogant, or both, for any one person to attempt to encompass the entire history of cinema single-handed. This is not just a question of knowledge but also of perspective.*

This is why Nowell-Smith requested for a team of specialists, particularly for narrating cinemas "known in the west only in the most partial, fragmentary, and unhistorical fashion."[10] The scholar fears the *hybris* of his own gaze, like Andrew explains:

> *The rubric that I, like so many others, employed for years, 'Survey of film', does an injustice to the situation and to students. For a 'survey' suggests a distant gaze, panoptically monitoring the foreign for our convenience and use. Any study of World Cinema, however, should instead be ready to travel more than to oversee.*[11]

Nevertheless, the approach reveals its subtle *schizophrenia*: "Giving space to multiple perspectives is one thing. It is also important to be able to bring them all together and to give a sense of the interlocking character of the many aspects of cinema in different places and at different times." So, as editor, Nowell-Smith tried "to show how different perspectives can be related, rather than imposing a single all-encompassing point of view."[12] Similarly, Andrew affirms:

> *While the idea of the atlas aspires to totality through an accretion of multiple yet differentiated maps that apportion objects and views, even an immense sum of maps does not afford that captious, final perspective one relishes when spinning a globe at arm's length. Still, the atlas' thwarted totalization encourages a dialectical understanding of culture and of one's place in it.*[13]

World cinema does *and* does not aspire to totality at the same time; it consists of different, multiple perspectives, but it brings them together, conciliating them in a single one, in a single book.

Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim suggest instead to think about world cinema "as a discipline, a methodology and *a* perspective" – it is "the world as viewed from the West." Their introduction of *Remapping World Cinema* raises several important questions:

> *From whence do we view, visualize and theorise world cinema, and what impact does this have on cinematic discourses and practices around the world? How does one's perspective limit one's view, and is it possible to develop a multifarious perspective that takes into account concerns of our own as well as that of the others? […] Why theorise, problematise, or even promote World Cinema as a theoretical concept?*[14]

That perspective (along with its gaze) carries the problem of its own *legitimacy*, as Annette Kuhn and Catherine Grant argue. It is a methodology "that is informed by a 'world systems' theory," and

> *[t]his may seem uncontroversial today; and indeed neither Andrew nor Chaudhuri see any need to defend such global (or 'globalized') perspectives in their work. And yet, in the 1980s – before the end of the Cold War and before the prominence of discourses of globalization – the world systems approach was among the sites of fierce polemic concerning the study, in the West, of 'marginal or 'non mainstream' cinemas.*[15]

In their reader they include on purpose the polemical articles by Julianne Burton and Teshome Gabriel on Third Cinema that were published on *Screen* in the mid 1980s. The first author asserted the necessity for Third World films "to rely on a mediating agency – an advocate in the guise of a film critic, historian, scholar, or other certified 'expert' with media access,"[16] while the other blamed the Western obsession for the "worldview," one of colonialism's arrogant legacies: "What is culturally specific is viewed as a phenomenon engulfing the globe. Even when noble causes with good intentions and positive results are involved, with implication far greater than cultural specificity, global annexation is obvious."[17]

Although accusations of colonialism may appear disproportionate today, Gabriel's protest

against Western criticism and theory usefully exposes the situated and discoursive nature of the same "worldview" that is now promoted by world cinema. On closer inspection, Nowell-Smith too, while trying to present "a picture of world cinema in all its complexity," cannot erase all the enunciative traces from his work, despite his own caution. It is interesting to note that in his *History of World Cinema* "[t]he American [Hollywood] cinema […] occupies a central position throughout the 'general' sections of the book, and there is no separate consideration of American cinema as a 'national cinema' along with the French, Japanese, Soviet and other cinemas."[18] For instance, Iranian silent films are not ("pedantically") assigned to the general silent cinema section, but they are confined "to a single, coherent," and separated, "essay on Iran."[19]

It is as if the "orientalist subject," that Said discussed, was replaced by a new "worldist" one in film studies too, whose aim is to represent the whole world. Adopting Said's framework, it can be said that the world itself, just as much as the Orient (and the Occident), "is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*," but it is "an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence."[20] Even considering briefly how the image of the globe was rhetorically exploited in the West in the last century can be telling. In a sense, the "larger vision" of world cinema corresponds to the "larger view" of the Earth provided by the first global photographs.[21] According to the cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, since the second half of the XX century, the whole Earth images and the Apollo space program photographs in particular have shaped two different discourses at the same time. A "one-world" rhetoric "concentrates on the global surface, on circulation, connectivity and communication. It is a universalist, progressive, and mobile discourse in which the image of the globe signifies the potential, if not actual, equality of all locations networked across frictionless space," it "signifies secular mastery of the world through spatial control." On the other hand, a "less synoptic and distanced" "whole-earth" rhetoric "stresses the globe's organic unity and matters of life, dwelling, and rootedness. […] Such a discourse has to confront the globe's islandness in the oxymoron of global localism" and emphasizes "a quasi spiritual interconnectedness and the vulnerability of terrestrial life." It advocates the necessity of planetary stewardship "best practiced from an insider's localist position," and therefore it promotes a "rhetoric of localism" which appeals to "the visceral bonds between land and life (individual, family, community), bonds that have traditionally been localized, frequently as mystical ties of blood and soil."[22] World cinema seems to combine both these rhetorics: the "quasi-spirituality" of the "whole-earth" discourse on the one hand, celebrating the fragile local cinematic and cultural differences as globally framed and interconnected, and the powerful "one-world" paradigm of the all-encompassing vision (the "map," the "atlas," the "picture of world cinema") and global circulation ("world cinema, as the world itself, is circulation"), on the other hand.

Cosgrove examines global discourses, the origin of which lies in a particular iconography, and it may seem questionable to assign the same rhetorics to world cinema literature, which despite its enthusiasm for maps and atlases remains essentially verbal. However, world cinema methodology not only conveys a complex rhetoric, but it also has an aesthetics in the strictly visual sense of the term. The cartographical and worldist aesthetics of world cinema is iconographically synopsized by the logo displayed in the books of the Tauris World Cinema Series edited by Lúcia Nagib (on the back cover and before the title page), which is, in fact, a world map (fig. 1).

Fig. 1 – The I.B. Tauris World Cinema Series logo (2007 – present).

This is the Arno Peters projection, which has become very popular (while very controversial inside the discipline of geography) since the early 1970s, because it was conceived as an "egalitarian" map, giving equal area representation to all countries, and replacing the Mercator "distorted" and "Eurocentric" map.[23] The Peters projection, like the Apollo space program photographs analyzed by Cosgrove, stretches some regions (like Africa) that usually appear relatively smaller on world maps, "and so correspondingly insignificant in Western geographical consciousness."[24] Despite its progressivism, the Peters projection – like every map of the world – is false, political and embedded in a knowledge and power discourse, and just like all the contemporary global thinking and imagery it belongs to an old and multifaceted globalist tradition, made of a repertoire of images with "sacred and secular, colonial and imperial meanings."[25] According to Nagib, the implicit "democratic" vocation of the all-encompassing view is actually at odds with the entire "cartographic genealogy of the Earth in the western imagination."

Having pointed out a precise worldist aesthetics in world cinema theory, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to draw a parallel between world cinema as a *methodological approach*, which is what I have been taking into account until now, and world cinema as a specific *film genre*. Even if this sense of the phrase is rarely taken into consideration, according to Martin Roberts world cinema can also refer to films that share, literally, "an awareness of globalization" [26] on a stylistic and iconographic level. As a matter of fact, world cinema as a film genre has grown consistently since 1998, when Robert's article was published; namely, as a trend of films that put the image of the whole earth as their main aesthetic (and ethical[27]) reference point (fig. 2), which the author calls "the ultimate panorama."[28] In spite of their own carnivalesque aspect, ironic cosmopolitism or new age humanism, *mondo* movies, international auteur films and global documentaries respectively perpetuate "global mythologies: ideological discourses about the world and humanity's relationship to it."[29] Roberts maintains that world cinema genre seeks, possibly unconsciously, "to reassert control over the new multicultural realities of the postcolonial world order:"

> *In a postcolonial world order in which First World societies have found themselves increasingly fragmented by Third World immigration, their cultural homogeneity destabilized and contested by the cultures of their former colonies, the global vision of Baraka [Ron Fricke, 1992] can be seen as a reaction to the threat such a world poses to Euro-American cultural authority, which, in reinscribing the world within the reassuring field of a Euro-American gaze, seeks to reimpose a neocolonial order on a world slipping increasingly beyond its control.*[30]

Again, allegations of neocolonialism may seem disproportionate. However, Roberts' argument exposes the partiality of a gaze and of a cinematic aesthetics that pretend to be innocent and

disinterested. Can Roberts' reasoning on world cinema genre be referred to world cinema theory as well, considering the fact that they both seem to share a similar globalist imagery? I believe that world cinema makes it possible to point out a sort of *osmosis* between cinema as a geographical medium and film theory as cartography. With the term "osmosis" I mean the overlap of two contiguous discourses, one of which – that of cinema as a geographical medium – becomes metaphorically and unconsciously implicated by the other – which considers film theory as cartography.

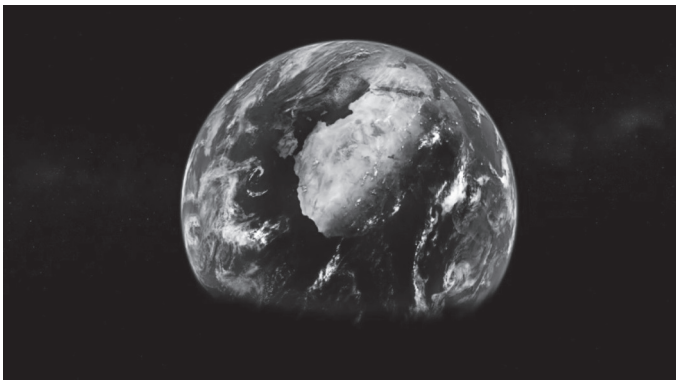

Fig. 2 – A recent example from the world cinema genre: *Home* (Yahn Arthus-Bertrand, 2009).

The world cinema genre appears to be nostalgic about the world and about a certain way of looking at it, for instance the geographical gaze of early cinema, epitomized by the whole earth image. Many scholars noted the primitive geographical penchant of the medium and its mapping impulse.[31] Indeed, cinema emerged in a century that geographically extended "the field of the visible and the representable,"[32] and it established itself "within a context of feverish production of views of the world, an obsessive labor to process the world as a series of images."[33] This also played a part in the colonial enterprise: "The cinema's ability to 'fly' spectators around the globe" flattered "the imperial subject as superior and invulnerable observer."[34] Cinema's concern was the transformation of "the obscure *mappa mundi* into a familiar, knowable world."[35] Cinema used to function like an atlas, by virtue of a "strong visual and rhetorical connection between cinema and cartography."[36] World cinema genre, just like – I argue – world cinema theory, is probably nostalgic for that old link between the medium and cartography, nostalgic for a cartographic cinema and, in general, for modern cartography.

A typical feature of the writings that deal with geography and cinema consists in considering this relationship on two different levels, which are precisely the ones taken in into account here. For the economy of this paper, the question could be simplified by saying that, first, cinema is geographical because of its realism and its ability *to represent the (whole) world*, since every film contributes for its part to the great archive of the visible, to the cinematic description of the Earth. Second, cinema is geographical because of its peculiar regional and national production and distribution; in other words, because of its possibility *of being represented as the world* by film history and criticism. These two aspects are sometimes intermingled, and the second one is possibly a consequence of the first. One can trace them even in *Kino und Erdkunde* by

Hermann Häfker (1914), which is probably the first book on the subject: films are geographical because of their photographic basis, but they are able to provide the necessary view of the whole world (*Weltblick*) only when inserted in a global framework by the scholar.[37] This amphiboly of the connection between cinema and geography is also evident in the two seminal series of articles edited by British Film Academy Director Roger Manvell, published in *The Geographical Magazine* of the Royal Geographical Society since 1953. While the first series consists of several articles on national cinemas (i.e. cinema as the object of cartography), the second series analyzes the way documentary film has been used to describe the British Commonwealth territories and the United States (i.e. cinema as the subject of cartography, and the world as the object of cinematic cartography).[38]

The same two aspects can be found in recent books that collect both articles promoting a large transnational analytical perspective on contemporary cinema and articles hoping for the emergence of new global documentaries able to visually map "new social and aesthetic spaces" and so to account for the "new world (image) order."[39] It is possible to trace this continuous rhetorical and aesthetic correspondence, or osmosis, between *cartography of cinema* and *cartographic cinema* also in the recent volume *Theorizing World Cinema*. The theoretical frame is the worldist one examined before, but it is interesting how the theme of film *realism* is particularly highlighted among the collected essays, like in the article in which Tiago de Luca considers a new "realist tendency [that] has surfaced on the world cinema map," spanning from Iran to Thailand, Mexico, Hungary, Taiwan, Argentina, China, Russia, USA, Portugal, Turkey and Spain.[40]

My point is that the fascination for world cinema, even if it cannot be labeled as neocolonialist, shows some *reactionary* traits. First, it attempts to conduct a single (but "fluid") discourse on the whole Earth, mostly from the vantage point of Western academia. While in a very prudent manner, it fails to acknowledge the crisis of authority of that global kind of gaze – the same gaze that, for example, postmodernist anthropology dismisses: "There is no longer any place of overview (mountaintop) from which to map human ways of life, no Archimedian point from which to represent the world."[41] Second, it reaffirms the belief in a privileged geographical relationship between the cinema and the world, in both the cases we have discussed, as if the medium was still supposed to give a "nouvelle connaissance du monde"[42] like many decades ago. A similar cartographic preoccupation can be explained by considering that digital production can pose – or be perceived as – a threat to the *referentiality* of cinema, just like informal digital distribution can threaten the *mappability* of film circulation. On close examination, this is indeed what resonates in Andrew's words: "Today, amidst digital confections tempting filmmakers and audiences to escape into the air of the virtual, world cinema brings us back to the earth, this earth on which many worlds are lived and perceived concurrently."[43]

Moreover, insistently and unproblematically resorting to a cartographic language, world cinema theory reveals *a nostalgia for geography* in general. This precisely happens in an epoch when the geographical discipline, which was at the core of the idea of modernity, is undergoing major transformations. Critical geography has been deconstructing the cartographical discourse since the 1980s, showing its fallacious and non-objective character, and its systematic and inevitable complicity in knowledge and power issues.[44] Basically, geography is always geopolitics for all intents and purposes, or as Yves Lacoste said, a *strategic discipline*. *Geopolitik*, as Franco Farinelli maintains, was just the first form of geography *openly* addressed to the political control of the world.[45]

On a broader scale, it has to be noted that world cinema emerges as a theoretical approach in an era of "crisis of the cartographic reason," that is when the foundations on which Westerners used to think about and to understand themselves and the Earth – which according to Farinelli are cartographic – are shaking. The model of the map would not be useful anymore to comprehend the functioning of the world, because the world itself, that is every social, economical, political, cultural relation, has recently slipped into an area of unmappable invisibility.[46] Perhaps, this very crisis may be discovered even in some filmic texts: it is possible to spot some contemporary films that critically represent maps, which could be considered as symbols of the "cartographic reason of cinema," and others that challenge the "god's trick" of aerial view, which was a "cartographic shape" of cinema according to Teresa Castro.[47]

The world cinema "perspective" has a symptomatic and compensative quality in contemporary culture. Promoting a cartographic view on cinema from all over the globe through a specific rhetoric and aesthetics, it allegorizes the geographical gaze of cinema and its modernist mission of making the whole world visible and comprehensible, of conceiving it as an image and "as exhibition."[48] By putting "the world before you"[49] once again, world cinema tries to overcome a crisis of authority and of representation, at the very moment when, to quote Heidegger's words, contemporary world "withdraws into a space beyond representation."[50]

1 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie," in Id., *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA)-London, 1995, pp. 101-102, originally in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 June 1930. And Id., "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies," in Id., *The Mass Ornament*, cit., pp. 291-304, p. 299, originally in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11-19 March 1927. The second quotation echoes in Kracauer's criticism of Walter Ruttmann's *Melodie der Welt* (1929): "His 'world melody' is void of content, because his concern with the whole of the world leads him to disregard the specific content of each of the assembled melodies." See Id., *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1947, p. 209. However, his opinion about the role of cinema in representing the whole world and the "family of man" seems notably changed in Id., *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Oxford University Press, London-New York 1960.

2 On world cinema as a "methodology," see, e.g., Lúcia Nagib, "Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema," in Stephanie Dennison, Song Hwee Lim (eds.), *Remapping World Cinema*, Wallflower, London 2006, p. 35; Id., "Situating World Cinema as a Theoretical Problem," in Id. (eds.), *Remapping World Cinema*, cit., p. 6; Annette Kuhn, Catherine Grant, "Screening World Cinema," in Id. (eds.), *Screening World Cinema: The Screen Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2006, p. 2. About its adequacy to a new "enormous multinational system," see for example Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema: Europe, The Middle East, East Asia and South Asia*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2005, p. 2. On the "geopolitical imaginary of cinema studies" and on the relation between transnational film theory and capitalist world-economy, see Nataša Ďurovičová, Kathleen Newman (eds.), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, New York-Abingdon 2010.

3 Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," in *Framework*, vol. 45, no. 2, Fall 2004, pp. 9-10.

4 *Idem*, pp. 10-19

5 *Idem*, pp. 18-19.

6 *Idem*, p. 19.

7 Lúcia Nagib, "Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema," cit., p. 35.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "General Introduction," in Id. (ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1997, p. xx.
10 *Ibidem*. The emphasis on polycentrism in the world cinema approach descends from Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Routledge, London-New York 1994, pp. 46-49.
11 Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," cit., p. 9.
12 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "General Introduction," cit., p. xx.
13 Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," cit., 15.
14 Stephanie Dennison, Song Hwee Lim, "Situating World Cinema as a Theoretical Problem," cit., p. 1 and p. 9.
15 Annette Kuhn, Catherine Grant, "Screening World Cinema," cit., pp. 2-3.
16 Julianne Burton-Carvajal, "Marginal Cinemas and Mainstream Critical Theory," in Annette Kuhn, Catherine Grant (eds.), *Screening World Cinema*, cit., p. 19, originally in *Screen*, vol. 26, nos. 3-4, 1985, pp. 2-21.
17 Teshome H. Gabriel, "Colonialism and 'Law and Order' Criticism," in Annette Kuhn, Catherine Grant, (eds.), *Screening World Cinema*, cit., p. 36, originally in *Screen*, vol. 27, nos. 3-4, 1986, pp. 140-147.
18 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "General Introduction," cit., p. xxi.
19 *Ibidem*.
20 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York 1978, pp. 4-5.
21 *Time* selected the Apollo 8 crew as "men of the year," in 1968, "not only for the dazzling technology of their achievement, but for the lager view of our planet and the fundamental unity of man," in Denis Cosgrove, "Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 84, no. 2, 1994, p. 284.
22 *Idem*, p. 287. And Id., *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in Western Imagination*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2001, p. 263.
23 Jeremy Crampton, "Cartography's Defining Moment: The Peters Projection Controversy, 1974-1990," in *Cartographica*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1994, pp. 16-32.
24 Denis Cosgrove, "Contested Global Visions," cit., p. 278.
25 *Idem*, p. 270. See also Id., *Apollo's Eye*, cit.
26 Martin Roberts, "*Baraka*: World Cinema and the Global Culture Industry," in *Cinema Journal*, vol. 37, no. 3, Spring 1998, p. 63. Actually, Roberts sketches a comparison between world cinema genre and world cinema literature (namely the BFI book *World Cinema: Diary of a Day*) in the last chapter of his article, pp. 76-77.
27 On this aspect, see also how Peter Singer resorts to the whole Earth imagery in Id., *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 2002, on the front cover and in his conclusions, p. 201: "The twentieth century's conquest of space made it possible for a human being to look at our planet from a point not on it, and so to see it, literally, as one world."
28 Martin Roberts, "*Baraka*: World Cinema and the Global Culture Industry," cit., p. 75.
29 *Idem*, p. 62.
30 *Idem*, p. 78.
31 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, Verso, London-New York 2002, p. 241; Teresa Castro, "Cinema's Mapping Impulse: Questioning Visual Culture," in *The Cartographic Journal*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2009, pp. 9-15.
32 Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in Teresa de Lauretis, Stephen Heat (eds.), *The Cinematic Apparatus*, St. Martin's, New York 1980, p. 122.
33 Tom Gunning, "'The Whole World within Reach': Travel Images without Borders," in Jeffrey Ruoff (ed.), *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Duke University Press, Durham-London, p. 32, previously in Roland Cosandey, Francois Albera (eds.), *Cinéma sans frontières, 1896-1918. Aspects de l'internationalité dans le cinéma mondial: représentations, marchés, influences et reception*, Payot-Nuit Blanche, Lausanne-Québec 1995, pp. 21-36.
34 Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, cit., p. 104.

