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Synoptique 5 :: Published November 1st, 2004.

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Layout by Janos Sitar.

SYNOPTIQUE: The Journal of Film and Film Studies

This is a journal about film and its communities. It was founded in late 2003 by Masters students at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. These two online journals are a part of Synoptique's immediate community:



Nouvelles vue sur le cinéma québécois edited by Bruno Cornellier presents its summer-autumn 2004 edition on Sexe, sexualité et nationalité

OR

Click here for the SYNOPTIQUE ARCHIVES

OFFSCREEN is the English companion publication to the wildly successful French journal Hors Champs. It is heroically maintained by part-time Concordia Faculty member Donato Totaro. The latest edition is dedicated to Janet Leigh.

Synoptique is able to publish thanks to the support of: The CGFSSA The Concordia Research Chair in Film Studies The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema

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To send us press releases, publicity material, community postings or any other relevant information, please contact our assignment editor Jon Doyle

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Click here to visit the website.

About Synoptique:

We've been thinking about life and art and the education that links Nous avons réfléchi à la vie, à l'art et à l'éducation qui les lie. À them. And the critic who sets the bait for the artist to rise to. And abstraction. The moviegoer re-circulating glib opinions. The filmmaker railing against bad films. The bad films. Film Studies—a s'en prenant aux mauvais films. Aux mauvais films. Les études name for an academic discipline—is already a self-reflexive past time. Let's extend Film Studies to include an entire range of activity related to film, of which our academic procedures are an important part, but not the only part, and in no way hermetic. It is our intention to make sensible to those looking that there are connections here—historical, personal, coincidental—and that these connections account for a film community, and it is only with qu'il existe des liens historiques, personnels et fortuits. Ces liens the frame of a film community that we can think about film. And its justifient une communauté de cinéphiles et c'est uniquement à education.

We wanted to create an online resource of student work at Concordia. For students at Concordia. To give expression to the intellectual character of M.A. Film Studies at this University by publishing what was rapidly becoming a lost history of ideas. Students work here for two years, take classes, write theses, go on their way, leave faint traces, might never take a stand or apportion an opinion. We wanted to discover what tradition we had inherited, what debates we were continuing, which debates we weren't inventing. But what began as a way to provide a continuity of ideas between years for Concordia M.A. Film Studies position ou partager une opinion. Nous avons voulu découvrir de students, has been expanded to recognize the play of influence and the fluidity of thought as it accounts for a discourse that links our classrooms to Montreal, and Montreal to the world. So that we ce qui semblait annoncer une manière d'assurer une continuité might recognize again these ideas if we should pass them by. So that we might see what we missed or took for granted when we thought they were ours.

To publish—to publish self-reflexively—work related to the theme of a University course, for example, to publish again on an old familiar topic, is not simply to revisit one more time New German Cinema or Canadian Documentary. It is to admit to one more defining characteristic of the ideas now in circulation. The good to reveal historical tenor. As our online archive of such themes develops—as more is published from the active thinking communities in Concordia, Montreal, and the world—these ideas will cease to be clearly delimited, and will instead be reworked and re-imagined across all sorts of social and intellectual scapes. And it is in the acts of meeting these ideas again that we become responsive to the synoptic character of the intellectual games we play. Those lines of thought should be teased out. Film Studies, by itself, an object of detailed study. We are endeavouring to make it our object of study. There are practical considerations when taking on such an investigation: a responsive world to discover and find place in.

We want to establish a context. We want to make sensible a context within which these ideas won't be lost, where they can be found, breached, and their physiognomies compared. So this task becomes once removed from archaeology. This is commentary on d'une étude détaillée sur laquelle nous aspirons à travailler. Des chains of insights, some familiar, some decaying, some life altering, some devastating. On a lifetime of education. Not a series of explicit investigations—not just that—but a resource where ideas influence ideas through clandestine channels. Ideas influence life and lives influence idea. It shows the chemical palettes where colours in proximity do not just mix to create new shades but are reactive, explosive, transformative: are not in long-standing community long-standing in flux. The professors, the experts, the professionals, the thinkers that have made decisions to teach certain things and in certain ways, the students d'autres qui bouleversent la vie ou sont dévastatrices. Faire du that chose to follow leads, reject others, see some films and not others, read some books but not others, find their way, realize all of the myriad ways that their taste and sensibility has developed... this is education. This long process of education. We've been thinking about the polyphony of educations in these communities. The desire to get better. How art and life make sense.

en français:

l'artiste ne sachant pas s'exprimer sur son propre travail, mordant the artist inarticulate about his or her own work. The scholar lost in à l'appât tendu par le critique. Au chercheur perdu dans l'abstrait, au cinéphile retransmettant des opinions trop faciles. Au cinéaste cinématographiques - désignation d'une discipline académique est déjà un passe-temps auto réflexif. Étendons sa définition pour y inclure un éventail complet d'activités reliées au cinéma, dont nos méthodes académiques constituent une partie importante, mais pas la seule et ce, en aucune manière hermétique. Notre intention est de faire prendre conscience à nos lecteurs du fait l'intérieur du cadre de celle-ci que nous pouvons réfléchir sur le cinéma. Sur son apprentissage.

> Nous avons voulu créer une ressource en ligne du travail étudiant à Concordia, pour les étudiants de Concordia. Pour laisser s'exprimer le caractère intellectuel des études cinématographiques au niveau de la maîtrise, en publiant ce qui devenait rapidement une histoire perdue des idées. Les étudiants travaillent au département depuis deux ans, suivent des cours, rédigent des mémoires, poursuivent leur chemin, mais laissent des traces minimes, ils pourraient même ne jamais prendre quelle tradition nous avons héritée, quels débats nous poursuivons, quelles discussions ne venaient pas de nous. Mais d'idées à travers les ans s'est étendu jusqu'à une reconnaissance du jeu d'influence et de la fluidité d'une pensée telle, qu'elle justifiait un discours liant nos classes à Montréal, et Montréal à l'univers. De sorte que nous puissions reconnaître encore ces idées, si nous devions les transmettre. De sorte que nous voyions ce que nous avions manqué ou pris pour acquis, lorsque nous pensions que ces idées étaient nôtres.

Publier – publier avec auto-réflexivité – un travail relié au thème ideas and the bad. It is to think about those ideas now in play. It is d'un cours universitaire ou s'exprimer encore une fois sur un vieux sujet familier, ne consiste pas simplement à revisiter une fois de plus le nouveau cinéma allemand ou le documentaire canadien; c'est admettre une caractéristique définitoire de plus aux idées déjà en circulation. Les mauvaises idées et les bonnes. C'est penser aux idées présentement à l'œuvre. C'est révéler la teneur historique. Attendu que nos archives en ligne sur de tels thèmes se développent – proportionnellement aux nouvelles publications des communautés pensantes de l'Université de Concordia, de like any intellectual discipline, is reconsidered every moment. It is, l'Université de Montréal et de partout dans le monde –, ces idées cesseront d'être clairement délimitées et seront plutôt retravaillées et réimaginées à travers toutes sortes de champs d'études sociales et intellectuelles. C'est dans le but de rencontrer à nouveau ces idées que nous devenons réceptifs au caractère synoptique des joutes intellectuelles auxquelles nous jouons. Ces lignes de pensées doivent être démêlées. Comme n'importe quelle discipline intellectuelle, les études cinématographiques se doivent d'être constamment reconsidérées. Elles forment l'objet considérations d'ordre pratique se posent afin d'entreprendre de telles études : elles résident dans un univers réceptif à découvrir

et dans lequel nous cherchons notre place. Nous désirons établir un contexte. Nous désirons créer un contexte judicieux où ces idées ne seront pas perdues, où nous pourrons les trouver, où elles pourront être transgressées et leurs service of any single picture, but are the spectacular elements of a physionomies comparées. De sorte qu'un jour cette tâche puisse s'évader du domaine de l'archéologie. Faire du commentaire sur des enchaînements d'idées, certaines familières ou en déclin. commentaire sur une éducation qui s'étend à la vie entière. Non pas une série d'enquêtes explicites, mais une ressource où les idées influencent les idées à travers des canaux clandestins, où les idées influencent la vie et les vies influencent les idées. De là, faire naître des palettes de couleurs qui ne font pas seulement se mélanger pour créer de nouveaux tons, mais qui réagissent entre elles: explosions et transformations. Elles ne sont au service d'aucune image particulière, mais constituent les éléments spectaculaires d'une vieille communauté en constante évolution. Les professeurs, les experts, les professionnels et les penseurs qui ont pris la décision d'enseigner certaines choses d'une certaine façon. Les étudiants qui ont choisi de suivre ou de rejeter des exemples, de visionner ou de fermer les yeux sur certains films, de lire ou de ne pas lire certains livres, trouvent leur chemin, réalisent une myriade de manières dont leurs goûts et leur sensibilité se nourris... c'est en partie cela l'éducation. Le long processus de l'éducation. Nous avons réfléchi sur la polyphonie des différentes éducations dans ces communautés. Le désir d'être mieux. Comment l'art et la vie font sens.

The gallery can be found at http://www.synoptique.ca/galleries/style

This Link Opens a New Window

The following text can also be found at the above link.

The SYNOPTIQUE STYLE GALLERY springs from film lovers talking about film and realizing that whether they were arguing about films they loved, films they hated or films that just seemed unavoidably "important" most of their talk was about film style. But we (yes, this writer was among these talkers) also realized that the same aspects of film style were not equally important to each of us. We also began to suspect that our ideas of what style meant varied wildly. How to peg the concept down?

At first the task seemed daunting: as the conversation spread wider and more people became involved more films began to be cited, more differences seemed to creep in, and the talk tended to become more abstract and hypothetical.

This gallery became a way to capture this expanding conversation without closing it off or narrowing it down. It became a way to collect concrete examples from actual films that individuals were willing to stand behind and point to and say, "Yes, this is a moment of film style." It became a way of helping us to see and to hear what the conversation is about and to give us hints of what still manages (somehow) to slip through the cracks. More importantly, it become a way to expand the conversation into new territory.

The Gallery you see is composed of people's responses to a prompt: we asked people to identify and describe a moment of film style. That moment could be anything and was. A raised eyebrow, a sequence, a motif recurring throughout the film, all of these and more were potential style moments. Everyone approached the question differently and talk about what should be in the gallery quickly produced a variety of alternate prompts:

- 1. Free associate on film style: what example keeps coming back to you? Do you have an acid test moment you compare all other style moments to?
- 2. Do you have a favorite film moment? Would you call it "stylish"?
- 3. What was the first moment where you remember watching a film and thought of its "stylishness"?
- 4. If you were a teacher and someone asked you to explain film style, what example would you use to do so?

But The Gallery is not finished and the conversation about style has barely begun. We want more examples of films style, more descriptions of what makes them valuable, more arguments about why style matters and how. We want this so we can begin to see films better. This gallery is full of moments chosen for one of the best possible reasons: they moved us emotionally, mentally, aesthetically, etc. Let's speak about style in these moments and see what sense we can make of them.

Please use the link at the top of this page to visit the gallery.

COMMENTS:

Dear Synoptique editors: I think your Style Gallery is a fantastic idea and applaud your choices and comments. I am afraid you are going to be inundated with follow-up suggestions. May I be so bold to offer two: The opening montage in End of The Road (1970) directed by Aram Avakian, the legendary sixties film editor of Jazz for A Summer's Day, The Miracle Worker, Lilith, and Mickey One. The montage intercuts newsreel footage, rostrum camera work, and dramatic footage to depict the childhood and formative years of the burn out college graduate played by Stacy Keach. The sequence is edited to Billie Holliday's "Don't Worry 'Bout Me" and concludes with Keach's character standing in a catatonic state on a New England railway station platform. I have also been haunted by the sequence in Alan Pakula's Klute (1972), when Jane Fonda as the call-girl Bree Daniels visits her elderly client at his garment district office. As part of a recurring fantasy of the client's, she plays a European sophisticate. Set to a haunting and far too brief piece of music by Michael Small, the sequence reminds us that Daniels is also playing out a fantasy - of the beautiful and talented actress she has failed to become - and that her interaction with the client is one of affection rather than the contempt or alienation she feels for many of her other clients. ... a great site by the way which I will be recommending to other friends and colleagues. Best, Lee Hill

By Lee Hill on 2004 11 06

Style is the point a film is built through. But to talk about a film director's style, i don't all the way understand the question. Which is maybe what we're all looking to define in here. A clear question to answer. Because what is wes anderson's style is most easily answered, wes anderson's style (or whatever director.) To extrapolate from there it is too easy to mistake his concrete, elaborately detailed sets, quirky wardrobe, soft humor, awkward beats but all to what end, where's the point. Where's the end obviously within in him. We have to go too deep to find it. We may have to ruin it to find it. Because our style could be a collection of insecurities or vanity. But it could be a collection of hopes, aspirations and imitations. Because whatever we do or why we do it can't be broken into degrees. How much of our doing was imitation of our idols, how much was spite, how much was instinct? In this case Wes Anderson made a sweet sad visual interpreation of the modern fiction set in new york that he loved as a teenager. That's what he made but a style in which it was made is faceted to the point of blinding. What makes a person fill a house top to bottom with surreality? Why is he attempting to create a believeable unreality? Why does he leave out: graphic sex, human deformity, bowel movements. Why are his movies safe and classy? Because of his style. So I don't know what we're trying to get at here. His style is everything within him, everything he'll tell us on the bonus features is just the part of what he knows about his style that he's comfortable to share. What he has in his head and heart that he doesn't tell us or know about is probably what we're trying to get at. Or else we can repeat the following ad infinitum adlibbing all along. _ spends his time on _____, placing ____ Most of the time to the benefit of his _____. The _ is an interpretation of the ___ we imagine when about it. And so on. What's interesting is that this is the first comment on either of wes anderson's movies. All the other eight or so clips have comments. Is that an effect of his style? Is it in admiration for the guy or being too cool for him or what. My generation, born in the late seventies, sees in his movies a contemporary artist that has come the closest to painting a true emblem of our spirit. A sad optimism. We've been hurt, all of us along the way. And we delight in a combination of self-pity and having endured. And also of our potential as underachievers.