35 *Idem*, p. 106.
36 Teresa Castro, "Cinema's Mapping Impulse," cit., p. 10. See also Eadem, *La Pensée cartographiques des images. Cinéma et culture visuelle*, Aléas, Lyon 2011. On the relationship between cinema and the atlas see pp. 157-211.
37 See Hermann Häfker, *Kino und Erdkunde*, Volksvereins-Verlag, München-Gladbach 1914. Even if Häfker does not cite Ptolemy's work, he believes in the Ptolemaic idea of geography as the description of the whole Earth, p. 10: "Erdkunde ist ja nicht das Wissen von einem Teil der Erde als solchem, sondern von ihrer Ganzheit."
38 The first series (1953-55) with articles on French, British, American, Scandinavian, Italian, German, Soviet, Indian and Japanese cinemas is presented by Roger Manvell, "The Geography of Film-making," in *The Geographical Magazine*, vol. 25, no. 12, April 1953, pp. 640-650. The second series (1956-58) with articles on "documentary films" shot in Australia, Canada, United States and in the British Overseas Territories, is presented by Id., "Geography and the Documentary Film," in *The Geographical Magazine*, vol. 29, no. 9, pp. 417-422.
39 John Hess, Patricia R. Zimmermann, "Transnational Documentaries: A Manifesto," in Elizabeth Ezra, Terry Rowden (eds.), *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York 2006, p. 97, previously in *Afterimage*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1997, pp. 10-14. The authors quote Jameson's work, in the belief that cinema can map the global social totality of late capitalism. However, they intend this in a very literal (and not allegorical) sense and, above all, they seem to ignore the essential impossibility of this task and the unrepresentability of the world system postulated by Jameson himself. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham 1991, and Id., *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press-BFI, Bloomington-Indianapolis-London 1992.
40 Tiago de Luca, "Realism of the Senses: A Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema," in Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 2012, pp. 183-205.
41 James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in James Clifford, George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1986, p. 22.
42 Pierre Leprohon, *L'Exotisme et le cinéma. Les "chasseurs d'images" à la conquête du monde…*, J. Susse, Paris 1945, p. 281-298.
43 Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," cit., p. 21. Left aside the extensive question of referentiality, on the informal distribution, see Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution*, Palgrave Macmillan-British Film Institute, London 2012.
44 See, e.g., Brian Harley's essays posthumously collected in John Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2001; Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps*, The Guilford Press, New York-London 1992; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World*, Routledge, London-New York 2004. And also Derek Gregory's chapter on "Geography and the Cartographic Anxiety," in Id., *Geographical Imaginations*, Blackwell, Cambridge (Mass.)-Oxford 1994, pp. 70-205.
45 See Franco Farinelli*, I segni del mondo. Immagine cartografica e discorso geografico in età moderna*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 2000, p. 249.
46 See Franco Farinelli, *Geografia. Un'introduzione ai modelli del mondo*, Einaudi, Torino 2003, and Id., *La crisi della ragione cartografica*, Einaudi, Torino 2009.
47 I have tried to address these topics in Giorgio Avezzù, "Sulla crisi della ragione cartografica del cinema," in *Fata Morgana*, no. 19, 2013 159-168, and Id., "La diserzione dello sguardo. Appunti sulla sorte dell'immagine aerea nel cinema contemporaneo," in *Annali online dell'Università di Ferrara. Sezione Lettere*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, 2011, pp. 262-295. On the aerial view as a "cartographic shape of cinema," see Teresa Castro, *La Pensée cartographiques des images*, cit., pp. 95-155.
48 See Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1989, pp. 217-236. See, e.g., p. 227: "The experience of the world as a picture set up before a

subject is linked to the unusual conception of the world as an enframed totality, something that forms a structure or system." See also D. Gregory's chapter on "Geography and the world-as-exhibition," in Id., *Geographical Imaginations*, cit., pp. 15-69. On cinema and the "world as exhibition", see Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, cit., p. 108.

49 The motto "We Put the World Before You" of the Charles Urban Company, often cited as emblematic of the cartographic reason of cinema by Teresa Castro, fascinated also Hermann Häfker: see Id. *Kino und Erdkunde*, cit., p. 16.

50 Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in Id., *Off the Beaten Track*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2002 (1950), p. 71.

LUKÁCS, PRÉCURSEUR D'UNE ESTHÉTIQUE GÉOPOLITIQUE? LE CONCEPT DE *TOTALITÉ* AU SERVICE DU CINÉMA POSTCOLONIAL

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Abstract

Can we still consider Lukács as a model of the "universalist" intellectual? And, in the geopolitical study of cinema, does the concept of totality have a relevant applicability? The matter of the legacy of Lukács' method, especially in Jameson's work, implies an insistent focus on his work, a re-reading and a survey of his fundamental elements, for it is precisely in what could be named his "method" that the unity of his project and his particular vision could recover their shape. Lukács' writing on realism, Marxism and literary criticism, his contributions on the history of aesthetics, the prolegomena to a Marxist aesthetics and other parts of his work, would let us clarify some fundamental problems. This article questions a new proposition: the reviving of film studies by a non-dogmatic "come back" to the remaining lessons of Lukács and the possibility of their practice in the postcolonial studies.

Always historicize ! (*Historicisez toujours !*)
Fredric Jameson

*Considérons d'abord l'*hétérogénéité *radicale et nécessaire d'un héritage […]. Un héritage ne se rassemble jamais, il n'est jamais un avec lui-même. Son unité présumée, s'il en est, ne peut consister qu'en l'*injonction *de* réaffirmer en choisissant.
Jacques Derrida

Aujourd'hui, Lukács nous semble très lointain et cela est renforcé par le fait qu'il a été, comme l'a dit Cesare Cases, « en grande partie conditionné par un climat historique irrécupérable ». Mais cette distance ne devrait pas nous faire oublier, sur le plan de la réflexion historique et politique, l'importance que la réception de l'œuvre lukácsienne a eue pour le débat théorique et culturel italien dans les années 50 et 60, et *au-delà* pour le débat international. En effet, les chercheurs italiens (marxistes ou non) se sont montrés toujours plus sensibles à de nouvelles suggestions: la phénoménologie, les courants critiques français et anglo-saxons, les différents structuralismes, jusqu'à un désintérêt substantiel pour l'analyse sociale et la critique de l'idéologie, qui renseignaient

non seulement sur Lukács, mais sur toute la bataille d'idées qui avait été menée dans les années 50 au nom de l'historicisme matérialiste : de la période du néoréalisme à la redécouverte et au lancement de Gramsci, jusqu'aux réflexions d'Umberto Barbaro et au « pathos historique » de Della Volpe. Phase de rejet de la génération de l'engagement, de ses contenus comme des formes courageuses de son militantisme, dans le contexte d'un pénible renouvellement qui traversa le marxisme après les secousses de 1956. De ce point de vue, il n'est pas exagéré de dire que l'oubli progressif dans lequel tomba la pensée de Lukács, fut un des aspects du moment difficile que connut l'historicisme en Italie[1]. Ainsi naît une clé de lecture ouvertement « extrémiste » de Lukács, mais son œuvre attend encore une relecture, qui pourrait ouvrir la porte à un réexamen du passé. Il est probable qu'une telle investigation fasse apparaître le philosophe hongrois comme un modèle d'intellectuel "universaliste": opérateur des grandes synthèses, homme d'une époque où les bases sociales du travail culturel étaient plus restreintes et où les rôles des individus étaient incomparablement plus larges. Une étude de la pensée lukácsienne telle que proposée ici pourrait faire office d'arrière-plan historique à de nombreux problèmes d'aujourd'hui et solliciter une récupération de la tension des instances plus rigoureusement *critiques* de la culture italienne mais pas seulement. Contribuer à créer un climat de ce genre, ce serait sans doute la meilleure manière pour que le difficile héritage du « vieux maître » ne soit pas à nouveau perdu.

En 1980, dans *Two Paradigms*, Stuart Hall fait remonter la naissance des *cultural studies* justement au croisement entre une tradition culturaliste des années 50 (Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams et E.P. Thompson) et une tradition structuraliste qui s'insère dans les années 60 et 70 (Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Foucault). Les *cultural studies* « cherchent – en effet – à penser au-delà des meilleurs éléments fournis par les structuralistes et par les culturalistes, à travers certains concepts élaborés dans les écrits de Gramsci »[2]. Gramsci sert ici à créer un premier cadre conceptuel pour les *cultural studies*, empêchant les glissements vers des paradigmes trop structurellement définis, et Hall explicite cette lecture en de nombreuses occasions : « Je suis entré dans le marxisme comme dans un problème ; j'ai lutté avec Althusser et à la fin, je suis parvenu à faire du travail à l'intérieur du cadre de la problématique marxienne, radicalement revisitée par Gramsci »[3]. Malgré la prolifération d'usages dans les différents champs, il existe un noyau dur dans la leçon gramscienne, capable de saisir certaines des contradictions centrales de notre époque. Les thèmes centraux qui persistent sont : la policité de la culture populaire et le nouveau type de rapport qui s'instaure entre politique et culture dans la société contemporaine. Une tradition interprétative entière – celle des *cultural studies* – part des suggestions gramsciennes[4], pour étendre ensuite ses recherches à l'étude des médias. La subalternité, reformulée, rouvre la discussion sur les concepts tels que la citoyenneté, l'Occident, l'homme en tant que sujet. Enfin, Gramsci a fourni une contribution absolument fondamentale, en approfondissant le lien entre le réalisme et les formes modernes de l'art, voire de l'avant-garde, et dans la définition de la totalité, il spécule aussi sur les cultures subalternes, sur le grand refoulement du folklore (dans le sens non pas exotique mais dynamique). De là également la vitalité de la leçon gramscienne à l'intérieur des *postcolonial studies*, qui s'intéressent entre autre à un concept tel que celui d' « hégémonie ». Chez Gramsci, la *phase hégémonique* du capitalisme[5] correspond à un moment historique où la bourgeoisie ne domine pas simplement grâce à ses moyens de répression mais maintient sa position dominante car elle est devenue la direction politique – qui s'exprime par « *une collaboration pure, c'est-à-dire un consentement actif et volontaire (libre)* »[6] – de ceux qu'elle domine.

S'il est vrai qu'il existe une distinction entre Gramsci et le gramscianisme[7], il est alors possible de remarquer que Lukács a fonctionné comme un élément déterminant dans la crise de ce dernier, et une reconstruction détaillée de sa réception en Italie pourrait amplement le démontrer. La possibilité d'une redéfinition organique du marxisme, de remonter à travers Lukács aux « sources » même du marxisme et de la dialectique, de repénétrer les événements historiques et culturels tels que ceux de la bourgeoisie européenne, en surmontant toute vision étroitement nationale de l'histoire politique et culturelle sont certains des aspects qui pourraient faire réfléchir sur la contribution non secondaire de l'œuvre de Lukács. Cases, en reconstruisant son rapport avec Lukács, parle ironiquement d'ouvrir une brèche, qui laisse transparaître l'alternative : « Il ne s'agit pas de reconstruire un "système", si jamais d'élaborer un "modèle", un "modèle culturel de développement", dans lequel vérifier des hypothèses possibles d'une interprétation globale de la réalité actuelle »[8]. Il ne s'agit donc pas tant d'un projet alternatif de culture et de société, qu'on pense pouvoir délimiter systématiquement dans sa totalité, mais plutôt d'une considération plus ouverte, moins systématique, plus attentive à la « méthode » qu'à l'édification d'un « ensemble ». Quel est alors le rôle que peut jouer Lukács pour la culture démocratique de notre siècle ? Où se situe la valeur de son enseignement et de sa doctrine ?

Le concept de *totalité* chez Lukács et Jameson

Dans l'horizon du marxisme, une place éminente revient donc à Lukács qui fut le premier à thématiser la totalité comme une catégorie *théorique* et *pratique*. Cette catégorie a été centrale dans les analyses d'*Histoire et conscience de classe*. Mais il nous faut ici immédiatement barrer cette focalisation, en insistant sur la prégnance de ladite catégorie dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre qui, rappelons-le, s'étend sur plus de soixante années. On en trouve la trace dès les textes de « jeunesse », et plus particulièrement dans *La Théorie du roman* (1916), où elle est explicitement thématisée. De manière plus affirmée, elle attestera sa fécondité dans les œuvres de la maturité, comme *La Particularité de l'esthétique* (1964), ainsi que l'*Ontologie de l'être social* (1964-1971).

> *Il apparaît aujourd'hui évident que la description que faisait Lukács du caractère conflictuel de la réalité moderne, avec sa scission typique entre la conventionalité toujours plus prononcée de la réalité objective et les aspirations toujours plus dénuées d'espérance de la conscience individuelle, était un reflet direct de la situation historique particulière où se trouvait la conscience même de l'auteur lorsqu'il rédigeait sa* Théorie du Roman. *Sa sensibilité et sa conscience se trouvaient profondément meurtries par l'irréductibilité du divorce entre l'aridité du monde « objectif » (image à peine sublimée de la civilisation capitaliste contemporaine) et l'intériorité « sans patrie » de l'âme individuelle.*

Et Nicolas Tertulian de conclure, un peu plus bas: « Une pareille dialectique esthétique cachait en soi l'aspiration secrète la plus profonde de Lukács: la soif de *totalité*. Dans son ensemble, l'œuvre de Lukács pourrait être définie comme une véritable théodicée de l'idée de totalité »[9].

La problématique de la totalité chez Lukács consiste dans son caractère spéculatif, non tant résiduel, que *persistant*. Elaborée en premier lieu, dans le cadre esthético-métaphysique des œuvres de jeunesse (*L'Âme et les formes*, *La Théorie du roman*), cette spéculativité se trouvera

littéralement ramassée par la conception du prolétariat comme sujet-objet identique dans *Histoire et conscience de classe*. Clef de voûte du marxisme, la totalité est alors clairement identifiée au prolétariat[10].

Sur le plan de la méthodologie, l'importance d'*Histoire et conscience de classe* réside dans le progrès décisif qu'accomplit Lukács en remplaçant l'idée phénoménologique de structure significative *atemporelle* qui avait régi les deux ouvrages historiques précédents par le concept marxiste et dialectique de structure significative temporelle et dynamique fondé sur l'idée de totalité.

Avant que la catégorie de totalité ne devienne centrale dans l'essai *Histoire et conscience de classe*, il convient d'indiquer que l'élaboration de celle-ci doit être assignée bien avant sa systématisation «marxiste». Si, en effet, elle apparaît d'abord, tant lexicalement que thématiquement dans *La Théorie du roman*, on peut néanmoins affirmer que sa maturation est amorcée dès les premiers écrits de Lukács, *L'Âme et les formes* bien sûr, mais également, dès son premier ouvrage *Histoire du développement du drame moderne* (publié en 1911 à Budapest)[11].

Pour Lukács, la justification du modernisme littéraire doit être mise en parallèle avec une conception du monde. D'où la tentative de justifier le concept de totalité au regard de la théorie marxiste: « Les rapports de production de chaque société forment un tout »[12]. Cette affirmation de Marx devient le point de départ méthodologique et la clef de la connaissance *historique* des rapports sociaux. Lukács montre, qu'au-delà d'une autonomisation de certains éléments, il s'agit de percevoir le tout, le processus global:

> *Toute catégorie partielle isolée peut être traitée et pensée (dans cet isolement) comme étant toujours présente pendant toute l'évolution de la société humaine. […] La distinction réelle des étapes de l'évolution historique s'exprime de manière beaucoup moins claire et univoque dans les changements auxquels sont soumis les éléments partiels isolés, que dans les changements de leur fonction dans le processus d'ensemble de l'histoire, de leurs rapports à l'ensemble de la société*[13].

Et à Lukács de conclure:

> *Cette conception dialectique de la totalité, qui s'éloigne en apparence tellement de la réalité immédiate et qui construit cette réalité d'une manière en apparence « non scientifique », est, en fait, la seule méthode qui puisse saisir et reproduire la réalité sur le plan de la pensée. La totalité concrète est donc la catégorie fondamentale de la réalité. La justesse de cette perspective se révèle cependant dans toute sa clarté lorsque nous plaçons au centre de notre recherche le substrat matériel réel de notre méthode, la société capitaliste avec son antagonisme interne entre les forces et les rapports de production*[14].

Contre le risque d'une dégénérescence de l'intention réaliste, qui finit par saisir seulement le « réel abstrait », c'est-à-dire le réel statique et mécanique du *hic et nunc*, et qui ne parvient pas à la *totalité*, Lukács a élaboré et introduit la catégorie du *typique* (*Typus*-). La vraie nature du réalisme consiste en la capacité de savoir donner une représentation artistique du *typique.* Il y a une étroite corrélation entre la *totalité* et le *typique*. Et c'est à ces catégories que se rattache celle de *Realismus* (le *réalisme*). Pour Lukács, il ne peut y avoir de vrai *réalisme* sans *totalité* et il ne peut se donner comme *totalité* artistique sans le *typique*. C'est pourquoi *Realismus* ne signifie

pas immédiatement *Realität* ou *Wirklichkeit*[15]: d'après Lukács, *Realismus* signifie une manière particulière (artistique) de révéler (dans la création artistique d'une situation objective *typique*) les rapports entre l'essence et le phénomène de la *Realität*, du réel.

Des catégories comme celles de *totalité* et de *typique* nous semblent encore capables d'offrir une structure mais c'est surtout le concept de *réalisme* lukácsien qui reste aujourd'hui encore très utile pour distinguer le phénomène de l'essence, pour comprendre que de nombreuses manifestations courantes, même réelles, ne relèvent pas du tout du réalisme, mais plutôt d'une « reproduction photographique de la superficie immédiatement perceptible du monde externe »[16] ; un renversement de valeurs de ce qui est important et de ce qui est banal, un retournement du phénomène et de l'essence, une perte de vue de leurs rapports, de l'existence même de l'essence et une réduction de l'essence et de la réalité toute entière au phénomène, en dernière analyse et encore une fois, une mystification de la réalité. C'est précisément la nature du grand réalisme, de l'essence du *Typus*, de la manière de préserver la vérité dans l'art de toute forme de mystification.

C'est à travers la lecture de Fredric Jameson[17], qu'apparaît sa filiation avec Lukács et la continuité de son projet: l'élaboration inlassable d'une herméneutique marxiste, qui fait du marxisme, davantage qu'une tradition ou un sous-courant intellectuel éclaté dans diverses disciplines (l'économie, la politique, la philosophie, la théorie de la littérature, l'histoire, etc.), le site sur lequel se disposent des objets hétérogènes et se mettent en scène des antagonismes théoriques. Cette herméneutique doit être considérée en tant que telle, parce qu'elle est depuis le départ indissociable d'une double crise : crise de l'interprétation, d'une part, et crise du marxisme, d'autre part.

On peut dire avec Nicolas Vieillescazes que Jameson est le « défenseur d'un marxisme hétéroclite, syncrétique et amphibie », et qu'à ce titre, il était particulièrement bien armé pour survivre à une longue période de défaite et de réaction. Le marxisme, pour lui, « n'est que le lieu d'un impératif de totalisation, et les diverses formes historiques qu'il a revêtues peuvent également et de la même façon être critiquées pour leurs limites idéologiques locales ou pour les stratégies de contention qu'elles ont déployées »[18]. Il maintient comme horizons ultimes l'histoire de la lutte des classes et le mode de production. Ces horizons remplissent une fonction de cadres et de stabilisateurs théoriques. C'est précisément en vertu de ces horizons que le marxisme de Jameson, si syncrétique soit-il, n'est pas réductible à un pluralisme libéral, ni à un dialogisme théorique, ni à une forme quelconque d'interdisciplinarité : il s'agit en vérité d'un site de production des antagonismes. C'est pour cela aussi qu'à un moment où le mot « marxisme » semble ne plus être seulement une insulte, à un moment où d'autres tentent de s'approprier des aspects du marxisme pour les subsumer dans des projets conversationnels ou des théories de la reconnaissance, cette œuvre ouverte mais fondamentalement conflictuelle pourrait n'être pas dénuée d'utilité. Et nous ne pouvons qu'être d'accord avec lui quand il voit en Lukács une continuité pertinente, voire une nécessité. Jameson ouvre son essai de 1988 avec un défi qui reste à relever: « The actuality of Georg Lukács has in recent years always seemed to found on two concepts: the defense of literary realism and the idea of totality »[19].

Jameson offre, selon nous, non seulement une critique de Lukács mais aussi un développement innovateur et conséquent de la catégorie de la totalité. Jameson insiste sur l'inséparabilité de la théorie de la totalité et celle du réalisme chez Lukács[20]. Mais il observe le fait que les positions de Lukács reposent sur une ambiguïté fondamentale: à savoir, « that the modernist writer has

some personal choice in the matter, and that his fate is not sealed for him by the logic of his moment in history »[21]. En articulant la nature de ces conjonctions, Jameson va nous présenter sa propre théorie de la totalité. C'est en 1981, avec son essai *L'Inconscient politique*[22] que Jameson pose véritablement les bases de sa démarche théorique; à savoir la constitution d'un modèle herméneutique totalisant ayant le marxisme comme instance métathéorique fondamentale. L'enjeu consiste alors à reconstituer, dans les multiples récits de premier ordre produits par la littérature d'une période, dans les multiples artéfacts narratifs disséminés et hétérogènes au niveau stylistique, diégétique et formel, le grand métarécit encodé, enfoui et refoulé. Le récit de premier ordre est ainsi la médiation ou le mode par lequel la totalité va se laisser entrapercevoir et construire, à travers les conflits de classe et de modes de production, entre nécessité et liberté collective, aliénation et désir. Soit la théorie des modes de production comme formalisation nous permettant de décrypter le sens du champ culturel dans ses multiples manifestations. A partir de là, nous pouvons repérer une des lignes de force de la pensée de Jameson: l'importance du récit comme schème d'appréhension de l'historicité. Une démarche interprétative qui s'efforce de décoder dans différents types de discours ce qui peut permettre une compréhension de la totalité sociale, et qui tient tout autant d'une analyse critique du présent que de la volonté de penser une alternative historique radicale. D'où le mot d'ordre jamesonien, *always historicize*, comme injonction à inscrire les productions culturelles dans l'horizon du capitalisme pensé comme séquence historique. L'historicisme herméneutique jamesonien consiste donc en une mise en relation subtile et sophistiquée qui, loin d'ouvrir sur une vision téléologique et linéaire des processus historiques, permet plutôt une analyse dialectique des textes considérés comme s'inscrivant de manière complexe (le concept de sédimentation) au sein d'une séquence de formations socio-économiques. Une stratégie qui s'avère efficace pour ce qui est de décrypter les phénomènes culturels et idéologiques hégémoniques dans la phase la plus contemporaine du capitalisme.

Enfin, à la fin de son *Postmodernisme*, il fait deux transferts théoriques qui nous semblent centraux dans l'ensemble de son projet intellectuel. Tout d'abord, il pense ce qui reste de l'ordre de l'impensable pour Lukács, à savoir que la catégorie de la totalité n'est pas toujours réalisable. En conséquence – et c'est là tout le génie de son transfert – plutôt que de considérer la totalité en terme de validité, il suggère de la penser en fonction des possibilités des conditions historiques mêmes. En d'autres termes, où, quand et comment, une compréhension totale de la société devient-elle possible ? Sa réponse à ces questions est que la totalité ne devient visible que lorsque deux modes de production existent côte à côte lors d'un processus de transition; il y a quelque chose qui diffère au sujet de la coprésence des temporalités: des systèmes de valeurs contradictoires et des modes de vie qui génèrent ce sens fondamental de l'historicité, qui est une condition préalable à toute vision totalisante.

Ainsi, selon Jameson, le concept même de « mode de production » – concept de totalisation par excellence – est né en France prérévolutionnaire, où les formes féodales s'opposèrent plus nettement à l'histoire de la culture bourgeoise croissante et de la conscience des classes. Si, comme Lukács, nous nous battons contre le féodalisme et le capitalisme en même temps, il n'est guère surprenant que nous insistions sur la catégorie de totalité, nous dit Jameson. Mais cette pensée de la totalité en fonction des possibilités de ses conditions historiques mêmes n'est pas la seule innovation de Jameson. La seconde innovation, qui est passée quasiment inaperçue, met en perspective la catégorie de la totalité en tant que celle qui se relie à tous les phénomènes

disparates. Ce n'est pas par hasard que, comme épigraphe de son essai *Idéologies de la théorie*, il ait choisi un passage de *Histoire et conscience des classes* dans lequel Lukács affirme que « si la liaison des phénomènes particuliers est devenue un problème catégoriel, tout problème catégoriel est retransformé, par le même processus dialectique, en un problème historique, en un problème de l'histoire universelle […] »[23]. Nous dirions dans les faits que toute la carrière de Jameson doit être comprise comme une tentative de fournir une poétique de la totalité.

Récupération de la totalite dans le cinema postcolonial

Les enseignements lukácsiens continuent à jouer un rôle important dans les écrits de nombreux critiques du postcolonial[24] – non seulement en vertu de leur présence latente et implicite, mais également parce que la référence à la catégorie lukácsienne de *totalité* peut sans doute aider à maintenir cette vision d'ensemble si chère à l'intellectuel hongrois, et indispensable à tout type de recherche postcoloniale. Cette problématique, dont Lukács s'est occupé, se régénère donc, en cherchant à savoir comment exprimer la totalité à partir d'une condition de fragmentarité. Comme on peut le voir, pour ce qui est des *postcolonial studies*, même si elle n'est pas encore employée autant qu'il le faudrait, la leçon de Lukács reste pourtant toujours vivante. Et la leçon de Gramsci ne l'est pas moins. Nous disposons sans autres, grâce à Gramsci et Lukács, d'instruments analytiques et interprétatifs nécessaires pour pouvoir étudier ces questions de manière plus approfondie et avec plus grande clairvoyance. En effet, Gramsci et Lukács ont circonscrit la mystification dans la partialité du point de vue, ils se sont prononcés en faveur d'un type de forme artistique capable de dépasser l'isolement particulariste et d'atteindre une dimension la plus globale possible. L'art nouveau est, pour eux, un art réaliste, capable de conquérir la *totalité* au moyen du *typique* et exprimer l'essence de son temps; un art qui vise à devenir national-populaire et cosmopolite. Ils ont en outre « dé-minimisé » l'œuvre d'art en réhabilitant le noyau vital et historique présent dans chacune d'elles.

Enfin, à l'intérieur du champ des *postcolonial studies*, les deux intellectuels – même si Lukács l'est encore trop rarement – ont fourni une orbite rationnelle autour de laquelle il est possible de placer et de comprendre les nouvelles tendances artistiques, et par le biais de laquelle théoriser les pas successifs pour le développement d'un cinéma postcolonial et émancipateur.

Mais quelle est concrètement l'application de ces théories dans les *postcolonial studies*? Nous ne pouvons que rappeler que le terme « postcolonial » est chargé d'un triple sens orientant, justifiant et marquant notre recherche: il désigne d'abord l'effet principal de la décolonisation, c'est-à-dire l'accès à l'indépendance de peuples autrefois soumis au joug colonial; il sert ensuite à désigner une approche critique (celle du chercheur et celle des cinéastes) qui tend précisément à explorer le fonctionnement de l'idéologie colonialiste et in fine à produire un discours alternatif susceptible de renouveler l'analyse des représentations produites pendant l'époque coloniale et d'inciter à un travail d'expression aux caractéristiques thématiques et esthétiques en phase avec les orientations idéologiques contemporaines; enfin, il renvoie à une forme de réécriture du passé mettant en perspective aussi bien la chaîne des événements eux-mêmes que leurs représentations. C'est en résumé un projet de connaissance qui vise à pratiquer un constant aller-retour entre le présent, l'ici-maintenant, et l'au-delà afin de révéler de quoi est vraiment constitué notre présent: de discontinuités, d'inégalités, de minorités et d'identités multiples, fragmentées et hybrides.

Et à travers cette révélation, c'est aussi un projet politique qui se dessine: il s'agit de sortir d'un rapport de pouvoir fondé sur la domination du monde « occidental » sur le reste du monde. C'est ce projet politique, et ses implications sur le choix des objets de recherche, qui fonde les *postcolonial studies* en un champ distinct à l'intérieur du courant postmoderniste. Dans une perspective strictement *postcoloniale*, le projet n'est pas celui d'une inversion – la menace n'est donc pas celle que l'on croit –, mais d'un changement radical des formes de relations entre toutes les parties du monde, elles-mêmes éventuellement à redéfinir. Pour y parvenir il convient de sortir du paradigme colonial. On peut parler de paradigme car il s'agit bien d'une forme globale de pensée, qui dépasse largement l'ordre politique lié à la période historique du colonialisme. Et le projet de connaissance rejoint ici le projet politique. En effet, ce regard qui privilégie le mouvement permet de rendre visibles les minorités et de faire reconnaître les différences, mais sans les enfermer dans une identité et/ou dans un lieu. Le paradigme colonial et le rapport de domination qu'il établit s'accommode bien de la diversité en lui réservant une place dans les périphéries du monde; les *postcolonial studies* veulent modeler un monde sans centre ni périphéries, où le principe d'égalité se fonde sur le droit à des différences toujours remodelées.

Pour un état des lieux de la recherche cinématographique dans le champ des *postcolonial studies*, on pourra se reporter au très récent ouvrage établi par le collectif Write Back, *Postcolonial studies: modes d'emploi* et particulièrement à la partie "La réflexion théorique postcoloniale au cinéma". La recherche proposée ici, par sa dimension internationale et polyphonique, participe à son tour d'un dépassement des étiquettes nationales et académiques rigides: autant de "modes d'emploi" qui invitent à de nouveaux usages des *postcolonial studies*, de nouvelles explorations esthétiques et intellectuelles, dans les champs de la littérature et du cinéma en particulier. Ce travail sur les films post-coloniaux contribuerait, d'après Caroline Eades, à construire une « autre Histoire », différente de celle prônée par l'Etat. Elle ajoute :

> *Pour décrire et même désamorcer l'imaginaire colonial […], le cinéma post-colonial a repris des figures et des schémas présents dans les conventions structurelles et thématiques de la fiction littéraire et cinématographique, dans l'inconscient collectif et son inscription dans le parcours du sujet, dans la réactivation et la réactualisation des mythes par les représentations littéraires et filmiques de l'époque coloniale. Cette reprise s'est effectuée au prix de décalages, de glissements, de modifications, notamment la remise en question de l'idéologie impérialiste par la faillite de l'autorité coloniale*[25].

Nous soulignons ici le fait que Pasolini a toujours pressenti et fustigé le « génocide anthropologique » perpétré par la bourgeoisie qui, de classe dominante sur les plans politique et économique, s'est fait hégémonique sur celui de la culture[26]. En outre, Pasolini a soutenu que la volonté de marxisme d'un intellectuel bourgeois peut aussi se manifester comme volonté de vivre une expérience vitale différente de la sienne et peut s'exprimer comme « ouverture vers un monde socialement non nôtre, qui contredit, conteste et rend chaotique le mien: le monde pré-bourgeois qui a survécu, les structures du Tiers monde, etc. »[27].

La culture n'est pas un espace univoque, mais un lieu où se jouent et se rejouent des affrontements symboliques et où des idéologies de classe, race, ethnicité, sexualité, nationalité ou genre tentent d'imposer leur hégémonie face à des minoritaires qui luttent, traduisant toujours en d'autres langues les termes selon lesquels ils sont représentés. Il est alors urgent de prendre en considération

la pluralité des voix et des lectures qui composent et saturent la culture cinématographique, en se penchant sur l'héritage des images coloniales.

Fig. 1 - Photogramme extrait de *Carnet de notes pour une Orestie africaine* (1970) de P. P. Pasolini.

1 L'emploi de la notion d'« historicisme » dans cet article – même si elle peut être aujourd'hui insatisfaisante – renvoie à la tradition marxiste italienne qui remonte à Labriola et Gramsci.

2 Stuart Hall, « Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms », dans *Media, Culture and Society*, n° 2, 1980, pp. 57-72; p. 72. Citons ici Raymond Williams, considéré comme l'initiateur du courant des *cultural studies* par ses travaux – influencés par le marxisme – sur la culture, les médias et la littérature. Pour expliquer les usages alternatifs des produits des industries culturelles, pour comprendre les manières de détourner les valeurs existantes et d'en créer de nouvelles, Williams nous invite à reprendre les catégories déployées par Gramsci fondées sur une nécessité théorique d'organiser, contre l'hégémonie bourgeoise – considérée comme garante de l'ordre social – une hégémonie culturelle de type prolétarien. Il semble faire de la culture elle-même le point de départ du processus par lequel des contenus culturels novateurs s'engagent et se développent – une tendance courante dans les sciences sociales contemporaines, mais qui, d'habitude, ne se déploie pas au nom du matérialisme, aussi « culturel » soit-il. Williams n'a cessé de repenser les termes de son paradigme original pour prendre en compte les critiques qui lui ont été adressées à la publication de *The Long Revolution* – même s'il l'a fait de manière oblique, à travers une appropriation particulière de Gramsci, plutôt que par une modification plus directe. Il insiste sur l'absorption de toutes les pratiques dans la totalité du «réel pratique indissoluble».

3 Stuart Hall, *Discussion*, in Id., *Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies*, in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (sous la direction de), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London-New York 1991, p. 289.

4 En 1934-35, Gramsci consacre l'un de ses *Cahiers de prison* au "Risorgimento", avec des portraits inhabituels de Garibaldi, Crispi, Cavour etc. Il y fait également une large place à la question méridionale, qui est pour lui la version italienne de la question agraire et paysanne. C'est précisément dans la partie intitulée "Aux marges de l'histoire" qu'il propose l'historiographie des groupes sociaux subalternes (Cahier 25, paragr. 1-8, 1934). Voir Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderno 25 (XXIII). Ai margini della storia. Storia dei gruppi sociali subalterni*, in Id., *Quaderni dal carcere*, vol. 3, Quaderni 12-29 (1932-1935), Einaudi, Torino 1975 (éd. fr. : *Cahiers de prison*, vol. 5, Gallimard, Paris 1996). Cfr. aussi Antonio Gramsci, *Alcuni temi della quistione meridionale* (1926), in Id., *La questione meridionale*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 2005 (éd. fr. : *Notes sur la question méridionale* [1926], dans *Ecrits politiques III*, Gallimard, Paris 1980).

5 Voir Sarah Benichou, « Gramsci, penser la révolution au présent », dans *Que faire ?*, n° 8, juin-juillet 2008, http://quefaire.lautre.net/Antonio-Gramsci-penser-la, dernier accès 7 décembre 2013.

6 Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere*, cit. (éd. fr. : *Cahiers de prison*, cit., p. 328).
7 Cfr. Alberto Asor Rosa, *La cultura*, in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 4, t. 2, *Dall'Unità a oggi*, Einaudi, Torino 1975, pp. 1593 et ss.
8 Cfr. Cesare Cases, *Su Lukács. Vicende di un'interpretazione*, Einaudi, Torino 1985, p. 23 (c'est nous qui traduisons).
9 Nicolas Tertulian, « L'Évolution de la pensée de Georg Lukacs », dans *L'Homme et la société*, n° 20, 1971, pp. 13-36; p. 23.
10 Précisons ici que Lukács n'emploie jamais le terme de « structure significative cohérente » et parle seulement dans ses deux premiers ouvrages de *Formes* et dans *Histoire et conscience de classe* de *Totalité*.
11 Pour une étude plus complète des théories du roman dans la pensée marxiste, qui minore toutefois la place de *L'Inconscient politique*, voir Jay M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel. Lukács, Marxism and the Dialectics of the Form,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1984.
12 Karl Marx, *Misère de la philosophie,* A. Costes, Paris 1950 (1847), p. 128, cité dans György Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtein. Studien über marxistische Dialektik*, Malik, Berlin 1923 (éd. fr. : *Histoire et conscience de classe: essais de dialectique marxiste*, Minuit, Paris, 1976, p. 24).
13 Cfr. György Lukács, *Histoire et conscience de classe*, cit., p. 24.
14 *Idem*, pp. 24-25.
15 Il y a, en allemand, une différence entre *Wirklichkeit* et *Realität*, que le français traduit tous deux couramment par *réalité*. En effet, *Wirklichkeit*, terme d'origine germanique, désigne la réalité comme effectivité, opérativité, lieu de l'action (de l'action humaine). *Wirklichkeit*, autrement dit, c'est *la réalité*, au sens courant du terme. En revanche, *Realität*, d'origine latine tardive, est la réalité de la *res*, ce dont il s'agit, l'affaire dont il est question. *Realität* est donc un terme qu'on traduira plus justement, pour le différencier du précédent, par *réel* (substantif).
16 György Lukács, *Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur*, Luchterhand, Berlin 1964 (1949), p. 43 (c'est nous qui traduisons).
17 Nous citons notamment *Métacommentaire* (1971), première esquisse d'une méthode totalisante appliquée à la littérature, dans lequel il se garde bien de ne mentionner aucun auteur marxiste – alors qu'en le lisant, on pense très fort au Lukács d'*Histoire et conscience de classe*, ou au Marx de la préface à la *Contribution de l'économie politique*, et alors qu'il s'apprête à publier la même année *Marxism and Form* (1971); *L'Inconscient politique* (1981) est une mise en œuvre d'une théorie marxiste et dialectique de l'interprétation, une explication de la formation du roman moderne et de la trajectoire qui conduit du réalisme au modernisme ainsi qu'une tentative de retracer la formation de la subjectivité bourgeoise tout au long du XIX^{e} siècle; *Le postmodernisme* (1992), tentative de penser historiquement une situation qui se présente comme post-historique.
18 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolical Act*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1981 (éd. fr. : *L'Inconscient politique*. *Le récit comme acte socialement symbolique*, Questions théoriques, Lyon 2012 [1981], p. 39).
19 Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1988; republiée dans Id., *Valences of the Dialectic*, Verso, London-New York 2009, p. 201.
20 Jameson dit que l'on est en droit de déplorer l'attaque de Lukács contre le modernisme comme une forme de décadence « à condition que nous comprenions que ce n'est pas seulement un instrument de censure morale et politique, mais en présupposant par une sorte de raccourci, l'ensemble de l'armature philosophique systématique de l'*Histoire et conscience des classes* lui-même ». *Idem*, p. 208 (c'est nous qui traduisons).
21 Fredric Jameson, « The Case for Georg Lukács », dans *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1971, pp. 160-205; p. 198. Il n'existe à l'heure actuelle aucune traduction française de cet ouvrage. Voir aussi Paul Breines, « Marxism, Romanticism and the Case of Georg Lukács: Notes on Some Recent Sources and Situations », dans *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 16, n° 4, automne 1977, pp. 473-489.
22 Pour une présentation détaillée de *L'Inconscient politique*, voir l'article de Stathis Kouvélakis, «Fredric Jameson, la totalisation inassouvie », dans Jacques Bidet et Stathis Kouvélakis (sous la direction de), *Dictionnaire Marx contemporain*, PUF, Paris 2001, pp. 461-472.

23 Cfr. György Lukács, *Histoire et conscience de classe*, cit., p. 174.
24 Cfr. Neil Lazarus (sous la direction de), *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004 (éd. fr. : *Penser le postcolonial: une introduction critique*, Éd. Amsterdam, Paris 2006) ; voir également Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (sous la direction de), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London-New York, 1995.
25 Caroline Eades, *Le Cinéma post-colonial français*, Cerf/Corlet, Paris 2006.
26 Rossana de Gennaro, « Oltre la dialettica della sovranità coloniale: Pasolini e l'Africa », dans *Le passioni di sinistra*, n° 14, septembre 2006, s.i.p.
27 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *I diseredati sono il nostro Terzo Mondo* (1966), dans Id., *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, Mondadori, Milano 1999, p. 828.

NEW STUDIES

EXTENDED CINEMA
THE PERFORMATIVE POWER OF CINEMA IN INSTALLATION PRACTICES

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Abstract

This essay will try to present the theoretical-conceptual points of a research route which concerns cinema's modes of being in the "wider field" of art, in the form that is ontologically most distant from itself and which, nevertheless, acts with an intense "cinematic" performative force and a high degree of "modelling" impact. It is a complex modality which manifests itself through the "format" of installation where "the cinema," starting from the discursive nucleus of the installed "work," triggers, among the heterogeneous and disconnected elements that it might be composed of (sculptures, photographs, videos, objects), a series of relations regarding which it maintains a double utterance location: "internal" because it is one of the compositional elements (among others) and "external" because through it the performative path, which implicates the critical action in the spectator-visitor, is activated and revealed.

Issues

The aim of this research[1] is to contribute to the study of "cinéma d'exposition"[2] or, as we shall see, "exposed cinema" and especially to its most complex and least researched form, because more distant and ontologically different from the cinematographic "dispositif." It will investigate, from an enunciative point of view, what, in its most radical and breath-taking form, relapses, in many ways, thus becoming a structural operating principle, into the "materialisation" of a series of phenomena that, according to Raymond Bellour's interpretative perspective

> *trouble toujours fatalement la projection de toute image en mouvement dans la situation d'exposition : tous les événements divers (mises en espace, degré d'obscurité variable, durées aléatoires, entrées, sorties, […] etc.) qui constituent une sorte de mise en volume, à l'opposé de la planéité propre à l'écran de cinéma.*[3]

Clearly, Bellour thinks of the "installation fondée sur la projection d'image en mouvement" both through the qualitative distinction between the "dispositifs" of "film-cinéma" and "film-installation,"[4] and in relation to the "passages composant 'l'entre-image'."[5] The point of view adopted

here, on the other hand, aims to examine the theoretical importance of a series of questions whose complex evidence lies where cinema is furthest removed from its (production-distribution) "dispositif," within an installation, where and when the cinematographic element (as "screen," "film," "projector," "feature film") is only one of the many compositional elements, outside of "time-based-media" display methods or *not* exclusively based on the projection/emission of "moving images." On the whole, as we shall see, the presence of "cinema" is achieved through the *transformations of the device* that the artistic practices operate in the museum spaces (via the protocols) both in the concentrated and immersive method of the "black box" and the unsystematic method of the "white cube."[6]

Matthew Barney's artistic activities are an exemplary case of enunciative construction underpinning the ways "cinema" is present in the installation. His "practice" – which was the subject of a case study –[7] has been chosen in this context for the complexity of the issues (also ideological) that it poses (and resolves), also because it concerns the root of the mutation in statute of the concept of "work." Such as the DRAWING RESTRAINT (began in 1986 and *in fieri*). This project included the presentation, in different exhibition contexts, of the constellation of works that formed through *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005-2006, film also presented at the Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica di Venezia and the Berlinale in 2006), amongst which *Dejima* (2005, complex multi-channel video-installation). As with all the other works in the constellation, *Dejima* not only places us in the peculiar experiential journey of the work but it also reflects the dynamics of the DRAWING RESTRAINT project as a whole. In one of the exhibition variations of *Dejima* (fig. 1) the screens are suspended on a large scale sculpture *Cetacea* (2005/2010, [fig. 2]) that defines the multi-level principle of the narration in the film *Drawing Restraint 9* (fig. 3).