By Jayson Rahmlow on 2004 11 06

I believe you may look to Kenneth Burke's definition of form, the creation of a desire and then fulfilling that desire. My first experience noticing style was in 1979 when my parents took me to see Apocolypse Now. Three scenes created and fulfilled a desire for me, the surfing scene with Robert Duvall and Timothy Bottoms, he played Bush in Thats My Bush, The scene at the last base before Kurtz, and the ending Napalming of Kurtz's compound. The Scene in Ran with the Telephoto view of the Samurai spilling onto the battle field though is the most beautiful. The opening scene of Patton is as well.

By Jason Garrett Hitzert on 2004 11 15

http://articles.synoptique.ca/style_gallery/

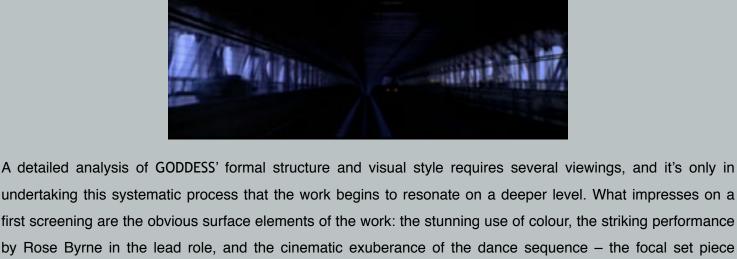
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stylists, but unfortunately this aspect of her work has rarely been acknowledged in detail as her oeuvre tends to be addressed only in terms of discourses of a feminist or national cinema nature. Stacey DeWolfe's analysis confronts this oversight and develops a case for GODDESS' place in the history of film style.

The opening sequence of Clara Law's THE GODDESS OF 1967 begins on a black screen with the low rumble of machines underneath. As the sound increases and starts to take shape, silvery credits glide into view and shimmer ephemerally before fading away. That these words skate horizontally across the frame anticipates the forward motion of the formal structure, but does little to prepare us for the coming rupture, as the film cuts abruptly to a speeding commuter train, hurtling down the tracks. With its front-mounted camera, the shot takes in the surrounding scenery as nothing more than a blur of red and white streaks in the night sky and propels the spectator into the narrative with a dizzying boldness, like a time machine, sucking us out of this reality and into another time and place, the metallic dissonance now contextualized as the grinding of brakes and the shriek of wheels scraping against tracks.



by Rose Byrne in the lead role, and the cinematic exuberance of the dance sequence - the focal set piece whose double articulation conjoins the present to its historical parallel, while concurrently bending toward the central characters' resolution through the humanization of the erotic perspective. And while critics have been disappointed with the "reductive and simplistic ideas of character and story" (Villella 4), a careful study of the film's mise-en-scene and cinematographic properties posits Law as a gifted metteur-en-scene whose compositional approach and lyrical use of camera movement informs a second reading through which the themes layered into the text can be explored. The Tokyo Prologue Returning to the film, we find ourselves back on our moving trajectory, but now everything has changed. An

interior announces the existence of human life – including our hero, JM – but what is perhaps of greater import is

the emergence of the computer screen, which appears as an insert, disembodied from any causal point of view. Through its written text, the binary of materialism and spirituality [2] is stated – "I want to buy god," then, "I want

What follows is an imaginative series of single-shot events, set within the walls of a Tokyo apartment over the course of several days and narrated through diegetic music [3] and text. The sequence is artfully designed and

oneiric quality has fallen over the train, as though it has emerged from the opposite side of the time machine, displaced from the present and floating through a futuristic vision of urban modernity, replete with towering glass structures and the ubiquitous presence of technology. In Law's Tokyo, there are no bright colours and no

advertisements, [1] and the alien landscape is washed with pale blues and grays. Here the train moves in slowmotion, revealing the city through a series of jump cuts that transport us through time and space. A cut to the

functions on a number of thematic, narrative and stylistic levels: offering insight into JM's detachment, introducing the provocative incident which launches us into the story, and laying the groundwork for the visual motifs which are developed throughout the film. In the interior of the four-room apartment, the narrative is informed by the graphic compositions that play with the shadows of film noir and introduce the motif of fractured space. With the decision to block actors in rooms separate from the camera, and having trimmed the royal blue walls with black, Law is able to construct her shots so that these dominant verticals are always present, creating the sense of a split screen within an otherwise organic single frame. In the first sequence, rock music streams from a visible speaker, drawing attention to its place within the

diegesis, and a series of jump cuts carry us into the kitchen where a kettle whistles as JM prepares dinner for his snakes. With a transition made more striking by the shift in sound, the film cuts to a close-up of JM, his face warm against the blue background. The play between warm and cool colours is kept in constant balance in the film, a lighting design that echoes the principles of Yin and Yang. A piano sonata in a minor key combined with the hissing of the snakes provides accompaniment for this unusual family dinner. Indigenous chanting triggers a shift to JM as he eats a bowl of steaming noodles, framed by the doorway, physically set

apart from even this machine-mediated communication, his gaze

focused on the monitor in the adjacent room. The tone is serious but the meaning unclear as he types: "how good is she?" The fizzle

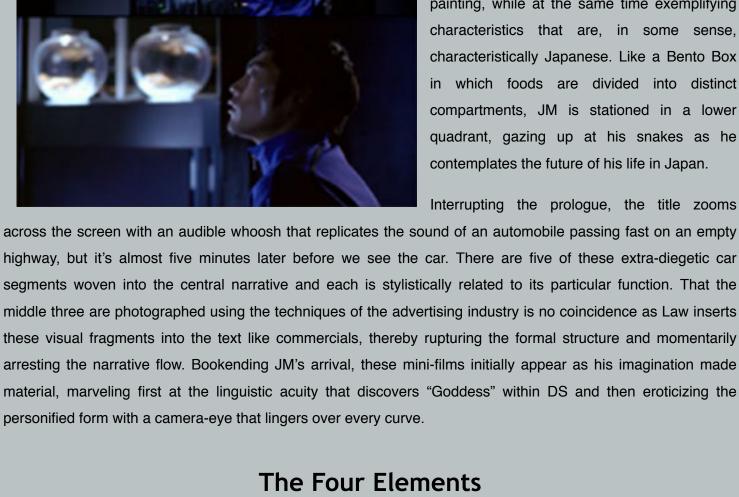
of a cigarette emphasizes a final jump to JM, framed by the

window, and illuminated once again by a warm glow. Latin music throbs from the stereo, symbolic of the human passion waiting to

be released by the Goddess.

With a nod to Ozu and Naruse, Law shoots these scenes from every direction, revealing all four walls but never establishing the space, so that it is only after repeated viewings that the layout of the apartment becomes clear. Here we have the sense of JM's transience, made concrete by the sparseness of the furnishings as well as the camera's reluctance to settle into one point-of-view. In the morning the camera begins to move, tracking back from the window to find JM and a girl in bed. JM wears shades to block out the light – his spiritual blindness made manifest. Consistent, but never formulaic in her use of visual motifs, the meaning of the vertical line shifts with each new scene, separating JM and his girl from the speaker in one and cleaving the relationship in another by delineating the domestic from the technological, placing JM and his computer to the right, apart from the girl and her chores to the left. The music turns with every cut – from jazzy big band to Beethoven to 60s style pop – speaking perhaps to a generation defined by a postmodern assemblage of cultural influences, as well as emphasizing the absence of language which finds its resolution at the dinner table where the couple munch on burgers, silently rocking as though in a trance. The lyrics, however, are instructive and obliquely force the back story into the present: "people running don't have much to say." Throughout this sequence, the computer's text continues to build the narrative and fixes the notion of the personified machine whose erotic objectification is evidenced in the extra-diegetic [4] commercial inserts. As the virtual conversation moves into a financial negotiation, a Klezmer tune marks the cut to a tracking shot that

horizontal lines resembling a Mondrian painting, while at the same time exemplifying characteristics that are, in some sense, characteristically Japanese. Like a Bento Box in which foods are divided into distinct compartments, JM is stationed in a lower



of the frame. As BG leads JM down the hall, we are distracted from her blindness by the visual magnificence of her hair which seems to glow from

within, taking on religious proportions as its fiery red hue connects to the horrorshow of events in

both the recent, and distant, past. But while her

lack of sight is not made plain until the following

close-up of BG whose face is blue against the stark black background, grounding her to these

worldly elements, and then panning across this

dark expanse to find JM as he emerges into light. As BG reaches out her hand, the camera circles and she moves into its arc to settle

human being," she says). She is blind, but sees much more clearly than he.

Moments later, his perverted appropriation of Romantic individualism is revealed by a disembodied shot of a violent purple

sunset – that is seen as though from his mind's eye –, providing the backdrop which supports his acts. In the morning, Marie walks out into a gentle sunrise of pale pinks and purples, captured in a vast wide shot that signifies her small place in God's world, but she

reveals JM on a treadmill. Here running acts

The first thing we notice as JM arrives at the house in Australia is that the crown of his head has been dyed an alarming shade of green. The colour, which acts as a visual reminder of the glowing tanks in the Tokyo apartment, also serves to preface the saturated palette

employed in insulating the present from its ever-present past. Here the film stock has

as a metaphor grounded in the decision -

which is only revealed in the middle of the film - that will determine his fate. The remarkable

composition that follows sees JM meditating on

this decision in an interplay of vertical and

quadrant, gazing up at his snakes as he

Interrupting the prologue, the title zooms

contemplates the future of his life in Japan.

scene, what becomes clear in retrospect is BG's sixth sense, her gift of intuition. As fire operates within the narrative on a symbolic level, so the remaining three elements find their home in the film. Law infuses the diegetic scenes of the DS with air - an idea made literal in the garage when it becomes blown up like a balloon – appropriating the techniques of traditional rear screen projection to create the sensation

of flight. The majority of the driving sequences are studio-shot with a crane-mounted camera that captures the

passengers in a medium two-shot, with the back window of the car centered in the frame and the bulk of the moving footage projected onto this window. Law makes no effort to conceal her methods, or disguise the surreal quality of the sequences, but rather enhances the effect through her use of expressionistic, rather than

been pushed during processing to produce a high-contrast look that brings out the whites and blacks, while at the same time "corrupting" (Millard 5) the colours and giving them an almost metallic sheen. The door frame is stark white, but still functions in the vertical, severing the filmic space and isolating the characters on either side

naturalistic imagery, that loops and repeats and is often smeared and blurred as though shot with a wide open aperture. The result is that the DS becomes a sort of "personalised vessel travelling in an alternate time-space continuum" (Villella 2) that serves to suture the present to the past, both within the diegesis - and through the manipulation of classical cinematic mise-en-scene – and within the history of cinema itself. [5] Visual representations of water are mostly absent in the film, though the first physical encounter between JM and BG is witnessed by a blue light that undulates through the curtain as though reflected off a shimmering lake. Law speaks of the concept of hei-fen, a Chinese expression that has no English translation, but which she describes as a "level of understanding" gained through atmosphere and tone, which takes you both inside the situation as well as the character (Millard, 6). As we move toward the first touch, this idea of hei-fen find its expression, starting with a

That BG finds her spiritual strength in an almost pagan embrace of nature is significant in the relationship that she shares with her mother, Marie. In the second flashback, we cut abruptly to a wide shot of the desert horizon, where a red-hued dust storm rages in the distance. However it is not the beauty of nature that draws Marie into the frame, but the fury of God under whose eyes she will transform her shame into a sort of radical devotion. Hiding in the DS to escape from the storm, BG yearns to understand what is going on and rolls down the window to feel the wind against her face, embracing the storm's violent energy. Building to the sequence's fiery

conclusion, these early scenes are coloured with reds, not the warm reds of the sun, but the deep reds of earth

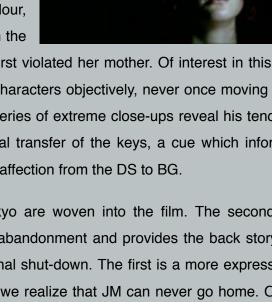
Throughout the film, the mise-en-scene continues to illustrate the divergent religious convictions of the three characters. Vertical lines maintain their role in marking the spiritual isolation of the characters, and as if to

reinforce the imminent danger, Grandpa is restrained by two solid blocks which separate him from the two girls.

and fire; and in the embers of a cigarette, or the red of a shirt, they foreshadow Marie's tragic end.

beside him, the colours shifting across her face as she rests her fingers on his cheek ("you are an unhappy

becomes enraged when her gaze falls upon BG who is clinging to a tree – the same tree that she returns to after her encounter with the boxer and that grounds her to the earth and offers her solace. The Presence of the Past When for the second time BG and JM come together physically, there is an increased sense of balance and light in the mise-en-scene. In a room – that in its symmetry reflects a Japanese aesthetic – two beds are positioned on either side of a large window. A series of jump cuts moves us toward the touch, which in keeping with the formal design of opposites and parallels, comes this time from JM. From an overhead shot of their respective beds, we cut to them lying side by



visual motifs, but is thematically less resonant than the other two, which create meaningful parallels between the three generations of women. Set in the recent past of only three years earlier, BG has gathered the strength to leave home and is searching for a decent person to transport her to the city. Here, in the driving scenes, the rear projection is more realistic, with recognizable details like bushes and plants, underscoring the distinction between this more physical journey and its psychological double on the return home. The moments leading up to the attempted rape are shot with a long lens, which emphasizes her blindness by removing the external world and forcing our attention onto that which is immediately present – that which she can feel and touch and smell. As the sun drops behind the horizon and the blistering oranges fade to black, Law uses single source lighting to mimic nature, as though representing a full but exaggerated moon, so that the objects and people seem to glow from

The effect of this high-contrast design is similar to that which was used in David Lynch's WILD AT HEART,

particularly in the car crash scene, which in its oneiric surrealism bears a striking resemblance to the portrayal of BG's escape from the drunken boxer. [6] When we come across BG again, she is curled into the fetal position

around the trunk of that tree, protected by a pack of wild dingoes. What becomes clear in this image is BG's

connection to the element of earth, nature and its creatures, with which she has an unspoken dialogue.

An extensive tracking shot through the dense underbrush is dirty with foregrounded twigs and bushes and echoes the mysterious river shots in Jim

Jarmusch's DOWN BY LAW. Carrying us into the third flashback, the movement

transports us into an environment that seems to brim with life until we arrive at the abandoned DS and discover that it is the location of a death. Here we are

introduced to Grandpa as a kinder man who has been shattered by the death

of his wife, and though Law never condones his abusive behaviour in the present, the balanced portrait offered in this sequence comes as something of a surprise, especially in light of Fiona Villella's article in Sense of Cinema in

which she states that, "the most unsatisfying part of Goddess is the...

finds the past pushing to the surface at exactly those moments when BG is experiencing happiness.

treatment of the Grandpa character... [which] is overly heavy-handed and one-dimensional" (4). But in the distant past, his character is more eccentric than evil, secluded in his barnyard laboratory trying to recreate the perfect Châteauneuf-du-Pape and not yet in possession of his vision for the future. That this father is transformed into the Kurtz-like monster portrayed in the climactic scene owes more to a combination of isolation and grief than it does to any sort of malignant intent, but exactly what Law is trying to say about this character is difficult to discern. In a scene that is as tender and as pure as the spectator can accept, knowing the transgressions that have since occurred, the camera cranes down slowly toward the pair as they rest in the grass staring up at the stars. Marie lies on top of her father, her head resting against his chest, in a shot that informs the emotions which later drive her to bring about her own death. After spending the evening star-gazing with BG,

and BG with a wide-angle lens, and her raised hands seem to brush against the frame, creating a dizzying effect which moves the spectator into her subjective experience. In an effort to teach her how to dance, JM puts his hands on BG's shoulders and moves her from side to side, the background behind them a shock of white, pink and blue. Grandpa repeats this same action in the flashback, which Law recalls with a matched framing, but his passion and pain overtake him as he grabs Marie and swings her violently into the air. [7]

What is clear in a comparison between the two time frames is that BG is her grandmother's daughter in spirit, [8] finding happiness where she can and determined to set herself free. That Law shoots the present with a camera that is often in motion creates an atmosphere that could be described as pure joy. The swirls of colours and the use of the spotlight draw the two characters out of the darkness and into each other's arms. With a cut to a close-up and a sudden kiss, the relationship is transformed into one of human connectedness, which is resolved in its later consummation. Here that connectedness is made evident in the following shot in which BG is lit

of BG's voice on the soundtrack. She calls out into a more human past, seeking information about that past to

inform the present.

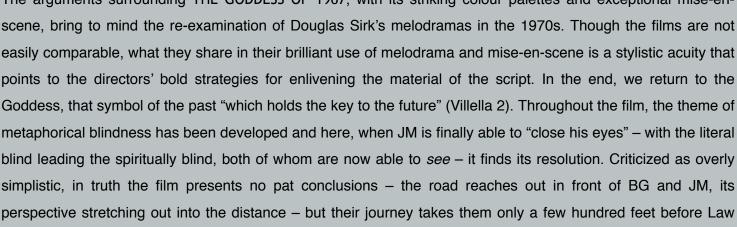
collision of colour, music, movement and light.

plunged into the dark blue of her blindness.

With a smash cut to a low, wide-angle moving camera that scuttles over the jagged earth at alarming speed, we arrive at our final destination. The sky behind the trailer is so blue and the clouds so still that the verisimilitude of the location comes into question. Is this another rear projection? And if so, what can we read into this replacement of the real? Here the film stock is pushed even further so that the ground becomes bright white and the colours of the car and trailer are reduced to their metallic essence. A sharp horizontal line divides the frame as we cut to the sky and then crane down to the entrance of the underground. As we move down into the "outback heart of darkness" (Teo 2), a place of insanity and lavish, rotting excess, we

have the resolution of the melodrama in which BG, despite the offer of marriage, must put an end to her

dysfunctional family legacy so that she can more forward. The cave interior is rocky, though even here sharp verticals divide the characters from each other. JM's flashlight warms their faces but when he leaves, BG is



stops the car and cuts to black. What does become concretized in this final scene is the role of the mise-en-

scene, as Law returns the colours of the setting to their natural richness and allows the DS to drive off into that realm of the real. No longer dependent on the mediating fiction of the DS and her rear-projection, the journey

forward will be grounded – but no longer haunted – by the earth which gave BG life.

As opposed to Quentin Tarantino's KILL BILL whose Tokyo landscape is dotted with a plethora of garish signs, which is a nod to the intrusion of America on Japanese culture and to the commodification of culture by technology. ² From Villella's text, "Materialism and Spiritualism in THE GODDESS OF 1967."

http://www.fortissimofilms.nl/catalogue/title.asp?filmID=82. ⁴ I am using this term as an alternate to nondiegetic to describe the unique manner in which the story of the Goddess breaks into the film's narrative, while at the same time running parallel to its themes.

makes no mention of his work. Though Law states explicitly that she dislikes American films, the character of Grandpa bears a striking resemblance to TWIN PEAKS' Leland Palmer, a father who crosses the line from paternal love, to violent incest.

Montreal. She is in the process of putting the finishing touches on the feature-length documentary EVERYTHING'S COMING MY WAY: THE LIFE AND MUSICE OF GORDON THOMAS, and is working toward the completion of her graduate thesis, "Masochism, Sound & Spectatorship in Three Films by Lars von Trier" for the spring of 2006. Stacey has also written for the independent film journal, Moving Picture Views, and is

where, in a close-up of her face, the extent of her emotional torment is revealed. The scene is shaded with pale blues and greens, though at the instant of her greatest anguish, a circle of red is visible on the wall behind her. The colour, which is not connected to any diegetic source, finds its origin in the past, drawing a parallel to the moment when her grandfather first violated her mother. Of interest in this scene, and the one described above, is the fact that Law shoots her characters objectively, never once moving in for a subjective point of view. As JM begins to make love to BG, a series of extreme close-ups reveal his tenderness for the first time and provide a visual echo back to the original transfer of the keys, a cue which informs the present and suggests the beginning of the transference of JM's affection from the DS to BG. In addition to BG's flashbacks, two cinematic detours to Tokyo are woven into the film. The second, more

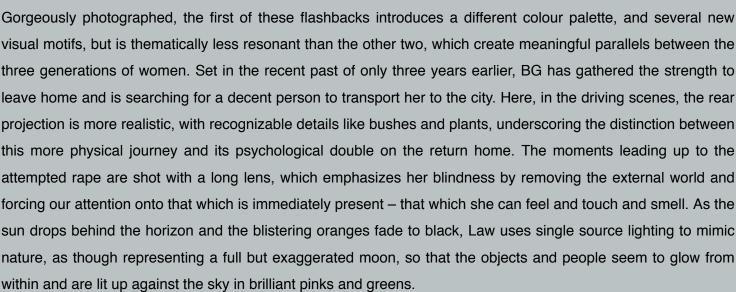
side, not touching and staring up at the ceiling. A third shot finds

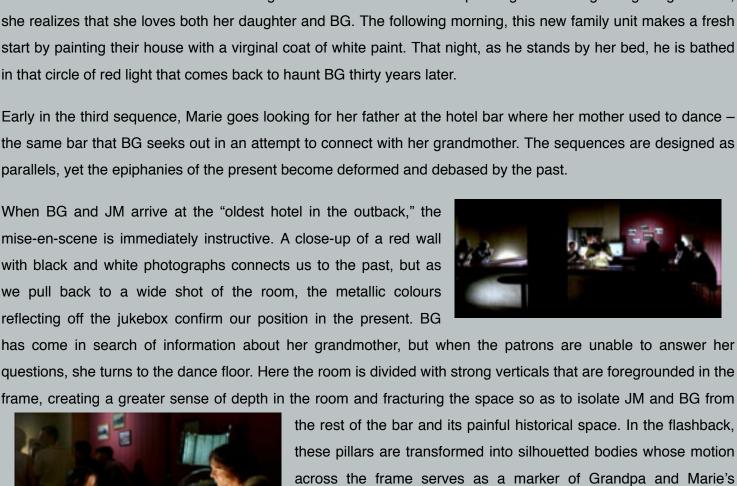
them naked and entwined, and a fourth finds BG sitting atop JM,

conventionally structured, is triggered by JM's sudden fear of abandonment and provides the back story to his trouble with the police and the possible reasons for his emotional shut-down. The first is a more expressionistic voyage, wrapped in a nostalgia that is better understood once we realize that JM can never go home. Opening on the face of a glass skyscraper, it calls to mind the opening of WONTON SOUP and AUTUMN MOON with its treatment of modern space, but then returns to the motion of the emblematic train, though here the image is broken down to its essence, the grains defined as though in a Pointillist painting. From these dream-like images of modern day Tokyo, we make a radical shift to the harsh realities of the parallel past. What is sometimes problematic in these intrusions is that they are "random" and "work against the rhythms of the

> car journey" (3), but while Law may have chosen not to impose a narratological structure

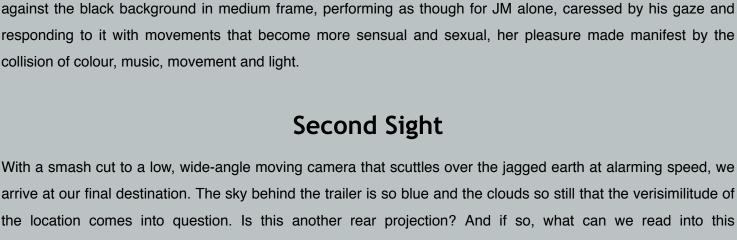
> on their form, there is an emotional logic that

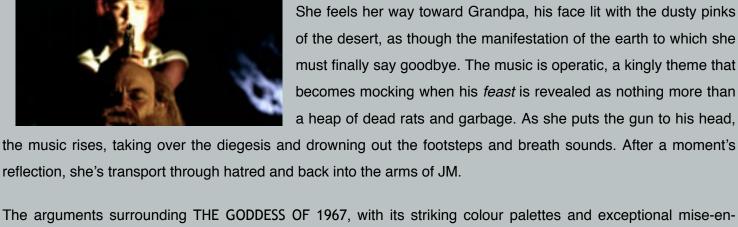


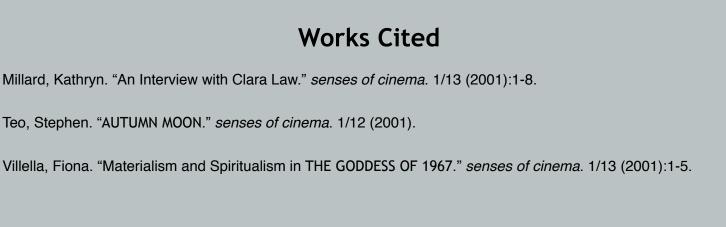


isolation from the rest of society, an isolation that becomes marked in the present by the emptiness of the frames and the hollow echo

From an overhead shot the dancing begins, as we look down on JM







 $^{f 5}$ As evidenced by the insertion of a shot from Jean-Pierre Melville's LE SAMOURAI.

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to buy a goddess."

Next entry :: >>> La conception de la chorégraphie

<: Previous entry</p>

⁶ The look of these scenes is also reminiscent of the photographer Gregory Crewdson, though in interviews Law

currently writing reviews for Toronto-based C-Magazine. http://articles.synoptique.ca/goddess/

³ With the exception of Beethoven's fifth symphony, most of the music heard in this sequence was created specifically for the film, rather than sourced from pre-existing recordings. Information about the music was culled from the music cue sheet found at the website for Fortissimo Films on December 9, 2003.







Wong Fei Hung intitulé THE STORY OF WONG FEI HUNG (Hu Peng, 1949) [2]. Il a aussi travaillé avec King Hu sur

le film COME DRINK WITH ME (1966) et sur deux autres films de Wong Fei Hung dans les années soixante. De

plus, il a aussi tourné avec Zhang Che dans le film SHAOLIN MARTIAL ARTS (1974). Face au milieu relativement

étroit du cinéma de Hong Kong, il ne serait pas surprenant que certains de ces films aient influencé le travail de

Yuen Wo Ping. Cependant, le film le plus connu du père auprès du public occidental est certainement celui qu'il

a fait auprès de son fils : dans SNAKE IN AN EAGLE'S SHADOW, il jouait le célèbre vieillard alcoolique. Il

interprétait le même rôle dans la suite très connue, DRUNKEN MASTER (Yuen Wo Ping, 1978).