Fig. 1 – Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint 9: Dejima*, 2005. Three-channel color digital video with stereo sound (12:20). Installation View: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2006

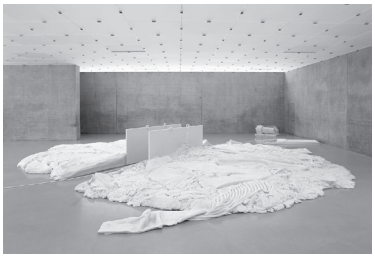

Fig. 2 – Matthew Barney, *Cetacea*, 2005. Cast polycaprolactone thermoplastic, self-lubricating plastic, vivac 34 1/4 x 480 inches. Installation View: Kunsthalle Bregenz, Austria. Copyright Matthew Barney. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York

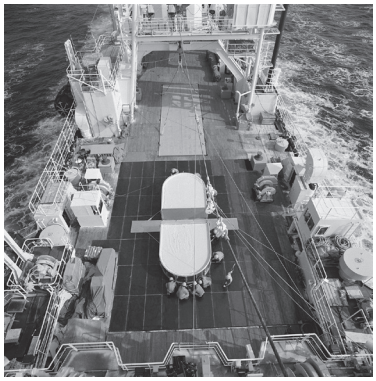

Fig. 3 – Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint 9*, 2005-2006. Production Still. Copyright Matthew Barney. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York

In this variation of *Dejima, Cetacea* allows the spectator-visitor to experience its dissipative process (the entropic collapse of the form into the material that the sculpture is made of), as the diegetic precipitate of the narration that, in relation to the film, the three screens re-compose from above. At this stage, as in others, the attention of the spectator-visitor can trigger the work, on different levels of complexity and he can explore its transtextual ramifications both in relation to the specific situation and context that it is exhibited in and in relation to the artist's *opus*. In *Dejima*, in the sculptural extension of the video-installation, the dimension of time and space is no longer the one of the film *Drawing Restraint 9* (nor of the projection in the screening room, nor of the cinematic narration). The *time-space* of the film is translated/transformed, inverted, extroverted and extended in another dimension: of *space-time* of the installation, which in many ways is open to, on the one hand, the variables of the situations and museum contexts that it takes place in and, on the other, to the experience of the spectator-visitor. There is a definition of a "mental space" that passes through the concept that seeing something involves this something in a sort of interior experience and a sort of knowledge (in these terms a knowledge of Barney's artistic *opus* is not a prerequisite). The work does not ask to be completed, but simply activated at a sensorial and attentional level.

Nevertheless in *Dejima* what can be perceived of the installed work at first sight is an aggregate of heterogeneous components (drawing, performance, cinema, photography, sculpture), of different expressive series (supports, materials, execution techniques, disciplinary traditions); the "work" manifests itself in a "plural form." It does not seem to imply an outgrowing of the expressive "specificity" of the languages and media used. Quite the opposite the definition of their use employs their specific and different languages and media for their ability to create a differentiation. The work seems to present itself as structurally *divided-undivided*, in a composition between heterogeneous elements: the compositional elements are defined in their (reciprocal) difference within the perimeter of the installation in relation to the "outside" of the museum space. The exhibition act – which is part of the work itself – traces the relationship between the compositional elements. Each component presents a strong inter-relational capacity and, due to this, is able to change the form of another component and reveal the sense of the work so that it may be interpreted, which is where, from a paradigmatic point of view, the cinematographic element acts. This

occurs not only due to the effects of the "spatial aspect of the vision" implied, but also in relation to the construction process of the work in which the installation consists. From this analytical perspective the installation, and the work, is intended as a variable *format* (aggregate of several materials) and as a technical viewing *display*, in its quality of exhibition device. In other words, both in terms of the questions posed (and not resolved) by the umbrella term "mixed media," and in terms of the phenomenology of the "dispositifs" used in the installation practice, the investigative hypothesis examined by the research is underpinned by the following assumption: on the one hand, the installation "dispositif" is, in every specific occurrence in a given work, (re)invented or varied each time (allowing for different spectatorial experiences); on the other hand, in its semiotic and enunciative dimension, each installed work presents in its device a certain systemic recurrence of forms whose linking or amalgamating factor seems to derive from the joint presence of "cinema" (of "moving images") amongst the other component elements.

This assumption, which is the starting point of the research, concerns the complex significance of "paradigm" assumed by "cinema," as the reference context for processing operational instruments, techniques and theories, in terms of the artistic practices and the reflections undertaken in the disciplinary fields of cinema and art. "Cinema," in relation to the processing of such operational instruments, can be found with different definitions such as "archive dispositif," "imagination," "symbolic," "allegory," "eye," "movement of the images," "situational model," "thought model," "action scheme," etc.

It is a paradigm whose institutionalisation in museum locations is in progress and which progressively gives rise to the performative capacity that "cinema" exercises on the enunciative level in the exhibition situation and the museum contexts.

"Disciplinary fields" and "de-territorialisations"

In relation to the questions raised by "exposed cinema," the breadth and extent of the interconnections of the subjects that must be specified by way of an introduction to the research, are so many that they exceed this writing space – starting from the *querelles* on the "*dispositifs*" of cinema and art[8] and on the "equivalence system" and "homogenizing principle of commodification"[9] deployed by the installation practice (which cannot be examined here). Here there will be an attempt to try to set out the theoretical references of the argumentative points that trace the intricate journey of the research.

The "*querelle*" will only be examined tangentially, as another point of observation has been chosen. Starting from the coexistence of the different "dispositifs," forms and formats of cinema and art, the research will examine the way cinema is present in contemporary artistic practices; where there is no "dilution of cinema in contemporary art," but rather a complex "*de-territorialising* extension."[10] This extensive process can also be found, although in different forms, in architecture, music, performance and also philosophy, historiography, anthropology, sociology, archiving, documentation and restoration methods, museology, etc.

In cinema's different phases of migration from the movie theatre to the museum[11] there are contingent "re-mediation"[12] and "relocation"[13] effects that force the cinema-art intersection, dynamically re-modulating the boundaries of the respective disciplinary fields.[14] The discursive for-

mations, the limits of the disciplinary fields of cinema and art and their identification regimes are all rendered evident through the continuous ontological, epistemological and methodological differences that contemporary artistic practices produce and focus on, from a radically *de-territorialising* point of view (for example the work of Dora García and Pierre Huyghe).

Similarly the current epistemological contingency is traversed by a process of "*dis-identification*"[15] linked to the crisis in the principles of autonomy and specific disciplinary positioning of cinema and art.

From this point of view the conflict of interpretations that the "querelle des dispositifs" – raised by Bellour – due to a sort of internal illumination reveals (in general) a "*singular-plural*" definition of cinema that contains the discussions relating to the processes of transformation, that in contemporaneity invest the disciplinary fields of cinema and art. A definition that on the one hand highlights in the "*querelle*" what is at stake in terms of the identity of "cinema" and on the other it follows the crisis that concerns in origin the dimension that Jean-Luc Nancy[16] called "*singular-plural*" of art and that, in the western cultural tradition, as Jacques Rancière observes,[17] identifies the definition of art (of its autonomy) only by dividing it in various ways in the different arts (that is by introducing divisions that identify the "proper" and distinctive traits of the different arts). Significantly it includes the "aesthetic identification regime" of art (which cannot be examined here), which questions the continuous disciplinary reterritorialization inherent in its internal aesthetic *and* political division, in relation to which "cinema" – in an apparently discontinuous way – is in intersection.

This intersection became clear at a formal and ideological level during the first part of the 20th century, through the historical avant-garde and, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1970s, with the neo-avant-garde revealing, as of the 1990s, a "shift towards the cinematic in art,"[18] a "cinema effect" on the works, practices and exhibition methodologies of contemporary art.[19] According to Philippe Dubois, there is an issue of "milieu de l'art" that repositions questions of field,[20] of the identity of cinema and of art and of reciprocal legitimisation, therefore of symbolic power. If one looks at the issues from a disciplinary point of view, from the cinematic *côté* one can note how the body of research and case studies on the intersection-interaction between cinema and art has defined an area of Film Studies.[21] From the artistic *côté*, on the other hand, there has been an interposition of techniques and expressive and aesthetic forms, through which cinema is disseminated and at the same time diffused "amongst:" video art, media art, net.art, software art, installation art, but also performance art, land art, body art, archive art, etc. – in a splintering of disciplinary interests employed and arranged according to a notion of *media-specificity* linked to the medial vector. These interests, however, seem to be contradicted by the very methodologies of the artistic practices for which any matter and type of material can be used; every type of "separation" of an expressive "*medium*" from its "*media*"[22] (spreading and transmission support) can be processed; as well as any crossbreeding between different production/post-production technologies ("old" and "new") can be created; any type of conceptual or concrete operation can be performed; all types of commitment can be assumed or considered from a critical point of view; any disciplinary field can be involved and not just those related to the so-called "Fine Arts," as can be seen in the "trajectory" of Vito Acconci or Pierre Huyghe. This results, as will be seen later, in a mutated and complex redefinition of the concept of *medium-specificity*.[23]

Artistic practices include knowledge and theories (and are theory in themselves), have a dis-

cursive character, initiate from planning methods, put processes into action and are something performed *historically*. The scope of their action is trans-disciplinary and it exceeds the traditional notion of "work" (as an autonomous, unitary and self-enclosed, textually certified unit) to include a complex operational method that results in *projects* revealed in paths within which the films, videos, actions, performances, installations, etc. – (the "works"?) – are merely temporary points, which may be repeated and changed, in *transit*. The statute of the "work" is therefore changed, resulting in an "open" and multiple expressive series, somewhere between a planning dimension and the *in fieri* collection of its punctual manifestations or temporary inscriptions. The "work" is sketched as a point of immanence, a transitory precipitate, within a planning journey and it is no longer reduced to the concretisation of a unitary and definitive outcome. The processes that lead to the objects and the meaning are analysed and presented, as Nicolas Bourriaud finds,[24] without the exhibition representing a conclusive outcome; the protocols of the art system are deconstructed and, peculiarly, the exhibition spaces too; in many ways, the work is performed on the limit between "art" and "not art," eroding it.[25] In this scenario the complexity that – according to recurring methods, from the 1990s to the present day – results in the release of the "artistic practice" from the concept of the "work," is the distinctive trait of extremely diverse artists such as, amongst others: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Tacita Dean, Marthine Pascale Tayou, Dora García, Nathalie Djurberg, and Matthew Barney whose work was mentioned earlier.

Medium

When we refer to the "work" in contemporary artistic practices we refer to a dynamic set of expressive methods that touch upon different disciplinary fields (cinema, music, architecture, but also anthropology, sociology, philosophy, as well as physics, medicine, etc.) and take in other "works" and "texts," *but also* "objects," "bodies," "locations," "concepts," "actions," "events," "documents," "archives," "media," etc. The heterogeneous inclusivity of the "work" has transformed the concept of expressive medium in relation to the idea of "*medium-specific*." Declared as "finished" in the modernist meaning, the idea of "*medium specificity*"[26] has changed and become more complex to include "sites," "situations"[27] and "actions" in which, and through which, the artistic practices take place. The practices have on the whole become "*impure*," able to produce an "*inter-media loss of specificity*"[28] that on the one hand assumes the aspect of dispersal and, on the other, installs a process of enhancement. The critical reflection by Rosalind Krauss moves in this direction and tries to extract, with progressive theoretical and critical lunges, from the modernist discursive unit a possible redefinition of medium specificity that focuses, through the concepts of "post-medium" and "reinvention,"[29] on the distinctive idea of "technical medium" (to define the use of rules and conventions that derive from the language of the medium used as instruments of communication, independently of the physical support) and of "expressive medium" (as the operation of changing and modifying materials, physical substances and the discursive action). The discursive space is broadened to include the concept of "medium," starting from the modelling impact of photography, cinema and video that, on the one hand, present intrinsically "impure"[30] or "inter-media"[31] expressive traits and on the other, they have technological and protocol[32] traits

related to complex mass communication devices. They are crucial and *a fortiori* aspects in a cultural contingency marked by all media converging on digital platforms,[33] where the logics of re-mediation and of relocation, that transform the relationship between "expressive medium" and "physical support," have led to a detachment of the "medium" (technical) from its "media" (or communication medium).[34]

The reinvented "specificity" of the expressive media in artistic practices would work based on a "logic"[35] or according to an idiomatic method that includes all their differences and is inclusive of stratifications of codes and conventions that, even though containing inscriptions and memory, does not match the material properties of their supports nor does it disappear with the lack of this materiality (in the persistence of "languages" and "perceptive modes").[36] Differently, Francesco Casetti refers to a new *geography of media*, based not so much on the technological specificity of an apparatus, as on the specificity of the forms of experience that an environment allows and induces.[37] In both cases the theoretical subtext, explicit or implicit, is defined through various readings of Benjamin.[38]

According to Raymond Bellour,[39] in order to analyse the system of numerous variations of "exhibition cinema" and to grasp the "mixing" processes that it implies, one needs to distinguish between the specificity of the experiences made possible through the works. The reasoning, however, focuses on the importance of the "sens de la singularité des expériences, en deçà et au-delà de leurs mélanges," starting from cinema's unique aspect due to its historically certified "dispositif" which, at an essential level, is defined by "la séance, la salle, l'écran, le noir, le silence, les spectateurs rassemblés dans le temps,"[40] regardless of its variability. The singularity of the experience of cinema is provided by "time" that defines its "dispositif."[41]

From this analytical perspective, we are in a *field of tensions*, *the dynamic intersection between cinema-art*, rather than a *tension between distinct fields*, art and cinema. In fact it doesn't seem to be a structural ambivalence of the relation and boundary between different sectors that would imply comparisons/contrast, appropriations/derivations of theoretical contributions, distinctive redefinitions of their own fields, institutionalisation processes, symbolic power, etc.[42] The interactive area between cinema and art produces mobile disciplinary limits that, at the points of intersection, form temporary relational accumulations from which unprecedented or unresolved theoretical questions can, and do, emerge. From this point of view research, in relation to artistic practices, must undertake an additional inquiry in relation to the action that drives contemporaneously different levels, methods and possibilities between languages "distributed" or "implemented," the one in the others, or *their difference programmatically maintained*, independently of the supports, in all cases translated, subjected to a transformation process where the location/space is a "between:" a passage, a movement that "de-territorialises" cinema and art in intricate networks of relationships that are still looking for a shape or that are already sketching it through "interactions." Cinema's presence in artistic practices is a set of discursive events and the event, as claimed by Michel Foucault, is produced as the effect of, and as, a material dispersion (in a sort of materialism of the immaterial, of the incorporeal).[43] It takes effect, is the effect *of* and *in* a "dispersion" that is not performed with a dissemination, loss, accumulation, but a "partition" of possibilities and choices "left open." What emerges, therefore, is a principle of dispersion and divisions of "interactions" that evidently are not limited to cinema and art. Contemporary artistic practices operate in this emerging arena.

Exposed cinema

However, an examination of the "effects" of the shift towards the cinematic in art has to face up to the complexities of the artistic practices and reassess – from a methodological and ontological point of view – the concept of "work," in the light of the change in statute, mentioned earlier, that it has undergone in one of its latest phenomenological differences found in the installation[44] *format*.[45]

From this point of view, what we refer to as "work," as the precipitate of a project, is manifested in variable installation formats that include, in many cases, the spaces that it takes place in (not necessarily museums), rendering the situation in which it is produced its condition of work open, in differing ways, to the presence of spectators. This takes place quite clearly through the dialectics that has invested the protocol of the exhibition space, between the logic of the "white cube" – critically analysed by O'Doherty –[46] and that of the "black box" – discussed in their medial implications by Catherine David at Documenta 10 (1997), and subject of a dissenting analysis by Krauss;[47] along an historical trajectory – marked on the technical-theoretical level by the *collage*, photomontage, *assemblage*, readymade, *décollage*, but also the form/format of the exhibition/museum – and a progressive movement of the concept of installation from simply the method used to mount the works in the exhibition space to a veritable artistic "genre."

Dubois has often pointed out how "large scale video projections and the creation of sequences of images repeated *ad infinitum*," as video has too, have "introduced the image-movement to the world of art […] changing in one fell swoop many 'habitual' parameters, both in terms of film and and video."[48] In terms of the interactive process between cinema and art, in fact, it is from the 1990s that the installation format – whose distinctive traits consist of site, space, time and spectator involvement – has settled on an audio-visual point of view in international exhibition and museum contexts, according to a protean method marked on the terminological level by a series of definitions that refer to the specificity of the medial component. The typology of installation art with a "*video*" component includes: the (multi)media installation with video, multi-channel video installation, single channel video installation, projective video installation, video installation, film installation, video sculpture, moving image installation, time-based installation, interactive installation.[49] But, once again from the 1990s, in an equally exponential way, the installation – or "complex work" – presents compositional expressions where the audio-visual component is only one of the elements and not necessarily the dominant one.

As a "*video*" installation, the "work" arranges and discloses levels of manifestation in which "cinema" is activated in an *un-expanded*, *expanded* or *extended* way and through which, in any case, finds exposure, is *exhibited* (in varying sizes of single screens or multi-screens). From this point of view the exhibition is part of the actual "work," it relates to the issues of the way the installation is exhibited. *Un-expanded cinema* is present in the installation as a "unified field," where the film is the dominant component as the cinematic medium, without any trace of the "device," is its own medium and/or the subject of the discussion that it carries or that carries it – as is the case, for example, with *The Scene of Crime* by Amar Kanwar, film installation, presented at Documenta 13 (2012) or with *The Clock* (2010), by Christian Marclay. *Expanded cinema* in the *in progress* definition by Gene Youngblood is cinema conceived as separate from its medium and support (electronic signal or digital code) as the art of organising a flow of audio-visual events in

time.[50] Peter Weibel includes it in a *phenomenology of the image*,[51] which can be defined from other points of view, in terms of migration or nomadic movement of the images between media.[52] It is a movement that, by crossing different media, stratifies characteristics and traces that the images hold, but the movement is also the condition and possibility that allows their "survival" (Foster's notion of *living on*)[53] and "*durée*."[54]

Extended cinema[55] manifests itself as "extended field," assuming a complex phenomenology – still being defined from a theoretical point of view and, as mentioned earlier, examined by this research – in relation to which the film or video, that is the audio-visual component (single channel or multichannel) is just one of the elements amongst other compositional elements (photographs, sculptures, drawings, "objects," materials, etc.). But it is *also* an element whose audio-visual "content" extends, activating the network of interactions with the other elements placed in the installed "work." This extension implies the interpretative activity of the spectator and it is related to a translation principle in time and space of the "filmic" dimension to the "non-filmic" dimension. It renders the installation of heterogeneous and disjointed components "a whole" and it does it by folding, unfolding and re-folding (in terms of relations) the components as its parts. It acts extensively between being in the "*work*" and being at "*work*."

Extended cinema manifests itself as the most indirect, most "conceptual," form of inter-relation between cinema and art, but it is also the way in which cinema becomes "paradigm" (rather than metaphor) of the exhibitive action. Paradigm whose modelling action is much more powerful when it is increasingly indirect; it is active where the film and/or the video are merely components amongst others or even – by no means a paradox – where they are not physically present. At the beginning of the 1990s Bourriaud defined this type of operating method that presents the exhibition/exposition venue (by playing on the accepted meaning of this term in photography) as a "filmless camera," a sort of "still short-movie" in which it is the spectator who must move.[56] This possibility was also noted by Dubois – "visiter l'exposition y revient à 'voir un film'"[57] – and linked back to the condition of *flâneur* carried out by the spectator.

The traits of cinema exhibited in an installation context emphasize the need to (re)define the role of the spectator that also Dominique Païni traces back to the Baudelairean *flâneur*.[58] The definition given by Bellour concerns the spectator and his ability to see/observe a re-folding of the exhibition space within "stratified spaces," that is within the thickening and the duration of "gaze upon the gazing" that the images consist of: the spectator becomes "stroller" in that he becomes more sensitive to the passages between the images, also because his body at times passes through the image and circulates between the images.[59] In terms of the distinctive relationship between "cinema," "installation," and "exhibition," Bellour thinks of "au modèle spécifique de la situation de cinéma par différence avec lequel les expériences et les configurations si divers d'image proposées par tant des installations peuvent être situées et comprise."[60] In relation to the latter, for Bellour the centre of interest is provided by the multitude of experiences within space and time that the installation activates, defining in a protean way the permutation and/or the connection between the expectations of the "spectator" (observer) and the "visitor."

In thinking of the "*in-between*" dimension of cinema-art with regards to the "dispositif" fielded by the installations, Bellour described an "explosion" or "dispersion" through what one thinks cinema is or has been (if one accepts to look through its eyes) only to find it split, "transformed, imitated and reinstalled."[61] According to Bellour, the spread of the *sub specie imaginis* installation

– as much a sign of the alleged criticalities in cinema and in plastic arts – begins with the invention of the camera obscura and the projection, including the different exhibition devices of the moving image from the phantasmagoria to the diorama, from "pre-cinema" to "cinema," and, in the second half of the 20th century, from the "installations-films" to the video installations. A genealogical journey that, in any case, produces a discontinuity within the tradition of the plastic arts and within the tradition of cinema. For Bellour, filmic installations do not present a "cinema supplement" in the way they are presented, but rather they are related to cinema, even though they are not cinema.

From this point of view we should consider cinema, in the historical and formal singularity of its "dispositif," as the "expansion" of an "*other cinema*,"[62] where these types of installations are finalised and completed[63] in a condition of "*aesthetics of confusion*" typical of the contemporary. As opposed to Païni, Bellour thinks about the type of spectatorial presence implied by the filmic or video installation as the situation of "semi-show" achieved by the museum space that does not recall the figure of the *flâneur*, but of the "visitor." Then again Bellour adds "[…] there is no right word with which to grasp this dissolved, fragmented, shaken, intermittent spectator."[64]

Considering cinema in the historical and formal singularity of its "dispositif" he maintains that: "The strange force of these works is thus to open ever more clarity the indefinable expansion of an *other cinema*, according to which the conditions of an *aesthetics of confusion* are clarified and amplified. It is better to try to describe its *nuances* than to pretend to be able to escape them."[65]

According to Philippe-Alain Michaud: "Le cinéma ne se confond pas avec le spectacle que permet la projection des images en mouvement: il est d'abord une conversion dans la manière de penser et de produire les images, non plus à partir de la fixité et de l'immobilité, mais en repartant de la pluralité et du mouvement."[66] He introduces – beyond the material presence of the cinematic apparatus (film, projector, screen) – the production of a cinema effect in every art able to activate "un croisement d'effects spatio-temporels" that extends within the exhibition space, changing the presentation procedures of the works. As Michaud found:

> *Il ne s'agit plus de donner à voir celles-ci dans leur isolement, mais de produire un effet de montage transversal. Ce dispositif muséal pensé comme un déroulé filmique laissera une trace durable tout au long du XXe siècle : dans Raum für konstruktive Kunst, la contribution de Lissitzky à l'exposition internationale de Dresde en 1926, devant de murs rayés et modulables, des objets hétérogènes se déployaient en séquence progressive ; à propos de l'exposition « Road to Victory » qu'il présentait au MoMA, Edward Steichen déclarait : « L'exposition est un film […] dans lequel c'est vous qui bougez et où ce sont des images qui restent immobiles … ».*[67]

Overturning the spectatorial condition in the context of the cinema projection room, the experiential condition that Christian Metz has thematized in "Story/Discourse: A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurisms"[68] and whose "device of confinement," according to Michaud's definition, has been analysed by Dan Graham in *Cinema 81* (1982).

The subject deals with the practices and experiences or, more precisely, the experiential and participative dimension of the spectator,[69] implicated in the artistic action as phenomenological "vector," and the ontology of the installation. A problematic junction through phenomenology (based on the teaching of Merleau-Ponty)[70] that tends to conceptualise the presence of the spectator, whose parallax visual trajectory can change the shape of the work. The latter is "triggered" by

the artistic activity, orientated *to* the context and *by* the perceptive experience (prehension of the sensitive qualities of the compositional elements) and by the spectator's attentive frame of mind that activates it and is activated.

"Paradigm," operating concepts

Cinema, as well as being at the "margin" or the "middle" of certain thinking within philosophy and aesthetics, as well as art, becomes a paradigm thanks to its constituent concept of "impurity."[71] The thematization of André Bazin,[72] in fact, finds an argumentative radicalisation in Alain Badiou[73] and it is criticised by Jacques Rancière.[74] Jean-Luc Nancy[75] in turn reconsiders it through the concept of "supernumerary art." Giorgio Agamben too, even though he thought of certain cinema as a "pure" medium "that does not dissolve in what it shows," detects a "zone of indifference" in contemporary cinema (in which the undecidability, both projective and mnemonic, between the real and the possible, opens up).[76] In various contexts, the plural acceptation of the cinematic finds a definition in terms of multi-faceted specificity,[77] in the "expanded" electronic and digital dimension,[78] in the extension in terms of the heterogeneity of its "apparatus,"[79] and in terms of the cinematic range of action[80] implied in the installation action. This action, whose layout – the installation – is subject to a disagreement in terms of interpretations, which cannot be examined here, that reformulates the issue of the autonomy and heteronomy of art, on the one hand, finding a real and symbolic cultural erosion process between "art" and "non-art"[81] and, on the other, in the opposite direction, highlighting the exhibitive-value[82] (exchange value and equivalence system of the serial production-commodification), mentioned earlier, that has become completely autonomous, to the extent of overpowering anything that is exhibited.[83]

However the inclusion of spatialized forms of the installation in current practices – video, music, theatre, etc. – indicates not so much the inter-medial loss of specificity (as the complex processing of the instruments, materials and "dispositifs" of the different arts), but, most importantly, as Jacques Rancière found,[84] highlights a practice of art as a way of occupying a venue and to re-distribute within it the relationships between "bodies," "images" and "times" with radical political and aesthetic implications.

And it is in relation to the installation methods, especially in relation to the re-definition of the concept of "work" and "expressive medium," that cinema has assumed, in various ways, a paradigmatic significance. Starting from its direct or indirect presence as components (amongst others) of installation constructions. What follows is a transformation process, a "metamorphic" capacity, related to the "enunciation" of the work installed and the *impurification* logic (or the loss of intermedial specificity) that concerns it, which affects the overall nature of the art, which can no longer simply be ascribed to an internal shattering of the very idea of medium, as happened with the media of "photography,"[85] "cinema"[86] and "video,"[87] even if in a discontinuous way. It is a transformative capacity that is stronger the more it affects the productive and exhibitive protocols, as well as the network of relations between heterogeneous elements, that it finds its condition of transitory possibility through the format of the installation in various ways and through various paths. The discursive layout of heterogeneous elements, that construct and transform each other in a network of relations, with the presence of filmic and/or video components, finds an extension as

a work. Their introduction in a specific spatial field, with the images that they carry, redefines the "surrounding" and transforms it in a "space for a *viewing experience*."[88] This is also due to the configurative action in relation to which the video or filmic component develops a complex function of catalysis. The video and the film, starting from the discursive nucleus of the installed "work," can trigger a series of relations between the different elements in relation to which they maintain, however, a location that is at the same time external, in that it contains the performative layout that drives the spectator-visitor's interpretive action, and internal, as they are compositional elements. The way they are presented re-articulates the exhibition space, the points of attention of the screen space, and in doing so they introduce "viewing/reading instructions" on the work installed and, at the same time, they create a "world" that includes the spectator-visitor (further fictional and narrative implication of the filmic construction). Video and film in the work installed trigger a process that connects the "filmic" and the "non-filmic" dimension (installation dimension) and together they activate the modulating and transformative capacity of the different expressive components, the ones in relation to the others, in relation to the presence of the spectator-visitor. Resulting in two inter-related operative methods. The first concerns the processing of the documental issue and the second is related to the compositional process of the work.

To paraphrase Fredric Jameson, on the installations of Hans Haacke of Nam June Paik, "none of the component elements" of the installation "is in itself the subject of our undivided attention" in which "only the most imprudent visitor of a museum would look for the 'art'," the *sense* is "in the content of the video images in itself."[89] Amongst the other component elements – from this point of view, not only through the moving image, but also through their "apparatus" and "dispositifs" – "cinema" and "video" are involved twice: the first time as different compositional media, assumed in differential terms; a second time through an "a posteriori implication" related to the meaning process and the interpretative act that redefines the collection of media involved. The interpretative act begins from a material occasion, that allows the spectator's perceptive experience (that Claire Bishop traces back to the key terms of "*activated spectatorship*" and "*dispersed* or *decentred subject*")[90] based on attentiveness that implicates a complex spatialisation of time. And it's through the spatial extension and the spatial location that the installed "work" is returned to its heterochronic dimension, that the "spectator-visitor" can engage, disengage and re-engage with at any time, and in moments that can be re-formulated (by each spectator). The spectator-visitor is a vector that through "lulls" and "movements," in the re-formulation of their duration, builds his own path that is often narratively performed (in filmic form), traced by a trajectory that transforms the temporal dimension – that is the process of the arrangement of the compositional elements that temporarily inscribes the "work" installed – in a spatial sequence of points. However by crossing, walking through and experiencing the exhibition space, he/she *also* initiates a temporal movement in the space. But the interpretative action that drives the spectator begins with acknowledging the impossibility of interpretation, based on the idea of textuality centred from the "work" within the "work" itself; it opens, from a trans-textual[91] point of view, the presentation method of the *mise en scène* and the contextual dimension. Questioning this impossibility means accessing the implied performative dimensions that invest the spectator starting from the direct or indirect presence of cinema as a component, amongst others, of installation constructions. Compared to the other components, this presence can express a performative "*force*"[92] aimed at "producing reality,"[93] or a social object, in terms of the same operation/registration of the work within the institutional context[94] and the cultural situation that render it possible. This perfor-

mative "force" pertains to the way (how, when and why) in which the language of art is being used inside and outside its institutional context. The "performative" translates and transforms a situation, it *operates* (as Derrida points out).[95] The performative act organises and does what it states. It pertains to the inscription of an *in actu* installation act, whose work starts where and when the network of trans-textual relations unfolds, constructing the object of a viewing/reading through the traceability of the meaning. It is an enunciative act that fields "an action" through the "enunciation," with the "enunciation," producing effects on something and someone. In the case of the installation act, the possible conditions of the capacity of this action concern the differential relationship between its "meaning" and its performative "force," that is the way in which the meaning that it conveys can be interpreted, read and viewed by the spectator to induce the interpretation; by activating the interpretation and orientating the trans-textuality of the installed "work." The "work" is the way in which the "text" acts[96] and, we must add, makes the spectator act according to different intentions and methods. In turn the spectator in a counter-action of attention and interpretation can detect in the "work" what is unexpressed, but was planned and what was expressed unintentionally.[97]

In the case of un-expanded and expanded cinema, the performative aspect relates to the exhibition of cinema in a *time based media*,[98] according to "black box" or "*site specific*" methods, but also through the installation of the cinematic apparatus, often by using obsolete technologies, with a more or less evident "sculptural" presence.

The performative "force" provided by extended cinema concerns an installation method that contemporaneously maintains (local level) and transforms (global level) the difference between the expressive methods (including the "objects"), also in relation to the exhibition space. And yet in the co-extension and co-existence of the compositional elements of the work installed (but also if there is an occasional hierarchical order), as we saw earlier, the filmic and/or video components trigger a translation process of the form from the "filmic" to the "non-filmic" (from the image to the spatial, installation, sculptural activity) and, at the same time, activates the modulating and transformative capacities of the different expressive components, in relation with the spectator-visitor. This can be seen in exemplary fashion both in the exhibition *Matthew Barney. The CREMASTER Cycle*, curated by Nancy Spector, in the version presented at the Guggenheim Museum (New York 2002), and in the travelling exhibition *No Ghost just a Shell* (2002-2003) and the correlative project *No Ghost but a Shell, un film d'imaginaire*, which consists of a complex multi-authorial activity by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno and others.

In conclusion, in relation to the production modes of the *sense*, the installation "dispositif"[99] highlights a mutation of the statute of the concept of "work" (and the correlated notions of text, cotext, context, situation) that affects the migration of cinema from the "movie theater" to the "museum," pertaining to its enunciative methods in the artistic context and includes a peculiar interpretative action[100] of the spectator-visitor. On the basis of this assumption, in relation to this research, these "notes" aim to highlight how the *non* "time based media" installation method implies on the performative level a "cinematic principle" able to extend within the "work" installed and to extend the enunciative process, that is the web of relations that give it meaning in relation to the "question" that traces it, amongst the heterogeneous and disjointed elements that can compose it (sculptural, photographic, filmic, video or "objects"). From this analytical perspective the "shift towards the cinematic in art" employs, in various ways, cinema's "paradigm" significance.

* Translated from the Italian by Robin Ambrosi.

1 The research refers to a series of studies dedicated to the possible (critical) definitions of the concept of "media art" (in relation to which cinema and video are in many ways "devices") and it analyses the installation methods in contemporary artistic practices, also in relation to the interpretation and analysis issues that these types of practices raise in connection to the activities of documentation, archiving, preservation and restoration. See Cosetta G. Saba, *Media Art. Definizioni in negativo. Concetti, pratiche, teorie*, Errata Corrige, Trieste 2013.

2 Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Pour un cinéma d'exposition. Retour sur quelques jalons historiques," in *Omnibus*, no. 20, April 1997, pp. 36-41; Id., "Cinéma d'exposition: L'Espacement de la durée," in *Art Press*, no. 262, November 2002, pp. 36-41. Raymond Bellour defined it "autre cinema" (Raymond Bellour, "D'un autre cinéma," in *Trafic*, no. 34, Summer 2000, pp. 7-12) and Pascale Cassagnau refers to it with the expression "troisième cinéma" (Pascale Cassagnau, *Future amnésia, enquête sur un troisième cinéma*, Isthme, Paris 2007).

3 Raymond Bellour*, La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, P.O.L., Paris 2012, p. 51.

4 Referring to the first, in ontological and historical terms, a unique "dispositif" and to each concrete occurrence of the second the invention of a specific "dispositif."

5 The "passages" of the "*entre-images*" concern the "variations propres aux mouvements et aux fixités des images;" the "transformations de l'analogie photographique" and the "interpénération entre langage et l'image." Raymond Bellour*, La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, cit., p. 50. An extremely relevant reflection, which opposes the indistinct "passage of images" in the processes found during the media convergence on computer platforms.

6 David Joselit, on the other hand, points out and introduces another analytical perspective involved in video projection. He maintains that: "More recent works of projection tend to hug the architectural envelope rather than produce a second informational circuit within the container of the gallery. […] The eclipse of closed circuit by projection thus performs an inversion whereby video is transformed from an apparatus within a space to a new electronic skin that engulfs architectural elements." David Joselit, "Inside the Light Cube," in *Artforum*, vol. 42, no. 7, March 2004, pp. 154-159.

7 See Nicola Dusi, Cosetta G. Saba (eds.), *Matthew Barney. Polimorfismo, multimodalità, neobarocco*, Silvana Editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo 2012.

8 See Raymond Bellour*, La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, cit.

9 See: Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1996; Id. *Design & Crime*, Verso, London 2003; Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, London 1999*;* Id. *Under Blue Cup*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2011.

10 Luc Vancheri, *Cinémas contemporains: du film à l'installation*, Aléas, Lyon 2009.

11 See amongst others: Dominique Païni, *Le temps exposé. Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, Cahiers du Cinéma, Paris 2002; Id., "Should We Put and End to Projection," in *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 23-48; David Joselit, "Inside the Light Cube," cit.; Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Cinéma d'exposition: L'Espacement de la durée," cit.; Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Tate/Afterall, London-New York 2008; Luc Vancheri, *Cinémas contemporains: du film à l'installation*, cit.; Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*, Intellect, Bristol-Chicago 2009; Viva Paci, *La machine à voir. À propos de cinéma, attraction, exhibition*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Lille 2012; Jaap Guldemond, Marente Bloemheuvel, Giovanna Fossati (eds.), *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2012; Sandra Lischi, "Film da percorrere: l'installazione 'cinematografata'," in *Predella*, no. 31, 2013, pp. 233-242; Dominique Païni, "Le Cinèma comme un art plastique," in *Predella*, no. 31, 2013. See also: Julia Noordegraaf, Cosetta G. Saba, Barbara Le Maître, Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving and Exibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013.

12 Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2000.

13 Francesco Casetti, "Esperienza filmica e ri-locazione del cinema," in *Fata Morgana***,** *Esperienza*, no. 4, 2008, pp. 23-40.
14 The aim of the research is to investigate and study cinema in the artistic context. Further studies have yet to be undertaken on the rebound effect from the "museum" to the "cinema" and not only in terms of experimental or avant-garde cinema or so called art or auteur cinema.
15 Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, Galilée, Paris 2004.
16 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Les Muses*, Galilée, Paris 1994.
17 Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique*, La Fabrique, Paris 2000; Id. *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, cit.
18 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, Thames & Hudson, London 2004. The "shift towards the cinematic in art" presents relocation processes that are not *sic et simpliciter* remediation methods.
19 See Philippe Dubois, "Esporre il movimento? Sull''effetto cinema' nell'arte contemporanea," in *Bianco & Nero*, no. 554/55, 2006, p. 21.
20 Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, Seuil, Paris 1992.
21 See amongst others: Dominique Païni, *Le Temps exposé. Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, cit.; Id. "Should We Put and End to Projection," cit.; David Joselit, "Inside the Light Cube," cit.; Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Cinéma d'exposition, l'espacement de la durée," cit.; Luc Vancheri, *Cinémas contemporains: du film à l'installation*, cit.; Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*, cit.; A.L. Rees, Duncan White, Steven Ball, David Curtis (eds.), *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*, Tate, London 2011; Viva Paci, *La machine à voir. À propos de cinéma, attraction, exhibition*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Lille 2012; Jaap Guldemond, Marente Bloemheuvel, Giovanna Fossati (eds.), *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, cit.; Jacques Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*, VIRN, Paris 2012; Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, cit.; Philippe Dubois, *La Question vidéo. Entre cinéma et art contemporain*, Yellow Now, Crisnée 2012; Marco Maria Gazzano, *Kinēma. Il cinema sulle tracce del cinema. Dal film alle arti elettroniche, andata e ritorno*, Éxòrma, Roma 2012; Christa Blümlinger, *Cinéma de seconde main. Esthétique du remploi dans l'art du film et des nouveaux médias*, Klincksieck, Paris 2013 (2009). See also: *Cinéma et art contemporain/Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts*, *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* (edited by Philippe Dubois), no. 8, Fall 2006; Cosetta G. Saba, Cristiano Poian (eds.), *Unstable Cinema: Film and Contemporary Visual Arts*, Campanotto Editore, Pasian di Prato 2007; *Cinéma et art contemporain II/Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts II*, *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* (edited by Philippe Dubois), no. 10, Spring 2008; *Cinéma et art contemporain III/Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts III*, *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* (edited by Philippe Dubois and Jennifer Verraes), no. 12, Spring 2009; Philippe Dubois, Lucia Ramos Monteiro, Alessandro Bordina (eds.), *Oui, c'est du cinema. Formes et espaces de l'image en mouvement*, Campanotto, Pasian di Prato 2009; Philippe Dubois, Frédéric Monvoisin, Elena Biserna (eds.), *Extended cinema. Le cinéma gagne du terrain*, Campanotto, Pasian di Prato 2010; Elena Biserna, Precious Brown (eds.), *Cinema, Architecture, Dispositif*, Campanotto, Pasian di Prato 2011; Claudia D'Alonzo, Ken Slock, Philippe Dubois (eds.), *Cinéma, critique des images*, Campanotto, Pasian di Prato 2012; Cosetta G. Saba, Francesco Federici (eds.), *Cinéma: immersivité, surface, exposition*, Campanotto, Pasian di Prato 2013; Cosetta G. Saba (ed.), *On Media Art: A Rewarding Anthology*, Errata Corrige, Trieste 2013; Id., *On Media Art. Definizioni in negativo. Concetti pratiche teorie*, cit.
22 It is an operative definition that distinguishes between "*mediums*" as the English plural term for "medium" – in order to designate the technical and expressive importance of the medium – and "*media*" – as the singular name referred to the transmissive function of the "medium" within the system of the communication media. See Francesco Casetti, *I media nella condizione post-mediale*, in Roberto Diodato, Antonio Somaini (eds.), *Estetica dei media e della comunicazione*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2011, pp. 313-28.
23 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, cit.*;* Id. *Under Blue Cup*, cit.
24 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses du réel, Dijon 2002 (1998), p. 54.

25 Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible*, cit.
26 See Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, Lukas & Stenberg, New York 2009.
27 See: Erika Suderburg (ed.), *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2000; Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, The MIT Press, London-Cambridge (MA) 2004; Claire Doherty, *Situation*, Whitechapel Gallery-The MIT Press, London-Cambridge (MA) 2009.
28 It is a discontinuity, that affects the overall structure of art, already highlighted by Walter Benjamin in relation to photography and by Rosalind Krauss in relation to video. See: Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version*, in Id., *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*, The Belknap, Cambridge (MA)-London 2008; Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, cit.
29 Rosalind Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 2, Winter 1999, pp. 289-305.
30 André Bazin, *Pour un cinéma impur. Défense de l'adaptation*, in Id., *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, vol. 2, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1958-1962 (Engl. ed. *In Defense of Mixed Cinema*, in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley 2010, pp. 53-75).
31 Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," in *The Something Else Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 1, February 1966, pp. 1-6.
32 Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2006.
33 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York University Press, New York-London 2006.
34 See Francesco Casetti, *I media nella condizione post-mediale,* cit.
35 See Rosalind Krauss, *Under Blue Cup*, cit.
36 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version*, cit.
37 See: Francesco Casetti, "Esperienza filmica e ri-locazione del cinema," cit.; Id., *I media nella condizione post-mediale*, cit. See also: Ruggero Eugeni, *Semiotica dei media*. *Le forme dell'esperienza*, Carocci, Roma 2012.
38 See Andrea Pinotti, Antonio Somaini, *Introduzione*, in Walter Benjamin, *Aura e choc. Saggi sulla teoria dei media*, Einaudi, Torino 2012, pp. IX-XXVII.
39 See Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, cit.
40 Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs*, cit., pp. 19-20.
41 Aumont's reflection converges on this point, on a historical-cultural level, even though from a different analytical perspective. See Jacques Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*, cit.
42 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, cit.
43 See Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours*, Gallimard, Paris 1971.
44 The term "installation" is used to define: a) a "genre" or "art" ("installation art") that lies *at the edge between* sculpture, architecture, theatre, performance and cinema, with environmental dimensions; b) a complex work that requires the use of both heterogeneous materials and expressive methods and differing techniques, placed in relation with each other based on a specific relational layout, and the corporeal involvement of the spectator/visitor in the space activated by his presence. It is a composition of heterogeneous components that act: 1) by implying the distinct material properties of the objects and/or physical media in which it finds temporary objectification; 2) translating the traits of one medium into another medium and thus reconfiguring the traits of one medium with other media; 3) releasing the material traits of the media involved in relation to which the "medium" is the actual productive action instanced by an interaction (*between* the concrete and the conceptual).
45 See Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, cit., pp. 135-136. The issue must be examined from a critical point of view also in terms of the ideological merit of the "exhibition value." See: Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, cit.; Id., *Design & Crime*, cit.; Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition,* cit.*;* Id. *Under Blue Cup*, cit.
46 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Expanded, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1999 (1976).