Le scénario de SNAKE IN AN EAGLE'S SHADOW est basé sur la démonstration et la confrontation de différents styles de kung-fu [3]. Il y a donc dans ce film un souci de préserver une mémoire collective et une exploration des origines des styles de kung-fu. En fait, le scénario de SNAKE IN AN EAGLE'S SHADOW est la base de cette démarche. Un vieillard alcoolique va montrer le style snake fist au jeune Chien Fu. Inspiré par les connaissances qu'il a reçues, ce dernier observe les techniques de combat d'un chat qui est agressé par un serpent. Puis, quand le vieillard se fait battre par un maître véreux qui maîtrise le style eagle claw, Chien Fu vient à sa défense et exécute le style snake fist en le combinant avec les techniques qu'il a observées du chat. Finalement, il triomphe sur le maître et, à l'issue du combat, Chien Fu a créé un nouveau style de combat qui est baptisé par son maître: « snake in an eagle's shadow ». Ce film fait une référence directe à plusieurs mythes sur la naissance des styles de combat. À titre d'exemple, l'influence de l'observation des animaux dans le kung-fu est certainement l'un des plus importants. Ces mythes sont également très présents dans la littérature. Comme dans les écrits de Jin Yong, le scénario exploite le côté imprévisible de la tactique inusitée mise à jour lors du combat. Il y a aussi une nette référence à l'ingéniosité et au caractère infiniment inventif des arts martiaux, c'està-dire qu'il y a toujours un mouvement pour en contrer un autre, il y a toujours un nouveau style pour venir à bout d'un autre, d'où la multitude de combinaisons possibles, de mouvements et de styles. Par conséquent, ce film combine la tendance didactique de l'apprentissage et l'exploration des origines et des mythes des arts martiaux. La suite de SNAKE IN AN EAGLE'S SHADOW, DRUNKEN MASTER, est aussi un film sur l'apprentissage et sur le dépassement, encore plus inventif que le premier quant aux moyens employés pour arriver à maîtriser les techniques de combat. Par exemple, quand le père punit le fils parce qu'il a fait des bêtises, il lui ordonne de se positionner en cavalier, une position que tous les pratiquants d'arts martiaux connaissent [4] car elle est une

position de base, difficile à maîtriser et aussi très douloureuse! De plus, le jeune Wong Fei Hun [5] apprend du

vieillard une forme de combat d'une manière originale : ce dernier relie les bras de WFH avec les siens par des troncs de bambous et lui fait exécuter les mouvements. De cette manière, l'apprenti n'a pas d'autre choix que de

suivre l'exacte chorégraphie du style pratiqué. Jackie Chan exécute le tout avec son talent exceptionnel : il est

agile, mobile et élastique. Quant aux entraînements pour renforcer le corps, ils font aussi partie intégrante du « spectacle » déployé par cette génération. Rien n'est plus amusant visuellement que les exercices imaginés : dans SNAKE IN AN EAGLE'S SHADOW, l'apprenti est suspendu par les pieds et il doit remplir une chaudière d'eau qui se situe à ses pieds en faisant sans cesse des abdominaux. La projection-identification du spectateur fait imaginer l'épreuve et la douleur. De plus, l'exécution de l'exercice par le protagoniste montre à quel point il est en train d'acquérir la puissance et suscite, par le fait même, l'admiration des spectateurs. Tous ces exercices sont des variations visuelles sur l'apprentissage et consiste également à des démonstrations de puissance : ils servent à montrer comment on acquiert les capacités et la force nécessaire pour faire du kung-fu! À cela s'ajoute la comédie : WFH profite du fait que le maître s'est assoupi pour se détacher et remplir la chaudière. Quand il réveille le maître pour lui dire qu'il a terminé, ce dernier lui demande de faire l'exercice inverse, c'est-à-dire de prendre l'eau de la chaudière et de la remettre dans le baril. Il y a également un autre exercice tout aussi amusant visuellement : le protagoniste doit pouvoir casser l'écaille de noix avec la seule force de ses doigts (et on s'en doute du qi [6]). Bien sûr, à force de persévérance, l'élève réussit à maîtriser ces techniques et il a développé, le spectateur s'en apercoit, la force nécessaire pour être un bon combattant. Les séances d'entraînements auxquelles on assiste dans le cinéma de Yuen Wo Ping contribuent à une démystification de l'apprentissage des arts martiaux, d'autant plus qu'elles sont illustrées avec une touche de comédie. Sur ce sujet, Ng Ho note que: « In kung-fu comedies [...] revenge has become meaningless. It furnishes the pretext for the hero to study martial arts, but the real focus of interest is hardship involved in his training and the bizarre variety of exercises he undertakes » [7]. L'entraînement s'insère dans le renouvellement

des chorégraphies car les chorégraphes et les réalisateurs tentent de trouver de nouvelles manières d'illustrer l'apprentissage. Ainsi plus les épreuves sont difficiles et excentriques, plus le public en raffole. Par conséquent,

ils mettent en valeur le kung-fu et les prouesses techniques que certains acteurs sont capables d'accomplir. En

ce sens, le kung-fu penche certainement vers l'approche classique de la représentation, car les performances sont authentiques, même si les chorégraphes et réalisateurs ajoutent à la chorégraphie une part de spectacle

vouée à divertir les foules. La chorégraphie étant un art combinant plusieurs influences, on note, outre le kungfu, la prépondérance de l'opéra et de l'acrobatie dans l'exécution de Jackie Chan : multiples culbutes, sauts,

chutes, pirouettes, grands écarts, les jeux avec objets sont autant de références aux arts martiaux pratiqués par Jackie Chan et par la famille Yuen. Ainsi, la chorégraphie n'est plus seulement un reflet des arts martiaux, au

Dans ces deux films, on dévie certains principes des arts martiaux pour amuser le public, comme par exemple la représentation un peu faussée de la boxe de l'homme ivre, le zui quan [8]. Il faut préciser que, contrairement au

film, l'exécution du style n'est pas combinée avec la consommation d'alcool mais vise plutôt à mimer, donner l'impression d'être ivre. Au contraire, le film montre un vieil alcoolique qui effectivement boit pour mieux

combattre, ce qui accentue le côté inusité et comique des scènes de combat. Peut-être est-ce pour cette raison

sens idéal que l'envisageait Bruce Lee : elle est retournée à la stylisation pour des fins de spectacle.

que ces films sont devenus très populaires et sont aussi considérés comme des films cultes. Yuen Wo Ping a aussi réalisé d'autres films jouant sur ce concept, comme DANCE OF THE DRUNK MANTIS (1979), aussi interprété par le père de Yuen Wo Ping, et des films moins connus comme SHAOLIN DRUNKARD (1983) et DRUNKEN TAICHI (1984).De plus, de ces films émerge l'un des plus importants aspects du style chorégraphique développé par Yuen Wo Ping et ses collaborateurs, et qui influencera aussi la carrière de Jackie Chan et de plusieurs autres: la poésie autour de l'objet. Cette technique chorégraphique consiste à trouver une nouvelle utilisation à l'objet pour des fins de combat. Par exemple, lors d'un affrontement dans DRUNKEN MASTER, WFH va manipuler deux tables qu'il tourne dans tous les sens : il va faire la planche entre les deux, s'en servir comme bouclier, se cacher en dessous, s'en servir comme tremplin, etc. En fait, c'est en intégrant à la chorégraphie des notions d'acrobaties de cirque et d'opéra que les affrontements sont rendus plus vivants. En utilisant tous les objets qui tombent sous la main, on invente ainsi une ressource infinie de combinaisons qui surprennent et divertissent le spectateur. Jackie Chan en fait l'une des bases de son cinéma. Il affirme :

First, an art director will select the props. The place is filled with props. Unwanted props are put

aside. I'm keen on working with every single prop in a scene as a weapon. Maybe, something

scene. To me everything is a prop. For example, a car. There is many ways of staging a fight in

Suite à ce discours, Jackie Chan montre comment il utilise certains accessoires en les incorporant au combat. Il montre une roue en bois, un panier d'épicerie, des chaises pliantes, un cendrier, une poubelle, des disques, une

lampe, un réfrigérateur, une machine à laver, un escabeau et une voiture, accessoires avec lesquelles les acteurs effectuent diverses cascades et mouvements pour diversifier le combat. Toutes ces idées ont pour origine la fin des années soixante-dix et les films qu'il a faits avec Yuen Wo Ping [10]. Ce jeu avec les objets

rend la chorégraphie inventive, ingénieuse, et elle ne trouve pas son égal en termes de mouvements et de

a car scene. I'll stand aside and observe. How many ways are there? Then I'll put them on a

screen. That's how you can manipulate different things. Almost everything in this place [9].

that's very ordinary, such as shopping cart. If you recall, I've used this in a movie. I may see some balls, so I can use them, too. That's why I'm good at using things. I'm provided with a

combinaisons. La chorégraphie devient une véritable poésie visuelle qui repousse les limites du genre vers de nouvelles avenues. L'association insolite ou la poésie autour de l'objet dans le cinéma de Yuen Wo Ping

Yuen Wo Ping, 2001. Voir les arts martiaux autrement, défier une tradition millénaire et pouvoir renouveler sa représentation au cinéma constitue un grand défi. Pourtant, comme le disait Magritte avec sa peinture « ceci n'est pas une pipe ».

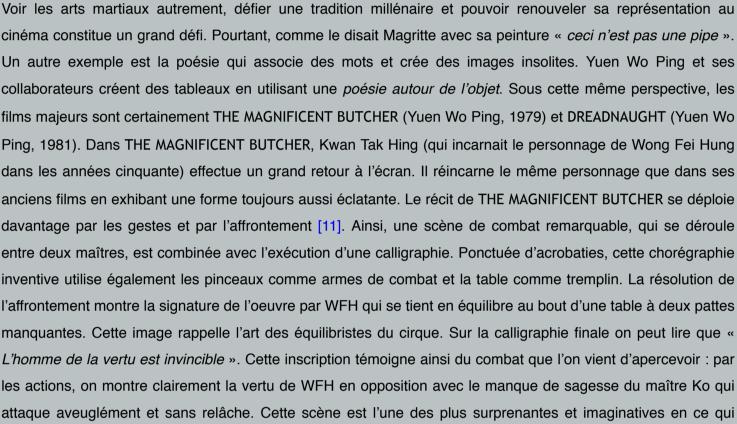
Comme [les chorégraphes devenus réalisateurs] venaient tous du combat, leurs films d'action

pourrais faire pour sortir de là. Que pouvais-je faire pour donner au public de la fraîcheur? J'ai

étaient brutaux et très sanglants. Je me suis demandé ce que, en tant que réalisateur, je

décidé de faire une comédie.

attaques sont de plus en plus spectaculaires.



concerne la chorégraphie [12] car elle exhibe comme un crescendo d'actions. De plus, cette scène est marquée par plusieurs démonstrations de puissances par lesquelles Ko essaie de détruire l'objet de sa honte. Pour ce

faire, Ko attaque sans relâche. En n'arrivant point à détruire l'œuvre, il fracasse plutôt la table, juste après que WFH ait enlevé la calligraphie. Pendant que la fureur du maître Ko devient de plus en plus déchaînée, les

A propos de cette scène, Yu Mo-Wan commente : « a brillant scene in which Wong Fei Hung, using a brush pen

as a weapon, engages in combat while writing, in elegant calligraphy, "Ren zhe wu di" » [13]. Cette scène n'est plus un affrontement banal comme on a l'habitude d'en voir depuis l'invention du cinéma : le combat se transforme plutôt en une poésie visuelle autour des objets. C'est un dialogue de gestes qui raconte visuellement

un débat opposant deux personnages. Abordé de cette manière, la chorégraphie illustre des affrontements

réinventés selon le quotidien. La poésie autour de l'objet est une trouvaille qui rend ces films d'un contenu visuel inouï et d'une richesse exceptionnelle à ceux qui savent les regarder. Désormais, toute situation est susceptible

de créer un affrontement et tout objet peut être utilisé comme une arme de combat. Et de ces combinaisons émergent un tout nouveau discours, une narration qu'il faut décoder pour en voir les images et en comprendre le sens. De plus, il faut souligner l'inventivité quant aux changements d'angles, à la multiplicité des prises de vue et aux différents cadrages qu'exploite Yuen Wo Ping. Ces éléments, combinés à la maîtrise du montage, permettent à Kwan Tak Hing de paraître drôlement plus efficace que dans les films des années cinquante. L'effet produit du combat se trouve donc amplifié par le médium filmique. Aussi, ce nouveau dynamisme de la performance, parce qu'absent avant le cinéma de Bruce Lee, permet au spectateur de croire que l'affrontement a effectivement lieu. En d'autres termes, on peut percevoir que l'expression de puissance a véritablement été intégrée au sein de la chorégraphie et affecte ainsi l'efficacité de la représentation des combats de l'acteur Kwan Tak Hing. DREADNAUGHT expose aussi l'idée de la poésie autour de l'objet. Dans ce film, Yuen Wo Ping montre comment le protagoniste, interprété par Yuen Biao, incorpore des gestes quotidiens à son entraînement de kung-fu. Il utilise notamment le eagle claw pour tordre son linge et il effectue quelques formes de combat, qui ressemblent à la pratique du *taolu*, pour l'étendre. Comme l'observation du chat par le jeune WFH, le protagoniste utilise ce qu'il a appris et pratiqué en lavant son linge lors de la scène finale. Ainsi, en pleine action, on reconnaît les mêmes mouvements exécutés avec la planche à laver et ceux pour tordre les vêtements. Par exemple, il utilise le eagle claw pour empoigner son adversaire et l'attaquer tandis qu'il fait les mêmes mouvements que sur la planche à laver pour échauffer le torse de son ennemi, ce qui rend un effet très comique. On montre alors que les activités quotidiennes peuvent devenir du kung-fu et qu'incorporées à l'entraînement peuvent servir au combat. De plus, comme pour le film THE MAGNIFICENT BUTCHER, la scène de combat final de DREADNAUGHT, qui se déroule dans une seule pièce, est étonnante par son rythme et sa création. Yuen Wo Ping ponctue le

combat en faisant diverses démonstrations de puissance : les objets ambiants sont souvent cassés, les bras de

l'ennemi grandissent soudainement pour atteindre le protagoniste et le projeter au sol, les vêtements sont déchirés. Yuen Wo Ping travaille aussi avec les objets et le décor pour varier les étapes du combat et le rendre de plus en plus vif et intense. À travers cet affrontement dynamique, les acteurs sautillent et virevoltent dans

tous les sens. Ils utilisent également les sauts acrobatiques et les chutes spectaculaires au sol, rendant ainsi le combat plus éloquent. Le volet acrobatique est donc essentiel au développement de la séquence et au succès

du spectacle. En somme, le style chorégraphique se développe à de multiples niveaux afin de préserver

Une autre scène remarquable dans le film DREADNAUGHT (encore avec Kwan Tak Hing dans le rôle de WFH) est

celle où un couturier vient prendre ses mesures [14]. Évidemment, cette interaction polie se transforme en un

affrontement déguisé. Tous les instruments du couturier deviennent des armes et pendant la prise de mesure, les attaques profuses sous de multiples formes. C'est ainsi que même si ces films sont réalisés au moment où le

l'attention du spectateur et voire même le surprendre à plusieurs reprises.