47 See Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, cit.
48 Philippe Dubois, "Esporre il movimento? Sull''effetto cinema' nell'arte contemporanea," cit., p. 37 (my translation). See also Id., *La Question vidéo. Entre cinéma et art contemporain*, cit.
49 See Richard Gagnier's presentation for the 2009 DOCAM Seminar, *DOCAM Terminology*, http://archives.docam.ca/en/?cat=15, last visit 31 January 2013.
50 Gene Youngblood, "Cinema and the code," in *Leonardo. Supplemental Issue, Computer Art in Context: SIGGRAPH '89 Art Show Catalog*, vol. 2, 1989 (It. ed. *Cinema and the code*, in Marco Maria Gazzano [ed.], *Steina e Woody Vasulka. Video, media e nuove immagini nell'arte contemporanea*, Fahrenheit 451, Roma 1995, p. 45, p. 48). In his 1970's book, however, Youngblood examines large format audio-visual installation "objects" and/or works with environmental/architectonic extension and thinks of a "plural" definition of *expanded cinema*, but within the audio-visual or, more precisely, the audio-visual flow events. *Expanded cinema* is defined from a technical point of view, to express the plurality of instruments used to produce "audio-visual flow events" where art can express its capacity to produce a transformation. See: Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, Dutton, New York 1970. See also: Sandra Lischi, "In Search of Expanded Cinema," in *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, no. 2, Spring 2003, pp. 82-95; A.L. Rees, Duncan White, Steven Ball, David Curtis (eds.), *Expanded cinema: Art, Performance, Film*, cit.; Marco Maria Gazzano, *Kinēma. Il cinema sulle tracce del cinema. Dal film alle arti elettroniche, andata e ritorno*, cit.
51 Peter Weibel, *Masters of the Codes*, in Marco Maria Gazzano (ed.), *Steina e Woody Vasulka. Video, media e nuove immagini nell'arte contemporanea*, cit., p. 64.
52 Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenchaft*, Wilhelm Fink, Paderbon 2002.
53 Hal Foster, *Design & Crime*, cit.
54 See Georges Didi-Huberman, "Construire la durée," and "Esquisse d'atlas," in the catalogue of the exhibition *Pascal Convert: Lamento (1998-2005)*, Mudam Luxembourg, 2007, pp. 25-51, pp. 199-203.
55 The meaning of "extended cinema" here refers to the performative aspect of cinema, its relational strength and its significance as "paradigm." The use of the expression is different to Daniel Birnbaum's use in *Chronology*, Les Presses du réel, Paris 2005.
56 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, cit., p. 73. See also Id., "Un art de réalisateurs," in *Art Press*, no. 147, May 1990, pp. 48-50.
57 See Philippe Dubois, "Un 'effet cinéma' dans l'art contemporain," in *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, no. 8, Fall 2006, p. 18.
58 Dominique Païni, "The Return of the Flâneur," in *Art Press*, no. 255, March 2000, pp. 33-40. See also Ursula Frohne (ed.), *Video Cult/Ures. Multimediale Installationen der 90er Jahre*, catalogue of the exhibition, Museum der Neue Kunst, ZKM, Köln-DuMont-Karlsruhe 1999.
59 Raymond Bellour, *L'Entre-Images. Photo. Cinéma. Vidéo*, La Différence, Paris 2002 (1990).
60 Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositif. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*, cit., pp. 50-51.
61 Raymond Bellour, "D'un autre cinéma," cit. (Eng. ed. *Of an Other Cinema*, in Tanya Leighton [ed.], *Art an the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, cit., pp. 406-422).
62 *Idem*, p. 408.
63 *Idem*, pp. 407-408.
64 *Ibidem*.
65 *Idem*, p. 408.
66 Phlippe-Alain Michaud, "Le Mouvement des Images," in *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, no. 8, Fall 2006, p. 183.
67 Phlippe-Alain Michaud, *Le Mouvement des Images*, in *Le Mouvement des Images/The Movement of Images*, catalogue of the exhibition, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, Paris 2006, p. 20.
68 Christian Metz, *Histoire/Discours. Note sur deux Voyeurismes*, in Julia Kristeva, Jean-Claude Milner, Nicolas Ruwet (eds.), *Langue, Discours, Societé. Pour Émile Benveniste*, Seuil, Paris 1975 (eng. ed. *Story/Discourse: A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurisms*, in Id., *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1982, pp. 89-98).
69 See: Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Arts Yearsbook*, 1965, pp. 74-82; Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture Part 2," in *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 2, October 1966, pp. 20-23; Michael Fried, *Art and Object-*

hood, in Id., *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1998 (1967), pp. 148-172; Anne-Marie Duguet, "Dispositifs," in *Communications*, no. 48, 1988, pp. 221-242.

70 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, Paris 1945.

71 See also Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, cit., pp. 35-36.

72 André Bazin, *Pour un cinéma impur. Défense de l'adaptation*, cit.

73 Alain Badiou, "Le Cinéma comme faux mouvement," in *L'Art du cinéma,* no. 4, March 1994, pp. 1-5.

74 Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, cit.

75 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Les Muses*, cit.

76 Giorgio Agamben, *Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Film*, in Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art an the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, cit., pp. 332-333.

77 See Christian Metz, *Langage et cinéma*, Larousse, Paris 1971.

78 See Gene Youngblood, "Cinema and the code," cit.

79 See Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, cit.*

80 See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, cit.

81 See Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, Tate, London 2005.

82 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version*, cit.

83 See the works of Foster and Krauss quoted above.

84 See: Jacques Rancière, *Le Destin des images*, La Fabrique, Paris 2003; Id., *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, cit.

85 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version*, cit.

86 See the works of Bazin, Badiou, Nancy, and Rancière quoted above.

87 See Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, cit.*

88 Francesco Casetti, *L'esperienza filmica e la ri-locazione del cinema*, cit., pp. 30-32 (my translation).

89 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham 1991, p. 162.

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91 See Gérard Genette, *Palimspestes: la littérature au second degré*, Seuil, Paris 1982.

92 See John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*: *The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Oxford University Press, London 1962. See also John R. Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy Science*, *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, vol. 7, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1975.

93 See Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art: The Meaning of Art's Performativity*, JRP/Ringier, Les Presses du réel, Zurich-Dijon 2010.

94 See: George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1974; Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Washington 1997.

95 Jacques Derrida, *Signature Événement Contexte*, in Id., *Limited Inc*., Galilée, Paris, 1999 (1971), p. 37.

96 See: Gérard Genette, *L'Œuvre de l'art, 1: Immanence et transcendance*, Seuil, Paris 1994; Id., *L'Œuvre de l'art, 2: La relation esthétique*, Seuil, Paris 1997.

97 See Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe. Écrits*, Flammarion, Paris 1975.

98 See: Pip Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations," *Tate Papers. Tate's Online Research Journal*, 2006, http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7401 (last visit 31 January 2013); Françoise Parfait, *Vîdéo: un art contemporain*, Éditions du Regard, Paris 2001.

99 In the perspective in which Giorgio Agamben formulates and places – after Foucault and Deleuze – the concept of "dispositif," he is able to include "anything has, in some way, the ability to capture, orientate, establish, intercept, shape, control and ensure the gestures, actions, behaviour, opinions and discourse." Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?*, Nottetempo, Roma 2006, pp. 21-22 (my translation).

100 See Umberto Eco, *I limiti dell'interpretazione*, Bompiani, Milano 1990.

THE CINEMATIC PERFORMANCE OF THE REAL
AESTHETICS, NEW REALISM AND CINEMA

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Abstract

The return of realism that followed the Postmodern years, marks an ontological "turn" which is not free of consequences also in relation to theories on cinema. This essay aims at analysing the existing relationship between the aesthetic-perceptive experience – through the notion of "immediate experience" – and the notion of "reality" in the cinematographic image. The link image-reality is considered here as a "phenomenon" in itself. If the phenomenal experience could be intended as such, without a subject, the cinematographic image too could be intended as a look without subjectivity. Cinema takes us beyond phenomenology, or rather, inside a "heretic" phenomenological perspective.

The temporal presence of cinema

In *Philosophical Remarks* we find the following passage by Wittgenstein, that captures very well the characteristic of the phenomenal experience in relation to the so-called "underlying physical reality." This passage captures specifically that particular experience of the world which we call "cinematographic" and that can only be mistakenly seen as a "subjective" experience, according to the analogy between "mental representation" and "screen:"

> *The present we are talking about here is not the picture on the filmstrip that is in front of the lantern's lens right now, as opposed to the picture before and after it, which have already been there or are yet to come; but the picture on the screen, which would illegitimately be called present, since 'present' would not be used here to distinguish it from past and future. And so it is a meaningless epithet (§ 54).*[1]

As a matter of fact the "present" inscribes in itself a bit of past and future. The appearance *hic et nunc* of what is directly observed on the screen happens during a time which we call "presence-time," and is identified by James as "specious present." All of our perceptions develop in the *present*, in the moment of the current now. This "now" does not correspond to the mathematical instant which is free of time, rather it implies a specific duration.[2] The phenomenal present belongs to the direct experience and has a "duration" (*durée*), as Bergson would put it, that captures the reality of the temporal extension of the event. The "presence-time"[3] is the time in which we describe

what is happening in the "now" moment of the film, and which corresponds approximately to the time it takes to pronounce the word "now."

The "presence-time," before becoming a concept, is the essential experience that stands at the base of every experience of the real and of the imaginary, by considering the act rather than the content. This event is not describable instant by instant, or according to the "single frame," since in the immediate of this lived presence, we remember many others. We couldn't say that we see images: we see a complex reality, a unit of movements, sounds and perceptions. The scene that we observe includes what Husserl indicates with the terms "protention" towards the future and "retention" in the past.[4] The cinematographic show is not made of frames: the sense of the event cannot be reduced nor it can be ascribed to the sequence of frames that make up the film. The system of reference which makes up the *reality* of the *encountered world* is established only inside this degree of complexity offered by direct experience. The reality of the event is therefore given in the immediate experience. If the temporal presence would really only last a short "instant," or less than one twenty-fourth of a second, then we could say that we are actually seeing an image. Can we indicate the direct experience of the film as "apparent" in respect to an underlying "reality?" And with what right, since we never escape from what we observe directly? When we see the film and its single frames, we are always in the immediate experience: the "beta movement" that creates the "illusion" of movement is in fact an aspect of the real, that is of a world with its own laws of phenomenal appearance. The images that make up the instant of presence which belongs to the perception of a moving unity, that is what is happening in the narrative present of the film, are all equally present. It is not possible to say which of these are more present than others. We know that these happen one after the other, nevertheless we experience them as a whole. If we wanted to express the reality of what lays under the "absolute threshold," we should be aware that what we now call "reality" is no longer perceived directly. It becomes a representation of what we observe and it is made of mathematical relationships and imagined entities. A reality which belongs to the fields of language and concepts used to explain each fact, instead of grasping them directly. We should notice how our common use of language is often as effective as it is approximate, sometimes leading to various errors when applied to the technical languages of philosophy and sciences. Indeed, an accurate phenomenological description of a fact, sometimes reveals to be logically paradoxical. Let's take for example the Euclidean definition of point as "that which has no part."

It is defined as a "punctual object" in space and time, just as the "tic" sound of the tip of a pencil falling on the table. Although we perceive it distinctly, it is impossible to separate the perception of the beginning of the sound from the end of it. This is what we call the paradox of a fact that while it is happening, it has already past. It is a "punctual event" that we distinguish from "factual events," or those events that we perceive through the memory of their beginning and the awaiting of their end. We perceive those in their "central part" and in this case we can give meaning to the expression "presence-time," which includes all of the punctual objects that extend beyond the experience of the single "tic." One should notice that time does not belong to the factual event, rather to the immediate experience in which they are contained. The presence-time therefore is the fundamental condition of every experience and it is precisely for this reason that it is so difficult to become aware of its existence.[5] During this precise time the object of experience manifests all its observable features according to its own principles, independently from the system of reference determined by the perceiving subject.

The immediate experience

Let's go through the perception of the cinematographic spectacle by clarifying the notion of "immediate experience" by drawing a diagram on the board.[6] The diagram is the following: we draw a member of the audience sitting in a cinema to the right, while he perceives an object that appears on the screen to his left. Therefore to the left we represent the source of the stimulus: the "distal stimulus" (the physical object). As this is a visual object, to the right there will be sets of electromagnetic waves of a certain type of frequency. The structure determines the "proximal stimulus" that, by reaching the retina, provokes its stimulation through the luminous beam that generates from the object, whose surfaces are capable of reflecting the light due to their physical-chemical nature. By following this traced path, we encounter the eye of the viewer. The images of the eye and the brain can be more or less detailed, according to the type of critical discussion. To the right of the retina we find the optic chiasm, the lateral geniculate nucleus, the visual cortex-area 17 (or BA 17). In this representation of perception, where do we position our immediate experience of the thing? By convention we symbolise the phenomenal perception of the thing to the extreme right over the drawing of the brain, by indicating it with "phi." Phi represents the phenomenal perception of the thing *directly* perceived on the screen: the movie. The psycho-physic scheme traced on the board is the representation of every possible causal explanation of perception. This does not match the direct experience as lived in first-person; rather, it represents the situation in which one looks at another person while he is observing something. By proceeding from the thing on the left, in the direction of the head of the observer on the right, through the various steps that make up the scheme, we never encounter the direct experience of the perceiving subject as such. Each part of the scheme is the internal, external or indirect *representation* of perception. Every single segment of the scheme can be object of further more or less detailed scientific research, in the field of physics, chemistry, physiology, etc. The "causal description" of the perception of the thing is an image, an explanation of the perceived reality. It aims at explaining the perception by analysing the situation as described above – typically found in the laboratory – where the experimenter analyses and verifies the direct observations of the subject. This situation should be distinct from the phenomenological description in which, on the other hand, the experience is perceived in first-person. The descriptions of what is perceived *hic et nunc* lay on a different level, that of the real, rather than the causal description of their representation. To confuse what we know of the thing perceived, interpreted as scientific and physical object (typical of a causal explanation), with what is perceived directly, means, in Köhler's words, to make a "stimulus error."[7]

For instance, if we assert to be observing a sequence of photograms as the result of the direct observation of the thing on the screen, then we would fall into the "stimulus error," since we would have indirectly integrated the knowledge of the thing to the direct experience of it. The correct phenomenological descriptions exclude all propositions that describe a knowledge which is not directly perceivable or cannot be intersubjectively shared. Our entire understanding of the film is guided by what appears on the screen, with all its observable properties. The scientific study aims at explaining the phenomenal appearance of the immediate experience: as deep as it can be, it should in the end explain why we perceive "phi" according to our schema "as such" – as Köhler would say. Every new discovery operated on the level of direct experience reduces the logical space of all logically possible theories and, at the same time, falsifies existent theories. If the discovery of a new fact can

destroy the theories that aim at explaining perception through a "causal model," this cannot happen the other way around, since no new scientific discovery, internal to the psycho-physical scheme, can in any way falsify the immediate experience. Science and the "truths" that it pursues were conceived to determine what is not possible to grasp through direct observation: the observed thing in itself is neither false nor true. The "truth," according to a well known philosophical tradition, belongs to the sphere of judgment and to the thought, not to the phenomenologically explicit fact. To better understand the meaning of phenomenology of perception as the description of an immediate experience that is, in Koffka's words, "as a naive and full a description of direct experience as possible"[8] we can take as an example Leibniz's analogy as found in *Monadology* (§17):

> *Moreover, it must be confessed that perception and that which depends on it are inexplicable in mechanical terms, that is, in terms of figures and motions. And supposing there were a machine, so constructed as to think, feel, and have perception, one could imagine it increased in size, while keeping the same proportions, so that one could go into it as into a mill. In that case, we should, on examining its interior, find only parts that work upon one another, and never anything by which to explain a perception. Thus, perception must be sought in a simple substance, and not in a composite or machine. Further, nothing but this (namely, perceptions and their changes) can be found in a simple substance. It is in this alone also that all the internal actions of simple substances can consist.*

According to this image, the visual perception corresponds to what we observe directly and does not include the mechanisms underlying direct experience, which fail to explain the sense of perception. In fact, perception is not perceived nor are we normally conscious of our conscience: one perceives directly the things of the external world. We can observe that they appear in their objectivity, or as it can sometimes happen, welcome them in their "subjective" character – as in the case of "afterimages" (also call "ghost images") or others – without leaving the immediate observation and without referring to the underlying brain activity. The case described by Leibniz shows how direct perception is different from the underlying transphenomenic mechanisms: the physiology of the brain corresponds to the mechanisms of the mill that does not justify the immediate experience of things, which is the object of study of experimental phenomenology.[9] In an extract from *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (I, §11) by Wittgenstein we find a symmetrical idea to Liebniz's, or the non-reducibility of the immediate experience to the underlying processes of perception:

> *Let us assume that someone makes the following discovery. He investigates the processes in the retina of human beings who are seeing the figure now as a glass cube, now as a wire frame etc., and he finds out that these processes are like the ones that he observes when the subject sees now a glass cube, now a wire frame etc... One would be inclined to regard such a discovery as a proof that we actually see the figure differently each time. But with what right? How can the experiment make any pronouncement upon the nature of the immediate experience? – It puts it in a particular class of phenomena.*

Here Wittgenstein underlines that it is the "immediate" properties of the perceptive experience that allow to "interpret" the optical apparat and not vice-versa.

The encountered reality: The independence of "phi"

Certainly, the interpretation of a movie forms our experience, nevertheless it does not complete it: our interpretations go beyond what can be directly observed. The interpretative level of experience does not eliminate the facts in order to reduce them to a single interpretative dimension as it happens in Postmodern culture. In some of his movies Hitchcock reveals the identity of the murderer since the beginning. Nevertheless this does not free the narrative plot from interpretations, just as the facts ascribed to the direct experience do not eliminate, but guide the interpretative space, often made of the union between visible and partly not directly visible elements. The independence of *the encountered* is characterised by: the independence of its materiality, its correspondence to the sense organs, the perceiving subject, the past experience and the activity of the thought. The encountered shares the characteristic of "unemendability" with the visual perception. This is the unchangeability of the perception or the impossibility to correct the experience.[10] The phenomenal appearance possesses its own and autonomous organisation. This feature must not be assimilated to the perfectible description of the immediate experience. The difference we encounter does not belong to the world of things, but to that of language, with the categories we use to refer to the world. The fact that we cannot correct the "encountered" means that we can use one reality only, the one directly and intersubjectively experienced. To evaluate conceptually what we encounter does not imply its modification.[11]

In the external world we can come across things that do not have a corresponding "distal stimulation." Taking into consideration the case of "Kanizsa's Triangle," what we see is a white equilateral triangle placed at the centre of a figure, which appears slightly lighter than the remaining surface. In order for it to be perceived it is necessary for the triangle's colour to be different from that of the surface. The "distal stimulus" of the triangle does not subsist, since on the paper we can only effectively see three circular sectors and three angles. Kanizsa's triangle is an example of anomalous surface that is realised in the visual field without the need of any difference of luminance or reflectance between different regions of the stimulus. In this figure it is necessary to distinguish between its phenomenal description, that is what we encounter and its physical-causal description. The latter explains the visual perception through our knowledge of it, through the psycho-physical schema, by referring to aspects concerning Physics, Chemistry, Neurology and Physiology. A physical-causal description of this figure would lead to the conclusion that the triangle does not exist in reality in the external world; therefore the only things we can affirm ontologically are just the black signs on the paper. In this case the triangle although phenomenally evident is considered as something subjective. The phenomenal triangle is "corrected" from a kind of "knowledge" consisting in a physical description of what we observed. A "correction" that should be operated on a presumed "objective reality" that coincides with the physical one.[12]

In this case we would appoint the right to correct the "imperfections" gathered by the experience.[13] Instead of describing the concretely measurable facts we would end up by representing them at a different level of reality that we would tend to privilege. This is how the ontological contrast is born between real facts and the descriptive levels of reality. The missing distinction between the two descriptive levels, the causal one and the descriptive one, leads to the stimulus error. The phenomenal description is the real description of the ontological level, or what *is there*: the encountered phenomenal world. During the same event two types of non-assimilable descriptions

are overlaid: as they are actually defined on two different orders of property. Kaniza's triangle exemplifies the inappropriateness of the kinds of speculations that bring us to define reality or non-reality of things on the basis of a match with the physical object: the distal stimulation. Can we consider cinema an illusion? In order to define an illusion we should first find an object of comparison. A rainbow for example is not considered an illusion but a natural phenomenon, different from the perception of a bended pencil in the water since it can also be seen unaltered in an empty glass. The mechanisms that regulate the perception stand at the base of our comprehension of the surrounding ecological environment: sometimes one sees what is not there, as in Kaniza's triangle, and one can sometimes not see what is actually there, as in the cases of "masking phenomena." In our behavioural phenomenal environment we can see also what cannot exist. Let's take the case of an "impossible object" like Penrose's triangle. Anything similar would be impossible to build since each of their single parts are not conceivable in our three-dimensional Euclidean space: as a consequence the physical existence of objects is not a necessary condition for their phenomenal existence. Moreover it is a false idea that we see things because we have learned to see them. As a matter of fact we could not have seen an object as the mentioned above, nor will we ever see it in the physical world, and less-so could we see it now, although this stands against the evidence of the facts.[14] We see things differently from how we think them – this is for example the case of the optical-geometrical illusion of Müller-Lyer, where even after having measured the two segments we continue to see them as we used to. The subject and the world are inscribed inside the same reality science intends to bring to light. The independence of the phenomenon as immediate experience of reality can be understood in different ways: let's think about the theoretical implications of virtual prosthesis, as we see in *The Matrix* (Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski, 1999). A colour is not solely visible in the presence of coloured surfaces, but also, for example, through a weak electrical discharge on the eyeball; or with a mechanical or chemical stimulation (with small drops of acids). It is possible to observe a colour as long as the eye is being stimulated by an input which is capable of giving out a low discharge of electric impulses along the filaments that are born from the macular blind spot. Any kind of stimulation allows us to see a colour: it is sufficient to receive the necessary impulses from the optical nerve, while the reason why this happens is irrelevant. If we were to ask the member of an audience why he sees what he sees on the screen, he could perhaps refer to the chemical substance that forms the projected images, capable of absorbing the entire range of light except the wavelength that we call "red." We could at this point object that it is not about a certain chemical substance, since any other useful substance capable of isolating the colour red would lead to the same effect. We know for example that the same properties are also found in different materials. In this case the audience will have to admit that, in this particular case, the chemical component is a sufficient condition but not a necessary one to perceive the colour red, that could derive from different materials with similar characteristics.[15]

The problem seems to be about the property of the radiation, rather than that of the materials: this way we can shift the problem more to the right, in the psycho-physical schema. It is not the action of the electromagnetic waves on the retina alone to create the perception of colour; we obtain the same effect also through mechanical, chemical and electrical stimulations of the eye. In optics, in order to see a colour, it is therefore necessary to intervene on the electric impulses of the optical nerve. The photochemical process of the receivers is an element that produces these electrical impulses, but not the only one. One can hypothesise the case of applying similar electric

stimulations to the optical nerve, perfectly capable of inducing the perception of a colour. The virtual is a prosthesis of reality. Virtual worlds express a coherence that originates from the rules of phenomenal givenness. In brief, if one could apply an ideal prosthesis to every single part of the psycho-physical schema, such prosthesis would have certain material characteristics perfectly defined and capable of reproducing the same qualities of the phenomenal appearance of the thing or, more generally, of the immediate experience. Such idea lies at the basis of the "special effects" that we see in cinemas where the sound of burning fire can be substituted with crumpling paper. We can therefore imagine different causal processes, different levels beneath the same phenomenal reality whose sense is expressed independently from the causes underneath their surface: a *science of the observable* (experimental phenomenology) can go beyond explanation on the subworld that "causes" it. The corporeal schema determines our first perceptive reference frame, or that which characterises our life form and is functional to the environment of the external world as a result of adaptation.