LEGEND OF A FIGHTER (Yuen Wo Ping, 1982) se veut en quelque sorte un film d'adieu – empreint de nostalgie face à une ère sur le point de s'éteindre en même temps qu'un film prémonitoire – car il annonce la nouvelle vague de films d'arts martiaux qui émergera vers la fin des années quatre-vingt et dans les années quatre-vingtdix. D'abord, ce film est remarquable car il combine plusieurs tendances de l'époque. C'est un film à fonction didactique qui est basé sur l'initiation aux arts martiaux du jeune Huo Yuan Jia (1868-1909). C'est donc aussi un film qui s'intéresse à *l'exploration des origines* des arts martiaux, car Huo Yuan Jia est un grand maître qui a

l'humiliation dont le peuple chinois souffre et permettre à ce peuple opprimé de retrouver fierté et honneur perdus grâce aux arts martiaux. Ce scénario et la symbolique cachée rendent ce film unique en soi. C'est avec ses chorégraphies et sa mise en scène que ce film se démarque le plus. Yuen Wo Ping continue l'association insolite pour créer différentes scènes de combat époustouflantes. Par exemple, à l'ouverture du film, le personnage principal prend le thé en se battant. Dans une autre scène, quand le maître enseigne au jeune Huo Yuan Jia, il lui montre ce qu'est la maîtrise et le contrôle des mouvements : il doit alors se tenir en position du cavalier [17], exécuter une calligraphie d'un mouvement fluide en ayant à l'intérieur de la main un œuf, et dans l'autre une tasse de thé. Plus que de l'acrobatie (quoique bien utile pour le spectacle) Yuen Wo Ping met en images le contrôle de la douleur et du corps tout en exhibant la finesse des mouvements. En d'autres termes, il réussit à créer des images qui représentent un processus abstrait de l'apprentissage des arts martiaux. Dans une autre scène, l'élève doit aussi accroître sa flexibilité par l'étude : pendant qu'il étudie, ses

peur et l'excitation et son imaginaire est sans cesse stimulé par ce qu'il voit. Les images lui permettent d'imaginer des concepts très abstraits, comme la force d'un individu ou les conséquences d'un combat. C'est ainsi que Yuen Wo Ping, sans une surenchère de sang, réussit à construire un spectacle crédible, certes amplifié, mais qui nourrit cet art de la chorégraphie. Se sont sur ces mêmes bases que son cinéma et son art de la chorégraphie ont, par la suite, continué à se développer. Il ne reste qu'à introduire la clôture du film qui est aussi un véritable présage du cinéma à venir. Huo Yuan Jia réussit à atteindre son maître grâce à une nouvelle technique qu'il expérimente. Il déstabilise alors son adversaire par un jeu de pieds qui ressemble étrangement à quelques sauts de danse (même que la musique laisse croire qu'il se passe quelque chose de nouveau et de fantastique). Puis, la chorégraphie montre quelques attaques spectaculaires, moments où HYJ prend son élan en courant sur les murs ce qui déroute complètement son antagoniste. Puis, il s'accroche sur les poutres des murs, même sur celle du plafond pour effectuer ses attaques en volant dans l'air. Le Japonais, d'abord surpris mais voulant pousser son élève au maximum, s'amuse à son tour : il se dissimule derrière quatre tatamis qu'il relève du plancher. Quand HYJ donne un coup de pied sur deux d'entre eux, le Japonais est disparu et il se tient en équilibre sur les deux autres. Ici, l'étonnement chez le protagoniste est le même que chez le spectateur, mais il n'a pas le temps de penser à l'invraisemblance car l'affrontement continue de plus bel. Avec l'envolée de Huo Yuan Jia et la curieuse réplique

est de Yuen Wo Ping. ⁴ Ces échos constants à l'apprentissage du kung-fu et à l'authenticité des styles ravissent les pratiquants des arts martiaux. ⁵ Il est à noter que l'on rapatrie le personnage et même la musique connue des années cinquante. Cependant,

pour leur travail, LCL affirme : « Nous, les acteurs et les figurants de la catégorie des « martiaux » à laquelle

j'appartenais, nous n'étions pas payés si l'on ne faisait pas appel à nous ce jour-là. On recevait une convocation, on se présentait sur le lieu de tournage et on attendait ». Liu Chia Liang, entretien effectué par Charles Tesson, «

⁷ Ng Ho, « Kung-fu Comedies : Tradition, Structure, Character », A Study of the Hong-Kong Martial Arts Film, Provisional Urban Council of Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong, 1980, p.44. ⁸ Sur le *zui quan*, les auteurs Habersetzer affirment ceci : *style de boxe chinoise qui aurait été créé par Li Po. Il* se compose d'un ensemble de mouvements directement inspirés de ceux d'un homme sous l'emprise de

volontaires, de ses chutes, de ses sauts acrobatiques, de ses ruptures de rythme, de ses rapides modification de direction. Gabrielle et Roland Habersetzer. Encyclopédie technique, historique, biographique et culturelle des arts martiaux de l'Extrême-Orient, Amphora, Saint-Nabor, France, 2000, p.799. Tiré du documentaire JACKIE CHAN: MY STUNTS, Jackie Chan, 1999.

10 En regardant le documentaire sur Jackie Chan, on constate qu'il prend sur lui tout le crédit de cette inventivité

mais les films de Yuen Wo Ping à cette période montre déjà le même type d'expérimentations, bien avant que

Jackie Chan passe à la réalisation. De plus, il faut aussi remarquer l'influence du film DREADNAUGHT (YWP, 1981) sur le premier film réalisé par Jackie Chan, THE YOUNG MASTER (1980) : il utilise les mêmes acteurs et effectue une danse de lion et de dragon comme YWP. Donc on peut facilement questionner à qui revient le crédit de ces idées... 11 Il semble que Yuen Wo Ping est atteint l'un de ses objectifs. Il affirme : « Les combats sont une histoire non-

Cahiers du Cinéma, Locardo, 2001, p. 175. 12 II faut aussi voir ce qu'a fait Stephen Chow, dans le film FLIRTING SCHOLAR (Lee Lik-Chi, 1993) qui, une dizaine d'années plus tard, a fait une scène combinant kung-fu et l'exécution d'une peinture exhibant un paysage traditionnel chinois. L'utilisation des câbles rend la scène visuellement tout à fait différente mais l'idée de

combinaison est la même. 13 Yu Mo-Wan, "The Prodigious Cinema of Wong Fei Hung: an Introduction", A Study of the Hong-Kong Martial Arts Film, Provisional Urban Council of Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong, 1980, p.86.

14 Cette scène est capturée à la fin du chapitre. 15 Qui fut entre autre joué par Bruce Lee dans FIST OF FURY et par Jet Li dans FIST OF LEGEND.

16 De plus, Huo Yuan Jia, comme la famille de Yuen Wo Ping, est originaire du Nord de la Chine. 17 Une position qui, je le rappelle, est très difficile à maîtriser car elle est très douloureuse.

dégagée par un coup. Mélanie Morrissette est née à Québec. Après avoir fait des recherches au China Film Archive et au Hong Kong

il le brûle, le fait tomber, le frappe, lui fume au visage, etc. L'étranger est battu par sa propre arme! Ping construit son cinéma qu'il continue d'ailleurs jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

A Study of the Hong-Kong Martial Arts Film_, Provisional Urban Council of Hong-Kong, Hong-Kong, 1980, p.188. ² Il n'existe aucune information concernant le rôle exact dans la production, mis à part sa contribution d'acteur. Mais à cette époque, comme l'explique Liu Chia Liang, les chorégraphes n'obtenaient aucune reconnaissance

chorégraphies dans le cinéma d'arts martiaux. Elle est en ce moment enseignante à la polytechnique Ngee Ann à Singapour. << :: Previous entry</p> Seeing with One's Eyes Closed [Back to Top] ISSN 1715-7641

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Film Archive, elle a complété sa maîtrise à l'Université Concordia. Son mémoire aborde le développement des

Transcendental Images of Time and Memory

genre s'essouffle, la chorégraphie connaît certains de ces plus beaux moments de cinéma. Le film synthèse et prémonitoire effectivement vécu en Chine. Le scénario relate plusieurs détails véridiques comme le fait que le jeune Huo Yuan Jia, dû à sa santé fragile, a été isolé de ses frères. Son père lui a interdit d'apprendre les arts martiaux qu'il enseignait et qu'il pratiquait avec les autres frères de HYJ. Ce dernier, confiné à étudier pour devenir un érudit, observait en cachette les entraînements de son père avec ses frères. Un jour, un pratiquant d'une autre école est venu défier la famille, les frères de HYJ furent battus et c'est ainsi que HYJ a mis à jour son talent exceptionnel. Plus tard, il a fondé l'école Jing Wu. Il était pratiquement invincible et sa réputation légendaire faisait reculer les plus grands combattants, même les étrangers. Soudainement il est devenu très malade et il est décédé. Son meilleur disciple, Chen Zhen [15], a découvert qu'il avait été empoisonné par un médicament qu'il a obtenu d'un médecin japonais. Juste avant sa mort, HYJ avait vaincu un grand-maître d'une école de judo japonaise à Shanghai, ce qui a perpétué le mythe selon lequel il aurait peut-être été empoisonné suite à la défaite du grand-maître japonais. Yuen Wo Ping répond donc aux mêmes aspirations que sa génération, c'est-àdire qu'il s'intéresse aux origines et aux mythes des arts martiaux [16]. Mais bien plus que de raconter l'histoire de ce grand-maître, Yuen Wo Ping (un peu comme l'a fait précédemment Bruce Lee) veut montrer la Chine et les arts martiaux chinois glorieux, surtout face à leurs adversaires japonais. Au début du vingtième siècle, la Chine a subi plusieurs invasions et a énormément été affectée par le commerce de l'opium. Les Chinois étaient alors considérés comme le maillon faible de l'Asie. Cependant dans ce film, les arts martiaux, berceau de toute une culture, arrive à la rescousse d'un peuple. En effet, on les représente comme un outil de persévérance qui affiche la résistance et permet ainsi de retrouver la dignité et la fierté perdue. Dans la version de Yuen Wo Ping, le jeune Huo Yuan Jia est initié aux arts martiaux par un Japonais qui a pour fonction d'être son tuteur afin qu'il devienne un érudit. Ce Japonais est en fait un espion venu d'abord pour épier les techniques de combat du père de HYJ. Développant une amitié avec le jeune HYJ (une pierre de jade en est le gage), l'affrontement final oppose l'élève contre le maître. Ce dernier fracasse la pierre de jade en guise de provocation (démonstration de puissance). Mais, contrairement à la plupart des films qui exhibent une opposition simpliste entre les Chinois et les Japonais, le maître japonais sacrifie secrètement sa vie dans le but d'extérioriser et de cristalliser toutes les capacités du talentueux Huo Yuan Jia. Ainsi, grâce au maître japonais, HYJ est appelé à se surpasser et il finit, dans un excès de rage, par tuer son ennemi. C'est avec tristesse qu'il découvre la véritable pièce de jade et qu'il se rend compte de la véritable motivation du Japonais : arrêter jambes sont accrochées à une corde afin d'exercer à la fois son corps et son esprit. Donc, Yuen Wo Ping continue l'association insolite d'éléments. Dans le même ordre d'idées, on retrouve également un combat qui se déroule entre un vieil homme qui fume une pipe à opium et un étranger. Ce dernier intègre la pipe à son combat, De plus, ce qui accentuent l'efficacité des films de Yuen Wo Ping sont les multiples démonstrations de puissance qui permettent de suggérer le danger encouru par les personnages. Le père de Huo Yuan Jia, qui pratique les arts martiaux, peut faire éclater un œuf dans un verre avec la seule puissance du qi. Tandis que le maître qui enseigne à Huo Yuan Jia peut prendre une brique d'une maison, la dégager du mur et la fracasser avec sa main. Ou encore, lors de la scène finale, les coups de poings manqués et qui touchent le mur laisse la trace du coup et une partie du mur enfoncé. Autre exemple, au moment où l'un ou l'autre des personnages projettent leur adversaire à travers un mur (ce qui détruit ce dernier) on démontre ainsi, visuellement, la force de l'impact. Finalement, un autre détail intéressant (et maintes fois repris par la suite) c'est au moment où Huo Yuan Jia fracasse presque le visage de son maître avec son poing mais au dernier moment, il arrête. Grâce au ralenti, on perçoit comme un effet de vent qui est provoqué par l'arrivée du coup [18], puis, suite à une courte pause, il gifle son adversaire. Ces techniques sont des détails qui enrichissent le contenu visuel du film. Elles permettent de rendre l'action plus convaincante et à la fois divertissante. L'ajout de ces détails permettent au spectateur de ressentir la chorégraphie au lieu simplement d'en apprécier l'esthétique (chorégraphie dansée) : il ressent la du maître japonais, Yuen Wo Ping (comme l'a fait précédemment King Hu) repousse aux confins du possible les limites de la chorégraphie pour offrir un spectacle uniquement possible au cinéma. Comme l'avait imaginé René Clair dans les années vingt, il réussit à créer un moment de *cinéma pur* où ni les arts martiaux, ni la littérature, ni la chorégraphie martiale est le principal objet de cette scène. On assiste plutôt à un moment de montage qui permet de visualiser les fantaisies les plus folles et de créer un spectacle unique grâce à la magie du montage et aux prises de vues. C'est à travers un équilibre entre l'approche classique et l'approche éclatée que Yuen Wo

> Le dernier des Shaolin », Cahiers du Cinéma, # 360-361, septembre 1984, p.26. De plus, ils étaient tout au mieux reconnus au générique comme cascadeurs ou acteurs. 3 En fait, ce type de scénario est devenu une formule connue et très souvent réemployée par la suite. Mais il ne faut pas négliger la parodie de Wong Jing intitulée en anglais LAST HERO IN CHINA (1993) mais dont le titre en chinois signifie littéralement WONG FEI HUNG: THE IRON CHICKEN AGAINST THE CENTIPEDE. La chorégraphie on rajeunit le personnage, ce qui donne un nouveau souffle au genre. ⁶ La force interne déployée par le souffle. l'alcool. Ils constituent pour l'exécutant une véritable performance physique en raison des déséquilibres

> verbale. [...] Mon but est de raconter une histoire non-verbalement. Si je le pouvais, je raconterais la même histoire avec très peu de dialogues ». Yuen Wo Ping, "La chorégraphie comme le combat", L'Asie à Hollywood,

> 18 Une autre astuce récente est l'intégration de craie aux vêtements ce qui cause de la poussière qui s'envole lorsqu'un coup est donné. C'est une technique abondamment utilisée pour montrer visuellement la puissance

http://articles.synoptique.ca/melanie/

SYNOPTIQUE 5 This image makes up a clickable navigation menu. Transcendental Images of Time and Memory You can view a PRINTER FRIENDLY in Andrei Tarkovsky's NOSTALGHIA version of this article here. by Michael Vesia In this thoughtful and lucid analysis of Tarkovky's film, Michael Vesia applies Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze's philosophies of time and memory to Tarkovsky's long-take, deep-space aesthetic. Textual examples reveal how formal strategies operate to bring the filmmaker's sentient ontology of reminiscence to stunning life in NOSTALGHIA (1983). NOSTALGHIA (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983) is a melancholic journey through a Russian poet's personal history and his feelings of nostalgia for his homeland. The protagonist, Andrei Gorchakov (Oleg Yankovsky), is a poet undertaking research in Italy on the life of an eighteenth-century Russian composer. During his stay in Italy, Gorchakov feels increasingly alienated and he develops an inner conflict in which he is overwhelmed by memories of his past life in Russia. Gorchakov effectively embodies the close emotional attachment that most Russians feel towards their native land. As Andrei Tarkovsky writes: I wanted the film to be about the fatal attachment of Russians to their national roots, their past, 01 Nov 2004 4206 words their culture, their native places, their families and friends; an attachment which they carry with them all their lives, regardless of where destiny may fling them. [1] Written by: Michael Vesia Accordingly, the film is structured around the protagonist's internal and immeasurable personal time. This oneiric structure creates a continual sense of temporal instability throughout the film that is exemplified through smooth, **Editor:** Zoë Constantinides seamless transitions between the protagonist's different states of consciousness and temporality. Most importantly, Tarkovsky employs a long-take aesthetic to express constant durational shifts between the "exterior" **Comments?** world and Gorchakov's "inner" world. **Questions?** French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) believed that our past experiences in life, collected and to go to our preserved in our minds as memories, are never forgotten. According to Bergson, there are two kinds of memory: Contact form. habitual memory (motor mechanisms) and pure recollection (independent recollections). [2] The difference between the two is that habitual memories are stored in the brain (resulting in routinized behaviour) [3], whereas Click to subscribe to our mailing list. pure recollections are stored within consciousness. Bergsonian scholar David Gross further differentiates between these two types of memory by stating that independent recollections are "based not on automatic Click here responses but on separate, individual acts of recollection whereby some singular image from the past is brought to visit our archives. to mind." [4] Bergson saw independent recollections as being superior to habitual memories because the formation of independent recollections allows for creativity and individuality, while habitual memories do not. [5] Moreover, Bergson suggested the possibility of a third kind of memory (left unnamed) that Gross describes as being "unsolicited by the needs of perception." [6] Gross believes that the notion of "involuntary memory," developed in the work of French novelist Marcel Proust, is the equivalent of Bergson's unnamed third memory. According to Gross, Proust believed that both habitual memory and pure recollection are part of voluntary memory, "a type of memory initiated by the mind which summons up images from the past in order to apply them to an immediate situation." [7] A voluntary memory is summoned by a situation in the present, whereas involuntary memory is more distant; it is unbound from the pragmatic necessities of everyday life and triggered by specific sensations. Gross remarks that involuntary memory is not intentionally called up by the conscious mind: A sensation, in other words, activates forgotten memories. It helps recall not only an antecedent sensation but, more importantly, the entire ambience surrounding the sensation: the feelings, thoughts, impressions, and mood of the self that experienced these things long ago. [8] As I shall demonstrate, the concept of involuntary memory is prominent in much of Tarkovsky's work and central to the cinematic style of NOSTALGHIA, in which the character's present reality is seamlessly merged with his memory. In order to better understand the manner in which Tarkovsky expresses time and involuntary memory in NOSTALGHIA, a brief description of Gilles Deleuze's concept of time-image cinema is needed. [9] As is well known, Deleuze (1925-1995) established two types of cinema: the movement-image and the time-image. The former is mainly associated with classical cinema, which organizes itself through movement and action as opposed to time and duration. The latter refers to a film aesthetic that is dependent on the duration of an image, not on a rational continuity of action and movement. In the movement-image, time is subservient to character action, whereas in the time-image, movement is subservient to time and duration. For example, Deleuze associates the movement-image with the traditional visual style of Hollywood narrative films made before the Second World War. He also considers the Russian "montage" films created by Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein to be movement-image cinema. To varying degrees, these types of films share a common aesthetic that is constructed according to a close visual interrelationship between specific graphic and kinetic elements within the shots that compose each film. In classic Hollywood films, character movement and action are usually determined by events that shape narrative organization. Shot-reverse-shot compositions, establishing shots/close-ups, and conventional point-of-view structures are all employed to maintain coherent sensory-motor links between the characters, their actions, and cinematic space. In the Russian "montage" films, however, the approach to cinematic spatialization is more complex and not completely contingent upon narrative action. Instead, the films are structured according to a system of sensory-motor variations that form "the cinema as machine assemblage of matter-images." [10] Deleuze explains Vertov's cinema as follows: [A]II of the images vary as a function of each other, on all their faces and in all their parts [...] everything is at the service of variation and interaction; slow or high speed shots, superimpositions, fragmentation, deceleration démultiplication, micro-shooting micro-prise de vue. [11] Conversely, in the time-image cinema shots are no longer linked through a balanced sensory-motor system. The time-image is best exemplified in the modernist style of European art films that emerged after the Second World War. The images in many of these films form illogical connections that create temporal gaps through a montage and/or long-take style that is not subservient to movement. In his book Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine, scholar D.N. Rodowick describes the Deleuzian time-image as follows: Since the linking of images is no longer motivated by action, space changes in nature, becoming a disconnected or emptied space. Acts of seeing and hearing replace the linking of images through motor actions; pure description replaces referential anchoring. [12] Rodowick notes that with the time-image "[t]he interval no longer disappears into the seam between movements and actions. Rather, it becomes a ceaseless opening of time - a space of becoming - where unforeseen and unpredictable events may occur." [13] In NOSTALGHIA, for instance, the camera often moves independently of character action within the frame, thus allowing the spectator to witness the passing of time as duration. Also, character movement often does not signal a cut, therefore, when a character leaves the frame the shot usually continues along with the camera movement. This seemingly unmotivated montage style creates temporal "intervals" that allow for the surfacing of images from Gorchakov's past and memories, taking him beyond the "actual" (present) world and into a "virtual" (past, memory) world. Furthermore, Deleuze argues that through its ability to have different visual planes exist simultaneously within an image, depth-of-field can serve as a device for expressing time and memory within cinematic space. Deleuze uses the term "sheets of past" to describe the use of depth in a shot that provides a visualization of a space where a virtual memory of the past is evoked from an actual present. [14] As Deleuze notes, "[depth] gives rise to all kinds of adventures of the memory, which are not so much psychological accidents as misadventures of time, disturbances of its constitution." [15] Therefore, the different planes of an image (foreground, mid-ground, and background) operate as regions or "slices" of the past; they become "sheets of past." This Deleuzian approach to cinematic space functions as a visualization of Bergson's notion that memory does not exist within us, but that we reside within a world-memory in which there is simultaneity of past, present, and future. The organization of memory-images in NOSTALGHIA, in which visual depth is used as a device to represent memory and consciousness, closely relates to Deleuze's connection of depth-of-field and memory. A good example of this occurs after Gorchakov's Italian interpreter, Eugenia (Domiziana Giordano), witnesses a sacred ceremony unfolding in an Italian country chapel. This scene ends with a straight-cut from Piero della Francesca's painting Madonna del Parto [Madonna of the Fields] to a medium close-up in black-and-white of Gorchakov with a sullen expression on his face. This sudden shift to monochromatic imagery creates a puzzling effect for the viewer because the film has been in colour up until this point. Gorchakov is outdoors, looking up towards the sky as a feather falls from above. This image is then followed by a shot of his hand lifting the feather out of a muddy puddle at his feet. His hand exits the top of the frame and the camera then slowly tilts up and frames him in a medium-shot, with the background out of focus. He then turns his head and glances at the space behind him. At this point, the camera tracks right, leaving him offscreen, and the background comes into focus to reveal a house in the distance (see fig. 1). For viewers familiar with Tarkovsky's work, the presence of the house coupled with the contemplative tone and mood of this scene - achieved through the subtle use of sound and slow-motion - indicates the recalling of a memory (often from childhood). A Deleuzian sense of depth within this shot establishes the house as a womb of stored memories, a "sheet of past." Moreover, Tarkovsky employs a long-take aesthetic to create a continuity of duration in which the presence of the adult Gorchakov (at the beginning of the shot) is combined with a shift in depth that allows images of the past and present to co-exist in a single shot. The camera movement prevents Gorchakov (who is in the foreground) and the house (which is in the background) from coming into visual contact with each other. Instead, Gorchakov and the house are linked through the uninterrupted duration of the longtake, which transforms the Russian countryside and the house into a "sheet of past" of stored memories. This sequence is followed by a scene in the lobby of a hotel (the location is actually not revealed until the end of the scene), where Gorchakov and Eugenia are having a conversation about the uselessness of translated poetry and the need to abolish state boundaries. Without an establishing shot, the scene opens with a close-up of Gorchakov's back to the camera (this shot directly follows the previously described black-and-white long-take in the Russian countryside), while Eugenia's voice can be heard on the soundtrack. The second shot, a 90-second close-up of Eugenia, is followed by another shot of Gorchakov that is composed in the same manner as the opening image of the scene. Although both characters glance off screen, Tarkovsky avoids the conventional eyeline match cuts used in the movement-image cinema. By prolonging the establishing shot and avoiding the use of eye-line match cuts, Tarkovsky challenges the viewer's understanding of the spatial orientation of the characters. Near the end of the third shot, Gorchakov looks over his shoulder and the sound of running water and a dog barking are heard on the soundtrack. Then, there is a cut to Gorchakov's wife (in black-and-white), who is seen from behind as she stands outdoors wiping a wine glass (see fig. 2). This shot only lasts about two seconds before it is interrupted by an abrupt cut to Eugenia (in colour) flipping her long mane of curly hair (this shot also runs approximately two seconds). This shot of Eugenia functions to retroactively suggest that Eugenia's movement evoked a sensation from Gorchakov's involuntary memory, and in turn, triggered the brief memory-image of his spouse on the image track. For a short moment, therefore, the virtual image (memory) of his wife absorbed the actual image (present) of Eugenia. Essentially, this cut between the two women is an excellent example of how the time-image can sometimes use techniques of the movementimage (i.e. a cut on movement) to underscore temporal and ontological uncertainty. What is more, these two brief shots are then followed by a medium-shot of a woman walking her dog through a corridor in the hotel. It then becomes clear that it was her dog that the viewer previously heard barking on the soundtrack, thus further mixing elements from Gorchakov's memory with those of the present. Without a cut, the camera then dollies back from the woman and her dog to a long-shot that finally reveals Gorchakov and Eugenia sitting in the hotel lobby with their backs to each other. The camera remains static for the remainder of this shot, which runs for two-minutes and fifty seconds, and is composed in depth with the foreground shrouded in darkness, both characters seated in the mid-ground, and a long narrow corridor leading into a brightly-lit room visible in the background. Visual depth is then used once again to evoke memory and a sense of Deleuzian "sheets of past," when Gorchakov rises from his chair and walks into the foreground carrying his luggage. Once in the foreground, he stops and stares directly into the camera, at which point a slow zoom-in flattens the image and lets the background go out of focus. This change in depth signals another shift in connection with the character's memory and his state of mind. The offscreen sounds of running water and a dog barking return onto the soundtrack, along with the voices of Eugenia and another woman talking in the background. There is a sudden cut to a medium close-up of Gorchakov's wife (in black-and-white and slow-motion) standing in a position similar to her husband during the first memory-image. She smiles into the camera - as if acknowledging Gorchakov's glance from the previous shot – and turns to look over her shoulder, where the background comes into focus as the camera slowly tracks right, leaving her offscreen to reveal a house (the same one seen earlier) in the distance. The camera movement continues as a young boy and a dog run from the house towards a large puddle of water in the foreground (see fig. 3). fig. 3 The voices of Eugenia and the woman are heard on the soundtrack, creating a simultaneous temporality in which present and past co-exist, as the virtual (past, memory) absorbs the image track and the actual (present) exists on the soundtrack. The recurrent surfacing of these involuntary memories from Gorchakov's past has an unsettling effect upon him that seemingly alienates him from his exterior environment in the present. In effect, Italy acts as a doorway from the present through which Gorchakov can recall his past. At times his memory-images of the past are experienced through dreams, while others surface without warning as involuntary memories that emerge from his subconscious. Traditionally, independent recollections in cinema are represented through the use of conventional devices such as flashbacks. However, as my analysis reveals, Gorchakov's memories are not presented as mere recollections or flashbacks; instead, they take on an oneiric quality that is closer to hallucinations or dreams. They are not memories of specific events from his past, but the visualization of fragments and sensations from dreams and memories that exist within his psyche. Tarkovsky describes his cinematic approach to dreams as follows: We need to know the actual, material facts of the dream: to see all the elements of reality which were refracted in that layer of the consciousness which kept vigil through the night (or with which a person functions when he sees some picture in his imagination). And we need to convey all of that on screen precisely, not misting it over and not using elaborate devices. [16] The viewer can see this approach in NOSTALGHIA when the physical world (present, Italy) and mental world (memories, Russia) of Gorchakov begin to merge. At times it is difficult to know whether a scene did in fact occur or not. The links between the images sometimes appear unmotivated and very often there are immeasurable temporal gaps between shots. In the first half of the film, sequences relating to the protagonist's past and memories are characterized through black-and-white photography and slow-motion, giving them a lyrical quality that helps the viewer differentiate them from the sequences in Italy. Yet, the line between past and present is continually blurred throughout the film, as characters from the present eventually begin to appear in sequences depicting Gorchakov's memory and past. As the film progresses, it is also evident that black-and-white photography is not limited to images of the past or colour photography to the present, thus creating a level of temporal complexity in which past and present merge. For example, in the scene in which Gorchakov visits the home of Domenico (Erland Josephson), Tarkovsky inserts a high-angle colour shot of Domenico's son (the young age of the boy suggests that it is an image from the past) looking up into the camera (presumably Domenico's point-of-view) and asking, "Dad, is this the end of the world?" The temporal placement of this shot is further complicated by the fact that it follows several memory-images from Domenico's past, which are all rendered through slow-motion and black-and-white photography. Another Deleuzian concept that is central to the representation of involuntary memory in NOSTALGHIA is the crystal-image. According to Donato Totaro, "[t]he cornerstone of Deleuze's time-image is the crystal-image, an indivisible unity of the virtual image and the actual image. The virtual image is subjective, in the past, and recollected... [t]he actual image is objective, in the present, and perceived." [17] The crystal-image is directly connected to the manner in which an exchange between past and present is required in our perception of the world. Deleuze understood that "time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past." [18] The present is continually changing and splitting into two directions: one moving towards the future and the other back into the past. In the crystal-image, the past becomes the mirror image of the present. Deleuze writes: "[t]he past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it co-exists with the present it was. The present is the actual image, and its contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror." [19] There is a three-minute long-take in NOSTALGHIA that provides an excellent visualization of the concept of the crystal-image. It occurs during a scene in Domenico's house that is one of the most temporally and spatially disorienting scenes in the entire film. In one long-take, Tarkovsky manages to denote Domenico's confused state of mind and Gorchakov's complex inner experience. The long-take begins with Domenico urging his guest to come forward." The camera remains static as Gorchakov carefully walks into frame and enters a room in Domenico's home. The camera then dollies back slightly and Gorchakov exits frame left as a musical piece by Beethoven comes onto the soundtrack. The camera is static for a couple of seconds, until it slowly tracks left across the room, revealing a ladder and an open window with curtains ballooning in the wind. Gorchakov is then seen standing near a corner, looking at his reflection in a mirror that hangs on a wall in front of him. The camera slowly dollies in to a medium close-up of him as he leans on the wall and stares pensively at the ground, while part of his reflection is still visible in the mirror to his left (see fig. 4). He then looks to his right (screen left) and the camera follows his gaze, tracking across a shelf cluttered with various objects (a clock, a picture frame, herbs, etc.). As the camera reaches the end of the shelf, his shoulder enters frame left and the camera continues tracking to reveal him standing with his back to the camera (see fig. 5), fig. 5 giving the impression that he is in two separate spaces at once. He turns his head to the left and stares out into a dark area of the frame as the camera track remains uninterrupted. The music on the soundtrack comes to an abrupt halt and Gorchakov turns his head in response, then he walks out frame left. The camera lingers for while, until it begins a slow dolly in on a painting that hangs in a darkened area of the frame. The lighting changes subtly and renders the painting increasingly visible (it looks like the image of a baby or a fetus) as the camera moves in closer and finally ends with a straight cut. In this sequence, the protagonist's reflection in the mirror can be read as a visualization of the crystal-image, which conveys the virtual as a mirror image of the actual to represent the continual split of time into two directions: future and past. Effectively, Gorchakov's initial position near the mirror suggests time's split into the past, while his later position with his back to the camera expresses a split into the future. The impression that he is in two separate spaces at once occurs within the duration of an uninterrupted long-take to express the simultaneity of past, present, and future. [20] This concept is further elaborated upon in a later scene, in which Domenico pours two drops of olive oil into the palm of his hand and explains, "One drop plus one drop makes a bigger drop, not two." His comment reflects the Bergsonian idea that the past, present, and future are indivisible, for they must co-exist in order for each to exist at all. Duration changes constantly because it is comprised of instances that build on each other, and like a drop of olive oil, duration cannot be divided into fragments or instances. The final shot of NOSTALGHIA consists of a long-take, shot in depth and in black-and-white, with a very slow crane movement backwards that shows Gorchakov and his dog seated in the Russian countryside. As the camera cranes back the viewer also sees that the Russian countryside is miraculously contained within an old Italian cathedral, visually suggesting the melding of virtual and actual space, past (Russia) and present (Italy) (see fig. 6). fig. 6 There is practically no movement within the frame, except for the appearance of snow in the foreground and background that adds to the emotion and atmosphere of the image. The shot achieves a sense of contemplative stillness that can be equated with what critic/filmmaker Paul Schrader terms "stasis," or the achievement of a "sparse means." As Schrader notes, "[c]omplete stasis, or frozen motion, is the trademark of a second religious art in culture. It establishes an image of a second reality which can stand beside the ordinary reality; it represents the Wholly Other." [21] The last shot in NOSTALGHIA is not the expression of a spiritual reality in the religious or sacred sense, but one that is part of time and memory. Tarkovsky describes time and memory as spiritual states: Time is a state: the flame in which there lives the salamander of the human soul [...] It is obvious enough that without Time, memory cannot exist either. But, memory is something so complex that no list of all its attributes could define the totality of the impressions through which it affects us. Memory is a spiritual concept! [22] Schrader explains that transcendental style in film must contain three steps (Everyday, Disparity, and Stasis) in order to complete the journey from the "abundant means" to the "sparse means." Although NOSTALGHIA does not contain all three of these steps, its last shot does appear to achieve a level of sparseness and a moment of "stasis." This shot represents Gorchakov's transcendent inner reality and it elevates his experiences of death (physical and emotional) and memory to a sacred level. In describing this closing image of NOSTALGHIA, Tarkovsky writes, "I trust that it is free of vulgar symbolism; the conclusion seems to me fairly complex in form and meaning, and to be a figurative expression of what is happening to the hero, not a symbol of something outside him which has to be deciphered." [23] Within this closing image, time and memory dissolve into each other to create a moment of pure transcendence, [24] whereby the protagonist passes from a practical reality (abundant) to one less encumbered by matter (sparse). Tarkovsky attempts to convey a sense of spiritual reality that goes beyond the limits of religious experience. He uses cinema to express an experience of time and memory that is beyond complete human comprehension and knowledge. It is understandable that an essay of such brevity cannot do complete justice to all of the philosophical concepts to which I have referred. Also, it can sometimes be an exercise in futility to apply Deleuzian-Bergsonian theories in whole to filmic interpretation because Bergson and Deleuze mainly employed cinema to support their philosophical interests and not to elucidate or explicate film. Yet, the fact that several of their philosophical theories can be applied, at least in part, to an interpretation of NOSTALGHIA demonstrates the complexity of Tarkovsky's work and its resistance to any single ordered interpretation. The film embodies many of the qualities that are central to Tarkovsky's vision of cinema as a form of high art infused with spiritual and philosophical richness. As the above analysis demonstrates, Tarkovsky's aesthetics in NOSTALGHIA challenge the viewer's perceptions and elevate cinema to a level beyond the simple act of storytelling. Tarkovsky places the abstract elements of time, space, and memory at the center of his film, for they are the basis of his belief that "the cinema image is essentially the observation of a phenomenon passing through time." [25] Tarkovsky, Andrey. Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema. 1986. Trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998: 202. ² Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. 1911. Trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. London: George and Unwin Ltd., 1978: 87. 3 As an illustration of habitual memory, Bergson uses the example of studying a school lesson through repetition in order to commit it to memory and learn the material by heart. According to Bergson, this use of repetition creates a habitual memory composed of a "closed system of automatic movements," whereby "to learn by heart is to create a cerebral mechanism, a habit of the body" (Ibid., 90). ⁴ Gross, David. "Bergson, Proust and the Revaluation of Memory." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 25.4, 1985: 370. ⁵ See Bergson, Henri. *Morality and Religion*. Trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton. London: Macmillan and Co., 1935: 9-12; and Bergson, Henri. Creative Evolution. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. New York: Modern Library, 1944: 140-141. ⁶ Gross, "Bergson, Proust and the Revaluation of Memory," 377. 7 Ibid. 8 Ibid., 378. ⁹ For an in-depth theoretical discussion of Gilles Deleuze's Bergsonian account of film history and theory, see Totaro, Donato. "Gilles Deleuze's Bergsonian Film Project: Part 1: Cinema 1: The Movement-Image." Offscreen. . Mar.31, 1999; and Totaro, Donato. "Gilles Deleuze's Bergsonian Film Project: Part 2: Cinema 2: The Time-Image." Offscreen. . Mar. 31, 1999. 10 Deleuze, Gilles. Cinema 1: The Movement-Image. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. 1983. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001: 85. ¹¹ Ibid., 80-81. 12 Rodowick, D.N. Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997: 13. 13 Ibid. ¹⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta. 1989. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001: 98-125. ¹⁵ Ibid., 110. 16 Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema, 72. ¹⁷ Totaro, Donato. "The Puppetmaster: A Bergsonian Personal Journey into History." Offscreen. . Mar. 14, 1998. 18 Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image, 81. 19 lbid., 79. ²⁰ I wish to point out that my reading of this sequence is but one interpretation, and it does not preclude other possible readings. One being, for instance, that the visual character split can also be seen as an indication of Gorchakov's psychic split (i.e. physically in Italy, emotionally in Russia). ²¹ Schrader, Paul. *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. Da Capo Press, 1988: 49. ²² Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema, 57.