Image and reality

We can observe how a movie camera can trace the movements of our body system. This determines a specific empathy between our eye (visual field) and the cinema. For this reason it is not correct to define cinema as "motion pictures," rather it would be more appropriate to call it "progressive picture." It is the exact opposite to an arrested picture as it continuously transforms the structure of the optic array. Therefore in cinema the progression approaches considerably towards the natural visual perception, to a greater degree than we would find in painting and photography. The optical asset corresponds to the temporary visual field of an observer in any natural environment. In order to consider the distinct types of technical modification of the cinematographic image (zoom, panning, tracking, etc.) it could be useful to use an ecological approach with a realist origin such as Gibson's.[16] Cinema therefore is an image that was modified such as to project shadows on its surface, even without leaving traces of colour on it. This way an optical asset of limited amplitude can be obtained, containing information about other things which are not simply relative to the surface. The difference with other types of pictures is that the optical asset is not blocked but can encounter modifications and transformations. This is the fundamental characteristic: we think that if it is true that the images are sent from the eye to the brain, therefore it is just as possible to send a series of images through. Coming back to Wittgenstein's quote, this is where the idea that the film is nothing but the sequence of frames kept together coherently by the persistence of vision originates. This basic physiologic description brings us astray. In order to produce an optical asset that changes it is not necessary to make use of a projector, as the inventors of the nineteenth century – experimenting with different systems – knew very well: what counts is the information that the image sends out to vision. The visual system captures exactly the perturbations of the structure of the asset of a continuous progression. It is precisely the single image frames (paintings, photographs, drawings) that are artificial, which constitute an arrested optic array. The cinematographic is distinct from other forms of representation because it produces in the spectator the experience of a chain of structured events. The fact that they are virtual events does not constitute an objection to what has been stated. When the cinematographic image takes shape

on the screen, we no longer see its surface, but we perceive the filmic space as part of a world, just as we see a world in a painting or in a photograph. Worlds that possess a degree of independent reality from the basic material substrata. Although the images are flat surfaces, they are treated in a way to represent the three-dimensional space we live in. When we see the image of something, what is the relationship occurring between the "thing" and its image and more generally between itself and the external world? The modes of appearance are always controllable factors on the level of the observation.

Every factor can be determined phenomenally: as the relationship figure-background, the principles of unification, depth and transparency have all been studied through spotting the visual variables that make up the structure of the event. If the appearance of the thing is a fact that needs to be accounted solely in its modes of appearance, it should be just as clear that the phenomenal level is the only level of visibility where all the qualities of the thing (primary, secondary and tertiary) stand together.[17] It is on this level that we find the sense of the movie and this cannot be reduced to the brain activity below the immediate experience. Through the images-events we can represent things as well as recreate them: cinema produces images through rules of phenomenological giveness *iuxta propria principia*. The image-movement becomes familiar whenever the artist discovers the same phenomenological giveness of the thing, grasping the same phenomenal invariables. As much as we can create things in all possible worlds to our liking, in order for the phenomenon to appear as it does, it *needs* to respect the principles of appearance brought to light by experimental phenomenology. We can have experience of a virtual world: we can also choose the virtual world to be the real one in its place. Moreover, the phenomena of the real world are identical to the so-called virtual ones: the same discoveries of phenomenology of perception would happen just as much in both worlds. Gibson, through the ecological approach, defines images as "invariant structures;" on the other hand we prefer to speak of *phenomenal invariants*, meaning the complex of dependent and independent variables that "experimental phenomenology" has discovered as conditions for the appearance of the phenomenon. Such conditions stand always on the same plane as that of direct observation. We therefore indicate with the name "phenomenal invariants" that which is shared between the image and the thing: this is how the structure of the real is at play. The image that appears on the screen therefore consists in a *game* between the intrinsic modalities of perception. What we mean by modality are all the factors that are brought to light by experimental phenomenology, as for example the "law of organisation," the "figure-background relation" and the "amodal completion." Every factor is visible and ostensible in the image and it is determined by specific conditions also belonging to the plane of direct observation. With more or less awareness the artist discovers and uses these factors: during the artistic production the director *always* judges the *phenomenally explicit result* of his own work. This is structured by perceptive factors; but the artist, on his side, can also choose to ignore the rules that determine the phenomenal appearance of the thing. We could say that the artist discovers as he goes: it is in his own production that he *does things with phenomena*. The modes of perception that the director brings about are what allows that specific perceptive-expressive output, whether he uses digital images or oil on canvas. This way it is possible to supply a description of the conditions of the images that complies to the phenomenal characters of the image itself just as it appears to us, identifying them with the same criteria of visibility that regulate ordinary perception. The "monocular clues of depth" (perspective, occlusion, weaving gradients, elevation from the horizon, relative size,

shading) allow to perceive the space of natural scenes; at the same time these clues can generate a spatial impression efficiently also in the cinematographic images. We are therefore able to have a common world in which, by exercising vision we discover the invariables that define the *possibility* of phenomena to take place. The image is tied to visibility both in its aspect of production and in its fruition; and the possibility itself to produce and see the images abides by the rules of visibility. There is a "system of equivalence" between reality and the world as perceived on the screen. To the condition of appearance of the phenomenon we inscribe both the external world and its image in equal size, for this reason it is considered to be similar to the real by degrees of reality. The cinematographic phenomenon substitutes the external world, or it is a surrogate of it. The definition of the condition of representation follows the fact that the director experiments and discovers phenomenal worlds whose possibility is already intrinsically contained in the visual perception of the phenomenological givenness. Through the movie camera the director uses the same phenomenal invariables that regulate ordinary perception, and therefore operates with the *possibility* of the visible. The image always keeps the intersubjective and ostensible character of any ordinary phenomenal datum of perception, also inside the new semantic frame. To be an image is the exemplification of a conjunction of perceptive invariants, and seeing and producing images abides by the same laws that regulate ordinary vision. In the first case, we could ask up to what point is it possible *to play with invariables*, if they are such and not just a simple possibility belonging to certain events of perception. This will depend on the result that one wants to achieve on the level of perceptive output efficiency and on the recognizability of the thing. Every phenomenal aspect comes out of the factors that determine it. The image is constructed through a technical apparatus for the optimisation of a specific phenomenal outcome, which is *tied* by a set of expressive factors that phenomenally determine the "result." Photography, cinema and painting allow the phenomenon of the "thing" to emerge starting from the same conditions of appearance of the phenomenal giveness *iuxta propria principia*. The physical object "embodies" the nature of the same conditions of appearance. The relationship between image and perception is regulated by the conditions of possibility of appearance of the thing, that are tied to the immediate experience and perhaps to an "eretico" way to intend phenomenology.

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, Barnes & Noble, New York 1975, p. 3.
2 See William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Holt, New York 1890.
3 See the classic work by Alexius Meinong: *On Objects of Higher Order and the Relationship to Internal Perception* (1899); see also the work by L. William Stern, *Mental Presence-Time* (1897) and the classic book by Henri Bergson: *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1910).
4 See Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893-1917)*, Martinus Nijhoff, Haag 1966 (Eng. ed. *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time [1893–1917]*, Kluwer, Dordrecht-Boston-London 1990).
5 See Paolo Bozzi, *Un mondo sotto osservazione*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2008, p. 50.
6 See Paolo Bozzi's definition of "Schema psico-fisico S-D." For a detailed analysis of the concept of "immediate experience," see: Luca Taddio, *Fenomenologia eretica*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2011.
7 See Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*, Liveright, New York 1947.
8 Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York 1935, p. 73.

9 See Paolo Bozzi, *Fenomenologia sperimentale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1989.
10 See Maurizio Ferraris's definition of "unemendability" or the leading feature of the real. Maurizio Ferraris, *Documentalità*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2009.
11 See: Wolfgang Metzger, *Psychologie. Die Entwicklung ihrer Grundannahmen seit der Einführung des Experiments*, Steinkopff, Darmstadt 1941; Maurizio Ferraris, *Il mondo esterno*, Bompiani, Milano 2001, p. 32.
12 See Wolfgang Metzger, *Psychologie. Die Entwicklung ihrer Grundannahmen seit der Einführung des Experiments* cit., chapter 1.
13 See Ugo Savardi, Ivana Bianchi, *I luoghi della contrarietà*, Upsel, Torino 1997, p. 101.
14 See Giovanni B. Vicario, *Psicologia generale*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2001, p. 222.
15 This is Paolo Bozzi's thesis.
16 See James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Lea, Hillsdale (NJ)-London 1986, chapter 16. As an introduction to the topic of cinema and perception, see Jacques Aumont, *L'Image*, Armand Colin, Paris 2005, chapters 1-2.
17 See Paolo Bozzi, *Fisica ingenua*, Garzanti, Milano 1990, p. 97.

PROJECTS & ABSTRACT

ABSOLUTE RELATIVITY
WEIMAR CINEMA AND THE CRISIS OF HISTORICISM

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Is there a logic of history? Is there, beyond all the casual and incalculable elements of the separate events, something that we may call a metaphysical structure of historic humanity, something that is essentially independent of the outward forms – social, spiritual and political – which we see so clearly?[1]

Posed at the outset of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1918), these ontological questions gained a particular urgency during a period of acute crisis and change. As German intellectuals witnessed a cataclysmic and illogical succession of early 20th century events, including world war, revolution, and the dissolution of empire, they reexamined the philosophical premises of traditional historiography and historical thought. Whereas German Idealism had upheld a basic optimism regarding the directionality and purposiveness of the historical process, Weimar intellectual currents betrayed disillusionment with the course of history, as well as skepticism of history's status as the site of logos and meaning.

Speculations on the ontology of history during the Weimar era were accompanied by epistemological inquiries into the very foundations of historical understanding. In contradistinction to natural law theory, with its appeal to the atemporal and universal aspects of human nature, 19th century German historicism had emphasized the historicity and uniqueness of all sociocultural phenomena and values. As historicist thinkers considered the conditions of the possibility of historical knowledge, however, they recognized the threat posed by historicism to objective cognition. The ensuing "crisis of historicism," anticipated by figures as early as Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacob Burckhardt, was first widely diagnosed in the postwar years, when intellectuals acknowledged the aporia of relativism that entailed from reflexive historical thinking. This crisis generated significant developments in Weimar intellectual history, including philosophical anthropology, existential phenomenology, and the sociology of knowledge, and it also induced the conservative attitudes that plagued the Weimar period and beyond.

My dissertation contends that the crisis of historical thought provided a key context for pioneering and influential works of Weimar cinema. I argue that films of the Weimar period registered and responded to contemporaneous metahistorical debates, offering aesthetic answers to ontological and epistemological questions of the philosophy of history. In my analysis, the films' extraordinary innovations in aesthetic and narrative form are associable not only with technological advances and sociopolitical ruptures, but also with concurrent efforts to theorize history in an age of "absolute relativity." Many of Weimar cinema's defining formal and stylistic features (e.g. non-linear

narratives, expressionist *mise en scène*) can thus be interpreted as figurations of metahistorical issues, including the structure and teleology of history and the possibility of objective perception. Furthermore, numerous films of the period developed strategies to break with historicist thinking altogether, whether in the non-referentiality of avant-garde abstraction or in the alternative temporal frameworks of nature, religion, and myth.

More broadly, my dissertation intervenes in the extensive literature within Cinema and Media Studies on the relationship between film and history. Challenging film theory of the 1970s and 1980s, which presumed a basic uniformity and historical continuity in cinematic style and spectatorship, the "historical turn" of the past decades has prompted greater scholarly attention to variables and changes in modes of technology, perception, and experience. In my view, while film historiography has henceforth emphasized the *historicity* of moving images, from their conditions of production to their contexts of reception, it has all too often left the very *concept of history* underexamined and insufficiently historicized. I hope to propose a more reflexive model of historiography that accounts for shifts and ruptures in conceptions and understandings of history, from the historical moment of a film's emergence to that of present-day interpretation. Moreover, I suggest that filmic texts gain new resonances when placed in constellation with contemporaneous intellectual debates – debates no less relevant and unresolved today than in the period of their initiation.

The Weimar period presents a particularly compelling case not only as the context in which a specific, distinguished tradition of historical thinking entered a phase of acute, widely diagnosed crisis. During the Weimar years, theorists also began to explore the nexus of history and photographic media and to contemplate the status and vocation of film in the historical process. Whereas philosophical pessimists such as Spengler identified cinema as one among many symptoms of irrevocable degeneracy in modern civilization, progressive cultural critics like Siegfried Kracauer attributed to film the singular historic task of gesturing towards the very provisionality of the current social order. Regardless of theorists' intellectual orientation toward cinema and an emergent mass culture, their frequent allusions to film in historical-philosophical debates reveal the medium's salient function as an indicator of the course that modernity was taking, and even as a signal of the paths which could yet be taken.

When juxtaposed against the actual trajectory of 20th century German history, however, the utopian possibilities evoked by Weimar intellectuals become overlaid with a strong sense of pathos. Scholars continue to dispute which historiographical tropes and hermeneutical models are best suited to the Weimar Republic and its cinema, criticizing the teleological, monolithic, and reductionist aspects of earlier accounts. Among the aims of my dissertation is to redirect focus to the Weimar period's own active, eloquent debates on the course and meaning of history, as well as to highlight the multiplicity of paths that were in fact later taken. The catastrophic events that followed the Weimar years are nonetheless indisputable, and – for those whose lives were cut short – such a project assumes a necessarily anamnestic function. Not least, then, I hope to serve the memory of those to whom Karl Popper dedicated *The Poverty of Historicism* (1944–45): victims of the totalitarian belief in "Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny."[2]

1 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, C.H. Beck, Münich 1923 (eng. ed. *The Decline of the West*, Vantage Books, New York 2006, p. 3).

2 Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, Taylor & Francis, London 2002.

FROM SCENEGGIATA TO YOUTUBE
THE CONTEMPORARY FORM OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF NEAPOLITAN NEOMELODIC MUSIC

Mimmo Gianneri / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
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My research concerns the contemporary Neapolitan Neomelodic music market and imaginary. It focuses on the analysis of a sample of Neomelodic music videos played by some actual local singers and uploaded on YouTube from 2005 to 2013.

Neapolitan Neomelodic music is a subgenre of local popular music especially addressed to teenagers and played in the slums of Naples and its hinterland. The market not only reaches a vast area of Southern Italy but also the suburbs around some great cities like Milan, Turin, Rome and their provinces.

My dissertation attempts to answer to the following questions: are Neapolitan Neomelodic music videos a form of local young generations' self-representation? Are they able to describe the needs and the desires of that particular kind of young people?

In the first chapter – after a theoretical introduction about the role that popular songs play in Italian cinema and the place they have in our national imaginary – I examine the history of Neapolitan popular music.

Neomelodic music combines two different traditions: *Canzone classica napoletana* and *Sceneggiata*. The first one, originating at end of 19th century in the Neapolitan bourgeois salons, is an admixture of popular farmer songs, opera and romance; it is able to speak to all urban social classes. In the 1920s, running parallel to *Canzone classica napoletana*, a new form of theatrical representation begins to consolidate: *Sceneggiata*. Grounded on existing songs, it addresses popular audiences, especially those who have recently moved from the country. The main song of *Sceneggiata* is called *canzone di giacca* ("jacket's song") because the performer doesn't wear the traditional tailcoat. *Sceneggiata*'s singers make deep use of *canto a fronna*, a typical modulate Mediterranean singing, used as a form of communication between the underworld's criminal bands.

Sceneggiata has a melodramatic repertoire. Its structure is made up of three acts. In the last act the main character sings the title track addressing his rival or his lover. For instance, one of the most successful *Sceneggiata*, *Zappatore* (L. Bovio, F. Albano, 1929), tells the story of a farmer's son who goes to the city and denies his origins. In the final scene, *o' zappatore* (the farmer) bursts into the bourgeois party to tell his son that his mother is gravely ill. After the song the moved and regretful son kisses his father's hand.

During the final period of *Sceneggiata*, between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, Mario Merola was the most important performer. In those days themes became more centred on crime and there were many screen adaptations played by the same theatrical performers.

Cinematic *Sceneggiata* was influenced by Italian B movies like *Poliziottesco* or *Spaghetti Westerns*, while theatrical *Sceneggiata* fell into crisis because its popular audience was changing (it was indeed adapting to the city life). Again, in these movies the criminal protagonist wishes to achieve a middle class life so Merola's son is often a student who wants to become an honest worker and to cut himself off from his father's illegal life.

In *Giuramento* and *Tradimento*, both directed by Alfonso Brescia in 1982, Merola's character is flanked by Nino D'Angelo. He was a young *Sceneggiata*'s actor and also a lively vocalist. He is considered the first Neomelodic singer. Neomelodic music, in fact, directs its attention to a popular audience who doesn't wish to be depicted as it was in the past. For instance, in *Pop corn e patatine* (one of the songs of the album *Nu jeans e 'na maglietta*, 1983), Nino D'Angelo remembers his gone by romance describing how together with his girlfriend he ate popcorn and chips and drank Coca Cola…

In the second chapter I analyse the semantic and syntactic features of Neomelodic music and describe its media landscape.

Pezzotto is one of the most distinguishing elements of the Neomelodic musical universe. It is the imitation of national and international pop music styles and rhythms. Neomelodic songs are often written in a mix of vernacular and Italian. Unlike *Canzone di giacca*, in fact, they have some lines in Italian, whose function is to emphasize some passages. The balance between Italian and vernacular in Neomelodic songs is useful to understand the relation between this subculture and the external world. For example, in *Fotomodelle un po' povere* (from the album *Passo dopo passo*, 1995), Gigi D'Alessio uses Italian to scorn his upper-class formeer girlfriend.

Just like other musical subcultures around the world – such as Mexican *narcocorrido* or Argentinian *cumbia villera* – and despite its apparent cultural autarchy, Neomelodic music grounds its success on the ability to rework commercial music culture. The Neomelodic market rests on a star system where, for the faithful fans, singers have to look like a local version of most important national and international pop stars.

The Neomelodic industry adapted itself to the changing media landscape: radio and popular cinema in the 1980s, television in the 1990s, internet and social networks like YouTube in the 2000s. In the end of the 1970s Nino D'Angelo became popular thanks to the self promotion he did through hundreds of local radio stations; and then, in 1980s, he reinforced his fame through popular cinema.

From 1990s, following the example of Gigi D'Alessio, Neomelodic industry grew thanks to weddings, First Communions or 18th birthdays. In these special occasions singers are hired to perform. Neomelodic aspiring artists are initially supported by their families while local labels deal with the recording process and the promotion of the singer. In this media landscape most of the local televisions' shows host Neomelodic singers' performances to profit through fans' phone calls. In the 1990s music videos broadcast by local televisions became one of the most important form of promotion for labels and singers.

In the third chapter I propose a theoretical overview about the journey development "from 20th century video/film to early 21st century social video,"[2] next I focus on YouTube architecture and social experience and then illustrate nowadays the Neomelodic subculture's use of this popular video sharing platform.

YouTube for the Neomelodic market is not only an archive for previous contents, like music

videos or live performances aired on television, but it is also a space where Neomelodic Pro-Am culture tries to make its contents professional.[3] Thus, many local video production companies mark their works with company's logo and they often have a YouTube channel where other contents, including wedding videos, are showed. Wedding videos are a very sought after product for their female fans.

As for singers, we can look at a new generation of performers born in the 1990s and digitally inclined who increases their one-to-one relationship with fans through social networks. Furthermore, this new generation of singers is more than ever influenced by mass culture: they try to follow the height of fashion; their songs are written mostly in Italian – with some lyrics in Spanish or English too – and, sometimes, their music videos emulate the ones of famous international artists ones.