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²⁴ For an informative study on the "transcendental" philosophy of Bergson and Deleuze, see Boundas,

Constantin V. "Deleuze-Bergson: An Ontology of the Virtual." Deleuze: a Critical Reader. Ed. Paul Patton.

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23 Ibid., 216.

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La conception de la chorégraphie

Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996: 81-106.

²⁵ Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema, 67.

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INDUSTRY An Interview with Richard Kerr by Randolph Jordan



01 Nov 2004 4220 words

Written by :

Randolph Jordan **Editor:** Adam Rosadiuk **Transcribers:** Andrea Ariano Gareth Hedges

Adam Rosadiuk

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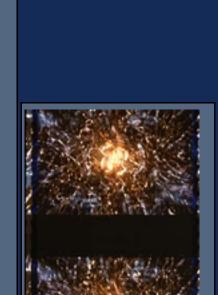
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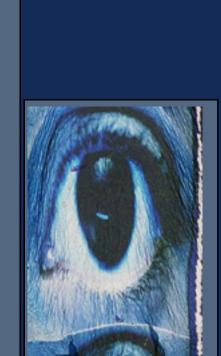
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for an

untranscribed REAL AUDIO excerpt of the interview in which Kerr discusses digital filmmaking practices.





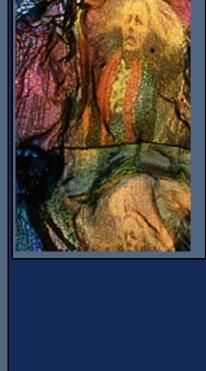




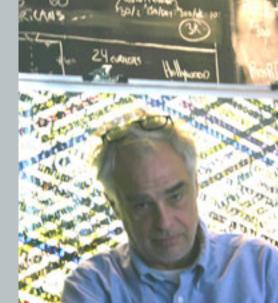








Randolph Jordan interviews Richard Kerr about his experimental filmmaking/installation project Industrie/Industry: a subversion of the Hollywood trailer, and a metaphor for an energetic community of artists and their materials. Randolph Jordan spoke with Richard Kerr at Concordia University on October 18th, 2004.



Richard Kerr has been on Canada's avant-garde film scene since the early 70s and has produced a large body of work in a variety of different experimental genres. Kerr's interest turned towards multimedia installations in the 90s with works such as OVERLAPPING ENTRIES and THE AFTER MOTION PICTURE SERIES. The Industry show expands on his recent interest in exploring cinema beyond the confines of the motion picture screen. Having acquired a box of 40 Hollywood film trailers on 35 mm film, Kerr began his Industry project with an idea for a short film that would heavily re-work these materials. With the luxury of a new studio at Concordia University's Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, he set to work with collaborators Brett Kashmere and Mike Rollo on what became a three-year process. Originally referred to as THE ÜBER-TRAILER, the eight-minute film at the centre of the *Industry* show became known as COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD. The film pushes the aesthetics of

Hollywood film trailers to an extreme level through high speed montage, multiple layers of superimposition, and extensive hand treatment of the film. Other pieces in the show include a dual projector slide show combining superimposed still frames from COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD and the original trailers from which the film was made; lightbox weavings for which Kerr has taken strands of treated film trailers and weaved them into symmetrical patterns illuminated from behind; large scale Cibachrome prints of stills from COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD; and a silent video projection of Brett Kashmere's digital remix of COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD entitled HOLLYWOOD DÉCOLLAGE. The show runs from Nov. 4th through January 23rd 2005 at the Cinemathèque québécoise. culminating on the final night with a screening of the very finest in found footage filmmaking from years recent and past. Naturally, COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD rounds out the program and will be the only time visitors will get to see the foundational piece on the big screen. Both COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD and HOLLYWOOD DÉCOLLAGE, along with the slide-show and a series of essays, production notes, and other materials will be available on the DVDformat Exhibition Catalogue which can be purchased on site. You can view the official website for the exhibition at : http://cinema.concordia.ca/industry/

RANDOLPH JORDAN: Can you describe or explain what this idea of



"industry" is? And why this is an "industry" project? What is your role in this industrial machine or industrial process? RICHARD KERR: Industry was a title that was brought up three years

ago when we started this project, Brett Kashmere, Mike Rollo and

myself (being the principles). And then the team expanded to fellows like yourself. It wasn't until the end of the three years, when we had a

naming session, that we realized what it was gonna be. We went through a lot of French titles. Partly out of a respect for the language

and culture and partly to identify where these pieces were made, because inevitably I will move on from here. None of the titles were working. So we rediscovered the simple word "industry." And then, we went to the dictionaries to break down the meanings. And of course, in French it has a singular meaning and in English it has multiple meanings. And beyond that, it was sort of a zeitgeist title. Meaning that it sort of wrapped up what we were doing here. The project was industrious; we were working with industrial materials. And being a filmmaker of the experimental avant-garde variety, you live in opposition to this thing called The Industry, which is an oxygen-suckingwildebeest that allows no room for anything I am interested in, other than titillation and escapism. So... I don't have much use for The Industry. It gets in the way of my teaching, it gets in the way of everything, but it's there so I might as well not complain. So, it became a title that we could live with. We were following a bit of an industrial model in the sense that the more experienced person—moi—went out and got the money, defined the project, led the team, and was so fortunate to have collaborators. Collaborators who I've known for a long time, from Saskatchewan. It was a very industrial process. The title was a manifestation of the daily practice. We worked in different areas and towards a common goal. The sense of team work, and just in the sheer

collaboration of the ideas. And, you know, it's probably exactly because it's wrapped around something so tight as the Hollywood trailer that so many people could input and move it forward. As opposed to if it was a personal film or something that was so internal. But, you know, this is public material. So any idea that was better than the last idea is the idea of the day. So it was kind of egoless in that sense. And the materials lend themselves to a certain sort of industrial process. We were using the old 35mm editing benches, Steenbecks, contact printers, and industrial chemicals. And then, of course, the last leg of it: it's spit-and-polished through digital technology. It's a good title because it has multiple meanings. And, yeah, there is a more metaphorical quality to the title that I guess everyone weighs in on... how they feel post-9/11. For me, way in the background is some sort of response to that malaise, that thing that everyone went though and had to question. And, for me, it's just: get up and go to work. Work kills the pain. JORDAN: So, it really has been a long process. Let's talk about living with it for the three years, getting up and going to work. I mean, you had that box of trailers, and what was the first thing you did to jump into the work? KERR: Well, the first thing that you do is that you look at the trailers on a Steenbeck and you start to listen. I And it's through working that out with its a, b, c, rolls and on the bench and all that. The first inclination was to go

mean it's like that with any material, not just this. You just listen to your materials and you respond to it, you know. It's that simple. The first project was THE ÜBER-TRAILER, which is now known as COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD.