The fourth chapter analyzes some music videos performed by actual Neomelodic singers. I compiled a sample composed of music videos performed by five local stars: Alessio, Raffaello, Nancy, Emiliana Cantone and Rosario Miraggio. All of them were born in the 1990s. Their music videos have been uploaded on YouTube from 2005 to 2013. I also chose to include some other artists, indulging in *flânerie* during my website[4] surfing on the Neomelodic subculture.

According to *Sceneggiata* tradition Neomelodic songs and videos tell stories. In these melodramatic love songs, men are rarely punished for their infidelity, while young girls play the following three main roles: the femme fatale, usually condemned for her behaviour; the young lady suffering or rejoicing for her man; the elder sister who comforts her relative's love pains.

Neomelodic music videos are often set on a domestic space, where female teenagers cry or phone up their lovers or their unfaithful men. Neapolitan urban space is shown only when the lovers walk together: a girl without boyfriend doesn't go through the streets of the city. Consequently, cars can be considered as an extension of domestic spaces. Within cars lovers can hide away from prying eyes and unfaithful men can preserve their integrity.

From the analysis carried out it emerged that music videos are a distorting mirror of private everyday life. Their stereotypical love stories provide a self-perceptive overview of the young slum's inhabitants and they represent a snapshot of the social relationship between male and female. Music videos can be seen as a melodramatic or romantic photography book of the potential young girl's life, with all her pain and her delight. Music videos, in fact, are connected with (future) wedding videos, not only because video production companies produce both, but also because young female teenagers look at them dreaming and waiting for *their* show: the wedding day. On that day female spectators succeed in being protagonists like local pop stars.

1 Ph.D. dissertation on 18th March 2013. Thesis supervisors: prof. Gianni Canova and prof. Massimo Locatelli.

2 Lev Manovich, *The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life*, in Geert Lovink, Sabine Niederer (eds.), *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam 2008, p. 33.

3 I use the Pro-Am definition from Charles Leadbeater, Paul Miller, *The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts Are Changing Our Economy and Society*, Demos, London 2004.

4 It's a methodological approach adopted from Thomas Elsaesser, *Tales of Epiphany and Entropy: Around the Worlds in Eighty Clicks*, in Pelle Vonderau, Patrick Snickars (eds.), *The Youtube Reader*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 166-186.

Saverio Giovacchini, Robert Sklar (eds.),
Global Neorealism. The Transnational History of a Film Style,
University Press of Mississippi,
Jackson 2012, pp. 273+IX

Although neorealism has never experienced a lack of scientific interest, over the last few years the theme has gained particular attention in the academic circles thanks to the publication, among others, of works that combine teaching intent and methodological updates (Haaland 2012; Noto, Pitassio 2010), studies that analyze the history of postwar Italian cinema in light of the innovations caused by neorealism (Barattoni 2012), research into formerly disregarded key aspects (Leavitt 2013), and even useful provocations that stimulate scholars researching in the field of Italian studies to address less familiar topics (O'Leary, O'Rawe 2011).

Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style, a collection edited by Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar, follow this trend, yet provides an original point of view in order to pull neorealism out of the specific area of Italian studies and integrate it into the debate on global cinema.

The volume is organized into three parts, divided according to their historical proximity to the central phase of the neorealist phenomenon. The essays of the first section deal with Italian film culture of the 1930s and early 1940s, and focus on those films and filmmakers that "anticipate" postwar cinema (Zagarrio), on the relationships of intellectual exchange between Fascist and Soviet film cultures in their attempt to stand out as national cinemas – as well as on the impact that neorealism had on the production of post-Stalinist Cinema of the Thaw (Salazkina), and the role of documentary films in relation to the debate on realism before World War II (Caminati).

The second part covers the way in which neorealism has been acclaimed and incorporated in the United States by the intellectual elites (Sklar) and marketed in the most suitable and profitable (Brennan), assumed as a compelling reference by the generation of critics/filmmakers of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Eades), and used as a critical and rhetorical argument in Argentina in the years of Peronism (Halperin). This section is closed, by the co-editor Saverio Giovacchini, with an essay dedicated to John Kitzmiller, a unique example of an African-American star in Italian postwar cinema and an effective starting point for examining the ways in which Italian culture has come to terms with its own colonial past and with the perceived threat of Americanization. The essays in the third part present neorealism as a completely global phenomenon and focus on those cultural institutions that have facilitated the reception and adaptation of neorealism, which as a consequence allowed national cinemas from very different geographical areas, such as Latin America (Mestman), India (Majumdar), West and North Africa (Niang), Brazil (Sarzynski) and Iran (Naficy), to emerge. Finally, the epilogue is devoted to the persistence of a neorealist legacy in contemporary Italian cinema (Carlorosi).

The relatively short length of the essays allows the editors to provide readers with a very broad array of case studies. What emerges as truly global and transnational is less a set of style rules linked to the "original" neorealism, than a range of patterns of adaptation and creolization. All over the world in fact, the

nebulous concept of neorealism is always mediated through a network of institutions, such as film festivals, academies, journals and state funded programs that are very often involved in and responsible for the building of national cinemas. The contributors prove that wherever the word "neorealism" is accepted and applied, it undergoes similar changes, potentially shifting from a critical category, to a style or a mode of production, or to a theoretical stronghold. Sometimes all these transitions are apparent, as in the professional trajectory of James Agee through criticism and filmmaking investigated by Robert Sklar.

Moreover, the same word can describe and cause different occurrences. The ideological connotations of neorealism vary according to particular conditions (Sarzynski) and can be obliterated for political reasons (Halperin), since the relationships between the intellectual elites and the cultural institutions that promote the realist discourse can be characterized by collaboration and rejection at once (Salazkina, Caminati). The reception of neorealism has usually been instrumental in the establishment of a locally rooted art cinema (Mestman), although its impact is traced back to the mainstream (Majudmar), and neorealist films themselves are marketed in the United States not as pure examples of art cinema, but as unstable compounds of art and exploitation (Brennan).

Such a variety of examples can affect the thorough elaboration of some of the historiographical and theoretical issues around which the contributions revolve. The notion of "national cinema", for example, still being crucial in the majority of the essays, is not called into question, but rather referred to by means of assertions of film critics and practitioners, and the absence of a concept that has been highly influential over the past decade, such as that of "ImpersoNations" proposed by Thomas Elsaesser (2005) is notable. Furthermore, in many cases the historiographical common denominator seems to be that of the neorealism as the aesthetic expression of a moral position, according to a tradition of scholarship that recalls the works of Millicent Marcus and Lino Micciché. This not only runs the risk of renationalizing neorealism (and each of its transnational expressions), as the editors point out, but also of restating the factors behind the assumption that realism is an inevitable effect of certain social and historical conditions.

Here lies the limit and also the strongest point of interest of this volume, which does not intend to add much to the understanding of neorealism as an all-Italian phenomenon, but nevertheless succeeds in broadening it. The more the essays turn away from the specific area of Italian studies and address distant contexts, the more they seem to demonstrate that neorealism is a moment of "the nationalization […] of a widely international conversation about realism and political cinema that had been at the center of the 1930s. […] In different ways, all of the conversation's participants were concerned with the possibility of making cinema relevant to what they saw as their national realities" (*Ibidem*, pp. 9-10). The readers may therefore undertake the task to verify how long this conversation has gone on, how deeply and how far this "subterranean artistic tradition" has tunneled through the history and geography of global cinema, and most of all which are the entry points for exploring it and which, instead, are dead ends.

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Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah (eds.),
Theorizing World Cinema,
I.B. Tauris, London 2012, pp. XXXII-229

Against the background of the increasingly global nature of the film market and film industry and the emergence of questions of transnationalism, globalisation, cosmopolitanism and world culture, the need undoubtedly arises to revisit the definition of world cinema and to reach a better grasp of how our understanding of the term has developed within the context of film studies and film history.

This is the main aim of the recently published edited collection *Theorizing World Cinema*: to problematise the collocation of world cinema within the disciplines of film studies and film history. In doing so this work present itself as a new addition to film studies' re-engagement with the notion of world cinema, joining in this way a series of books published in the last decade which include Dennison and Lim's edited collection *Remapping World Cinema*, Dina Iordanova's *Cinema of the Periphery*, Ďurovičová and Newman's *World Cinema: Transnational Perspectives* and (with a different focus) Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt's *Global Art Cinema*.

As part of the recently launched I.B. Tauris World Cinema book series, *Theorizing World Cinema* offers a new theoretical discussion of the subject in order to relocate some of the most established meanings of world cinema by freeing the term from the negative binary division between Hollywood and "non-Hollywood" cinema, in favour of the adoption of a polycentric approach. Previously introduced by Lúcia Nagib (2006) as the filmic adaptation of the notion of "polycentric multiculturalism" (Shohat and Stam 1994: 7), polycentric cinema implies a "world made of interconnected cinemas" (2006: 34) as it focuses on the idea of circulation in order to think of world cinema as a "positive, inclusive, democratic concept" (2006: 35). This theoretical argumentation against the binary system is effectively conceptualised in the introduction of the book written by the three editors, Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah. In fact, it successfully engages with the limits of the discipline, inviting to overcome the Hollywood-centric perspective and to offer viable alternatives to the established understanding of world cinema. This reframing invites the adoption of "a positive and inclusive approach to film studies, which defines world cinema as a polycentric phenomenon with peaks of creation in different places and periods" (p. XXII). In order to address these peaks of creation, from India to South America, *Theorizing World Cinema* comprises twelve chapters – plus the introduction – organised in four "theoretical projects:" the national, the transnational, the diasporic and the realist. This structure is a consequence of the application of the polycentric method to traditional attitudes and new tendencies of film studies, from the theoretical models of transnational cinema to the role played by the notion of realism in the diachronic idea of world cinema. Featuring a series of exemplary case studies analysed by prominent scholars such as John Caughie, Ismail Xavier, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Laura Mulvey (to cite a few), the book ultimately

offers a wide array of theoretical approaches surrounding the notion of world cinema. I am thinking here, for instance, of the notion of accented cinema, re-evaluated by Song Hwee Lim in his analysis of Ang Lee's career from a diasporic perspective; or the concept of "minor cinema," deterritorialisation and national identity discussed by Caughie in his account of Scottish cinema and the film *Morven Callar* (2001). Despite not all the contributions succeed in maintaining the excellent premises of the introduction, in particular in terms of methodological innovation, chapters such as Xaviers' "On Film and Cathedrals: Monumental Art, National Allegories and Culture Walfare" and Dudrah's "Beyond World Cinema? The Dialectics of Black British Diasporic Cinema" present a refreshing and welcomed approach able to influence future studies on the topic. Starting from specific case studies such as Taviani's brothers *Good Morning, Babylon* (Xaviers) and *Bhaji on the Beach* (Dudrah), the two chapters open the discussion to the persistence of national elements in world cinema, and to the questions of community and identity. One of the most significant examples of the polycentric approach in the book is Lùcia Nagib's chapter on the corporeal realism of *The Realm of the Senses* (1976) as part of the realistic theoretical project. Nagib successfully shows the advantages of this approach "drawing on local context and traditions, over the arbitrary application of alien (usually Hollywood-based) paradigms to films produced across the globe" (p. 160). Engaging with the European approaches to the film, in particular that of "anti-realism," Nagib demonstrates how matter of ethics and boundaries related to the realistic representation of and the position of the spectator change when moving away from Western philosophy in favour of local cultural context.

An aspect of the book that, arguably, would have benefitted from further development is the Diasporic theoretical project. In addition to the two good chapters that comprise this section, I felt that a contribution specifically dedicated to the concept of diaspora in film studies and to its relationship with those of national and transnational cinema would have provided a more solid ground for further investigation and contextualizing. This would have allowed the book to offer an important insight on a theoretical approach, which undoubtedly is going to be increasingly pertinent for the discipline.

Despite some minor limitations (mostly due to its nature of edited collection), with its range of chapters *Theorizing World Cinema* is a book that will easily meet the interest of scholars working on different aspects of world and transnational cinema. However, its greatest achievement goes beyond the sum of its contributions: it consists in the invitation to problematise the term "world cinema" and the role it plays in film studies. While doing so, it clearly shows a series of distinctive directions that the discipline can now decide to follow, while moving away from the predominant Hollywood/Western-centric perspective.

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Marc Cerisuelo,
Fondus enchaînés.
Essais de poétique au cinéma,
Seuil, Paris 2012, pp. 309

As a sort of homage to the "Poétique" series, let us start from the paratext and, more precisely, from the book's back cover, where we can read: "Avec ces *Fondus enchaînés*, la collection 'Poétique' s'ouvre au septième art."

This evocative claim should be slightly corrected: this time, cinema goes through the "main entrance." This means, of course, that cinema had already entered the series, although it passed, if I may say so, through the "service entrance." Indeed, it has been one of book series' founders who has been the one "smuggling in" cinema from the very beginning, and who is also the first reference we can find in the book's "Ouverture," significantly titled "Un art des relations" – which also affectionately hints at Gérard Genette's teaching in its concluding lines.

Genette's poetics is one of the main references of Cerisuelo's book, and of course this is not surprising. On the one hand, it is worth mentioning that another book by Cerisuelo, *Hollywood à l'écran* ("a study of historical poetics of films", 2001), guided Genette's largest "incursion" into the field of cinema – namely *Métalepse* (2004), where the borders between narratology and poetics tend to blur. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Genette has recently (see *Figures V*, 2002) referred to cinema, to a certain extent, as the "art of relations" par excellence, in order to discuss why the question "can we love a genre?" should be replaced by the more appropriate question "can we really love something different from a genre?"

However, Genette's poetics is not the only reference in *Fondus enchaînés* – nor, as we will see, the main reference. What Cerisuelo is really interested in is, as he defines it, is an "expanded poetics" ("poétique élargie"). Of course the main features of Genette's poetics, considered as the starting point of the overall project, are reaffirmed, such as the focus on transcendence, the effort of clarification, and the attention to how artworks function. And yet, Cerisuelo adds something more.

According to the challenging project developed into the book, an "expanded poetics of films" must also include the classical film theory (as becomes evident in the section titled "La fin du grand sommeil de l'introuvable dame du Lac," where Cerisuelo refers to Christian Metz and Albert Laffay, among others, to discuss the issues of showing, narrating, and the particular features of the viewing experience), history (we will return to this) and interpretation, which seems to be strictly connected to the fact that an "expanded poetics" cannot but interact with philosophy.

Given this aim, the book does not provide something like a linear, systematic discussion; and although it is clearly divided into three main parts ("Poétique des films," "Cinéphilosophie" and "Transferts culturels"), the three parts continuously overlap and intertwine. Thus, rather than a linear treatment, what we can find is a series of in-depth analyses of individual topics which gradually start to appear as profoundly interconnected and manage to show the overall theoretical project of an extended poetics "at work."

Let me provide some examples. Starting from the well-known field of film remakes (Part One), and passing through Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), the author comes to address (Part Three) the wide topic of "cultural transfers" – that is not a matter of "influence" and, indeed, explains quite well how poetics can cross history. In the more general context of the work of European filmmakers based in Hollywood, Cerisuelo discusses how American Transcendentalism has been imported into films (see the section "Les cinéastes européens à Hollywood et le transcendantalisme"). And it is in

this way that we enter the field of "Cinephilosophy" and we meet Stanley Cavell, who had a broader and fundamental role in regaining the transcendentalist heritage, and who largely (although not exclusively) based his interpretation of films on transcendentalist philosophy.

Stanley Cavell (especially for his well-known book about the "comedy of remarriage," *Pursuits of Happiness*, 1981) and poetics (for its traditional attention to the issue of genre) also meet each other in what Cerisuelo defines as the "seconde comédie américaine," which has Preston Sturges as its leading figure and which particularly interests the author due to its "post-classical" features.

As a matter of fact, Stanley Cavell can be regarded as the true core of the book – the center (the two sections "La philosophie et le cinématographe" and "Stanley Cavell, un philosophe au cinéma") of the central part ("Cinephilosophie"). It is in this part that we clearly understand that the relationships between cinema and philosophy do not consist of a process by which cinema would illustrate or provide examples of philosophical concepts – this is actually the worst way to conceive these relationships.

In opposition to this perspective, Cerisuelo's proposal is in tune with Francesco Casetti's idea (*The Eye of the Century*, 2008) of considering cinema as a form of thought and a place where philosophical investigation can be developed; and indeed, it is not by chance that both Cerisuelo and Casetti refer to Gilles Deleuze (to whom Cerisuelo devotes the section "Deleuze et la comédie: petite forme et grande santé") and, of course, Stanley Cavell.

Cavell's "philosophical criticism" remains the focus of Cerisuelo's research, perhaps one of the best examples of "cinephilosophy" and, I would add, a "forerunner" of the "expanded poetics." As Cerisuelo writes (pp. 196-197), "plutôt que de considérer la philosophie comme une activité qui consisterait dans la 'création' de concepts et dont le cinéma montrerait en quelque façon le théâtre des opérations, Cavell semble procéder à rebours en préférant un geste plus rigoureux qui aboutit à un gain en terme de liberté. Assez proche en cela de la critique, Cavell organise une interprétation centrifuge qui part du film, toujours minutieusement résumé, et propose une 'lecture,' certes autonome du film en question mais rejoignant inévitablement des questions qui le dépassent et aussi [...] que le cinéma contribue à *régler* (ultime tour d'écrou wittgensteinien)."

In this perspective both cinema and poetics, besides being (although on different levels) "arts of relations," are definitely aimed at becoming (p. 197) "un laboratoire inappréciable pour l'étude de notre relation au monde."

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Gertrud Koch, Volker Pantenburg, Simon Rothöhler (eds.),
Screen Dynamics. Mapping the Borders of Cinema,
Österreichisches Filmmusem/Synema Publikationen, Vienna 2012, pp. 184

In the history of viewing technologies 2010 was an important year, if not a turning point a confirmation of a series of processes that began in previous years with the arrival of the digital age. The launch of the iPad marks a decisive step in the delocalisation of audio visual contents and the relocation of the viewing experiences, especially in terms of cinema.

Screen Dynamics collects together essays from a conference called "Cinema without Walls," held towards the beginning of 2010. It is a valuable document on the way film and media studies approach the issue of cinema's

future and the forms that it assumes in the digital environment. The text includes a plurality of perspectives that, on the one hand, demonstrate the vivacity of the debate (and therefore also the urgency of finding a solution to the issue of cinema and the digitalisation process) and, on the other, they provide a chance for a meta-disciplinary reflection on the reorganisation process of film studies.

The text provides as an important opportunity to reorganise and revive the debate. Reading the essays collected in *Screen Dynamics*, we can identify three aspects that outline a new possible architecture of film and media studies.

The first aspect deals directly with the research policies. In particular the essays by Gertrud Koch and Vinzenz Hediger examine a change in film studies and a progressive shifting of the reflection on cinema from 'what it is' (revealed as aporetic well before the start of the digitalisation process) to 'where it is' – and, according to Koch, also 'when' and 'how' cinema is. Especially the issue of place and space becomes crucial: film studies are called upon to account for the plurality of cinema locations (intended as places where cinema is experienced, as well as places of production – the impulse originating in postcolonial studies), but also, and more radically, to account for the configuration that the cinema experience space assumes and of the network of relations that come into being between film, spectator, platform and the social and cultural environment. In this sense the reformulation of the question at the heart of film studies assumes a strategic importance: it imparts an inductive progression to the reflection, breaking the impasse of the speculative and ontological approaches, and encourages an understanding (and therefore appreciation) of the multiple situations and contexts that cinema is relocating in and reinventing itself, demonstrating the persistent (social, cultural and aesthetic) prominence of the cinematic experience.

The second aspect that emerges from *Screen Dynamics* is the naturalization of the change. The digital age has not distorted cinema's identity; rather it has rendered the plurality (or better still the mobility) of its forms patent and irrefutable. The experimentation and contamination with art (Volker Pantenburg), the phenomena of metalepsis (Thomas Morsh) and the interaction (Victor Burgin), are all aspects that could already be found in cinema; they have merely been intensified in the digital environment. Expanded cinema represents a stage of cinema's evolutionary process and the changing forms that it presents itself in are the epiphenomenon of the mobile nature of the medium. Similarly to theories on spectatorship – Patenburg recalls – the comparison with the empirics and the acknowledgement of the complexity and variability of historical data allow us to grasp, in the exuberance of cinema's current forms, the full expression of its nature and, I would add, proof of its versatility and capacity to communicate with the present.

A final aspect emerges from the essays collected in *Screen Dynamics*, which we can sum up as cinema's resilience, in other words its capacity to maintain its distinctive traits. The theme of resilience emerges in different contexts in relation to different aspects. Tom Gunning, for example, examines the issue of cinema's indexicality (with its speculative criticality), highlighting the capacity of digital technologies of strengthening the 'impression of reality', confirming a 'classic' aspect of the medium. Or, in terms of the way cinema is viewed, the phenomena of new cinephiles, however renewed and often different from the past, reveal continuity between a contemporary cinematic experience and its previous forms (Jonathan Rosenbaum). Or Miriam Hansen's proposal of leaving the task of rethinking cinema to the new generations and avoiding the pessimistic visions of the effects of digitalisation, implies

the idea of a persistence of the cinematic experience as something that lies deep in the culture and collective memory (not least, as Raymond Bellour's essay reveals, as nostalgia), which is merely waiting to be acknowledged.

The essays collected in *Screen dynamics*, for their diversity in approach and perspective, share the conviction that cinema is anything but dead, but rather livelier than ever. Film studies are perhaps in not such a healthy state, often stuck on rear guard positions and with a categorial and speculative apparatus that finds it difficult to account for any changes. *Screen dynamics* seems to me like an excellent survival manual: may those who read it, apply it.

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