Po-Mo crazy, because that's what a lot of the material was: Adam Sandler type comedies, and all these buffoons and whatnot. The inclination was to make something funny, sardonic, cynical... too easy though. Out of that

same box of trailers I could have made an encyclopedia of Hollywood joke films, all which would have been funny to look at one night... and then put away. Another person would have done that or another person will do

that. My interest is in perception and acceleration and the physicality of cinema. So, I passed by most of the

comedies and the Warren Beatty love movies. I went straight for the rock' n' roll, or the soul of Hollywood: the explosions, the gender bends, the darker sides. Again, it's just a case of working with materials: ideas will pop up. Well, I just happened to have a 35mm slide holder in my hand one day and two frames of the trailer fit perfectly in there. Well, that's all I needed: you got another medium here, you know. You put them in a slide projector, project them and they look great: they're sharp, they're loaded, there is two frames. Once again it is responding to the materials. So it was a short hop to the slide show and then there is no hop to the motion picture weavings, because that has now become a staple of my practice. From there it seemed natural to decide on the three elements of *Industry*. One is very static and sculptural (the weavings). The second, the slide show, the Demi Monde, is another type of Hollywood spectacle: big images, hand manipulated, slowed right down, stilled cinema (as Bart Testa defines it). And then the third

chamber, the third room is an accelerated reworking of COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD which is now called HOLLYWOOD DÉCOLLAGE. It's a pretty tight unit. But I must say, I ran through prototypes of probably seven other objects and ideas. Most of them were eliminated simply because I could not afford them. This project will continue, things will keep being made because there is an image bank there to draw from. And, I can invite other people in and they can make another generation of materials from this archive bank of Hollywood images. I am not tired of working with it; it's really cartoon material. It doesn't bite you back like autobiography or social intervention. I mean, George Clooney is pretty harmless on a light table. But it is beautiful material that is formally very strong, and there is lots you can do with it. The idea

the screen—is related to your interest in trailers, which are objects that surround the films they are supposed to represent? KERR: I don't think it's quite that tight. I mean, first, there was my waning interest in working in 16mm optical sound. I think it's fair to say that I've done my work in that medium. That ended in the early 90s, and then it's

really been about opening up in pursuit of other forms of presentation, other issues of perception. And then, of

JORDAN: Do you think that your move away from thinking in terms of a single screening—moving your work off

came together pretty quickly. It was labor intensive and that's why it took three years.

course, there was the juggernaut of the digital evolution (not revolution). That took some time to think about, and I made some work just to find out what that material and technology was about. The trailers were purely a matter of practical function. After relocating to Montreal, I had no big money to make a project. I had a new studio here at school and this mythical box of fifty trailers. So, in the spirit of working with the material at hand, and what you have before you, it just kicks in there, and then the definition of what you're doing sort of follows. I mean you're working with trailers: that's very specific. What can be done with them? And so you do the big shakedown, and see what happens. In this case, it expanded from one 35mm film COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD, which was kind of a natural place to start this exercise in meta-cinema. JORDAN: So do you think of it in terms of commentary on cinema? You're drawing mostly from Hollywood sources. Are you trying to offer some comment on Hollywood film or are you engaging in more of a participation with them?

politic, a certain reading of gender and those things. Therefore, as a collagist, I could only steer and shape, turn inside-out. I let the material speak. There is a rarefied commercial language in Hollywood cinema, especially trailers. It's a fairly limited perceptual language. Thinking of screen directions, its physicality, shot lengths, frame

lengths, rhythms—it's fairly limited, but very intense. It needs to be torn apart. Pretty high-octane stuff.

was just full-frontal attack, but to me that was cinema. Tactile. You can feel it on your face.

KERR: Well, I'm not starting out with a set agenda. Though, I think that inherently in this material there's a certain

JORDAN: You're feeding off that. When Cornell made ROSE HOBART, he drastically changed the feel of the original film, but you seem like you're more interested in amplifying the intensity that already exists. KERR: Yeah, it did collide with a pre-existing interest I had in "accelerated cinema." This is the Age of Slow, so they tell me. My interest is in the giddyup of cinema. How fast and how physical? That's always been my experience and what I respond to. The earliest stuff I experienced and shaped me was by Paul Sharits, which

of defiantly not using that technology. In terms of the image there was no digital processing whatsoever. Did you make a decision to commit to the materiality of film itself in opposition to digital? KERR: That would be my first response to any act of creation: what are the materials? I wouldn't understand how to start any other place. I mean, whether I was building a fence or baking a pie, it would be the first consideration. Am I working with good materials? What inherently do these materials have that makes them

JORDAN: Also, you're very consciously materialistic: interested in the materials and very consciously non-digital. In fact, you mentioned a few minutes ago that you were interested in figuring out the digital thing, but you're sort

unique? And then, you work from there. It seems anything else is swimming upstream. I'm interested in the formal properties. I'm interested in the materials. I'm less interested in grandiose, indulgent statements. It's about the materials, it's about the process, and it's about making things. I have no great insights about the world, no more than anyone else. But the objects I make, I think, resonate with something that I'm unaware of and it lies in its material and its physicality somewhere. JORDAN: The first section is very disaster film oriented, right? Were you thinking at all in terms of the materiality of the film in relation to the materiality of maybe even the Earth, or just life and its constant process of destruction?

make something work that doesn't work. What works is when you put all the space stuff together, all the psychodramas together, all the genres, and you lay them one, two, three, A, B, C, on top of each other. Because they have the same rhythms and pulse, right? A space movie has a totally different rhythm than a psychodrama or than a cop movie. So, it's their physical properties that defined it and then that made more sense narratively, too.

KERR: No. I mean you keep trying to give me credit for being a thinker about this material, and I'm not. I just go

at the materials. I mean the way that the narrative shape of COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD came to be, is I tried like fifty different combinations of fifty different things, of A, B, C... but at the end of the day, it's what works. I can't

JORDAN: But at the very least, you thought about the form of its three sections, which are fairly distinct. You've got the space stuff and the disaster stuff, you've got the psychodrama stuff, and then you've got the really abstract, mostly hand-painted, hand-treated section at the end. This must have been a conscious move, from outer space to inner space maybe? KERR: Mario Falsetto saw it in its early stage and his first observation was "from outer space to inner space", ha, ha, ha, right? I really have to reiterate, that with this kind of work—especially the stuff in the last twelve years or so—I've quit thinking, and just started reacting. Of course, I think; I have lots of notes in my sketchbook. There's

a difference between crediting yourself as a great thinker and just being realistically open to the material and

being sensitive enough to let the stuff respond and happen, and then recognize it, and not fuck with it.

JORDAN: And it's very much also a way of responding to and interacting with something which Hollywood doesn't really want you to respond to, any further than looking at the trailer and buying a ticket for the movie based on what they've shown to you. KERR: Well, we'll see. I mean I have every intention of trying to get this to the States, and specifically Los Angeles and Hollywood. We're going to approach certain institutions down there. And it'll be interesting to see

JORDAN: Yeah, I see it as a simultaneous critique and homage. I like the way the two can work together and not really contradict each other. If you like the experience of sensory overload that you get from watching film trailers, then I'd think you'd also like to watch COLLAGE D'HOLLYWOOD. But at the same time there is a conscious pushing it to absurd limits. And these limits may end up becoming a test case for copyright issues.

KERR: Early in the stages of this I signed with a dealer in Toronto, and they were going to do a show with the motion picture weavings, and some photography. And they backed down on the copyright issue. They just got

what the read is. Will they dig the intellectual play of it, or will they see it as a copyright threat? It all depends, it

all depends. But I think it should be seen. It's a good take on Hollywood. It's a fair take.

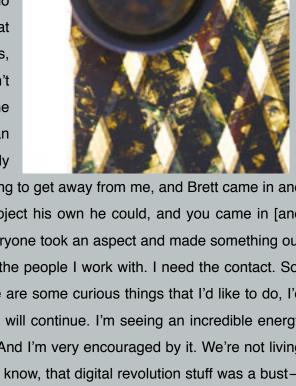
JORDAN: So you are going to expand on the *Industry* project and hopefully tour around with it and keep adding things as they come up?

too afraid. So it may be a problem getting it exhibited. We'll have to see. I'll push the issue as much as I can.

reconfigured many ways. So the idea of shipping it around and touring it seemed rather natural. We'll see how that goes. Like everything else it takes money and hustle. And yeah, there are

more things to be made. Sculptural things—all sorts of mutations of photography. There's another slide show based on PEARL HARBOR that's never been shown. There are a couple unfinished films hanging in the trim bins that never got realized. The idea would be to build a studio around this idea, and bring in other people who work the same way. Because we have a great setup here at Concordia, where we've saved all these great analog machines, from stop motion cameras to Oxberries to optical printers. We didn't throw the analog out in anticipation of the digital, so I really like the way we sit in North America as a cinema school. Maybe we can build a studio around this concept and widen this circle. Certainly the most rewarding aspect of this show was when I saw it was going to get away from me, and Brett came in and collaborated at such a high level that if he wanted to call this project his own he could, and you came in [and

KERR: This show, conceptually, can be broken down and



submitted essays], and Adam [Rosadiuk] did the website, and everyone took an aspect and made something out of it. I still have lots of energy, but I definitely need the energy of the people I work with. I need the contact. So, yeah, I'd like to carry this forward at a community level. And there are some curious things that I'd like to do, I'd like to make. So as long as there is that core of energy, the work will continue. I'm seeing an incredible energy from this new generation about working with the materials again. And I'm very encouraged by it. We're not living in a total digital world, which I may have feared 15 years ago. You know, that digital revolution stuff was a bust it was the biggest con that ever happened to young practitioners. And the ones that were smart enough to hang on to their old cameras, and learn how to hand-process film...it's just that the 100% totally digital world, to me, has an evil aspect to it. It all backs up to M.I.T. somewhere and some sense of military R&D. Yeah, I think there's a political point to doing this sort of work, this handmade work. So I hope that the *Industry* project can continue and involve more people, and expand, and get beyond me. That's for sure.



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Review of The 2004 Fantasia Film Festival

Randolph Jordan is a recent graduate of the MA Film Studies programme at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University in Montreal, and is currently enrolled in Concordia's Interdisciplinary PhD Humanities programme. His research in the MA programme focused on sound/image relationships in the cinema, specifically within the films of David Lynch. In the Interdisciplinary PhD Humanities programme he is continuing his interest in sound theory and practice, combining the fields of film studies, electroacoustic music and intertextuality studies to explore how the complex audio-visual relationships that inherently make up cinema of all kinds can benefit from perspectives outside the realm of film scholarship. He is also a practicing musician and filmmaker, and is a regular contributor to http://www.offscreen.com. For more info and links to all his webpublications, visit the Assistant's Corner at http://www.soppybagrecords.net.

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Transcendental Images of Time and Memory



A film like RITUAL is just one reason why Fantasia carves out its own distinct territory in the Montreal Film Festival



Editor: Shawna Plischke **Comments? Questions?** to go to our Contact form.

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horror and exploitation film geek, martial art and anime cinema enthusiast, it's back to the city's repertory hangout Cinéma du Parc for "Parc After Dark" or the local Boîte Noire or Succubus video store for a little something to assuage the dark, curious or adventurous side Fantasia caters to so well. But until next year's Fantasia Fest., here is a short collection of reviews and comments on some of the films enjoyed this summer written in the format of the daily journal, taking you all the way back to July and August for those of us inclined to visit the immediate past of Montreal's premiere showcase for genre cinema just one more time. This year's films cut across all genres, styles and themes; from Spanish horror to 60s freeze-frame anime; school kids with a sadistic edge to pugnacious seafood. Some of them worked and others didn't, but all were

evidence of extraordinary imaginations willing to skip outside rather than goose-step behind the usual parade of Hollywood insipidity. They evinced an international cultural fecundity and the simple, enduringly human need to tell a story, albeit ones with a bit more viscera, manga and slashing katana than normal filmic fare.

Enjoy. RITUAL (Hideaki Anno, 2000)

monotonous quality of the Woman's daily ritual of attempted suicide (every morning she contemplates whether or not she should jump off her seven-story roof hanging onto a guardrail), the act does take on a more endearing tone – as her trust in the Director grows, she eventually allows the guardrail she clutches to be replaced by the out-stretched hands of the Director. He won't stop her from playing with her life, but he can at least hold her Actor Ayako Fujitani has surely had enough of being saddled with the moniker of "Steven Seagal's Daughter," which is how she was introduced at her Thursday night appearance, only a few days into the festival. She has come into her own for her recent accomplishments, presumably without Seagal's direct involvement. With three novels under her belt, one of which RITUAL is based upon, she has demonstrated that she is not only an accomplished actor, but also an inspiring novelist. In the Q/A following the film, Fujitani described the book, and

In turn, producer Amagi Omiro likened the film to a live-action form of anime, asserting that this is at least how the Japanese public received the film and digested it conceptually. Omiro insisted on describing RITUAL with two words that are loaded in any cinematic context, regardless the country or culture: Art Film. RITUAL does, in fact exhibit a number of the common characteristics of the "art-film," for example, existential angst and a narrativestructure up for grabs. The film only played in a Photography Museum when it was released in Japan, and it was never intended to be distributed in commercial theatres. When it played in Japan in 2000 (the year it was originally released), about 50,000 people in only three theatres saw the film. It was only when the film was released on DVD that word of mouth among fans brought the film to the attention of distributors. The use of real-life Japanese director Shunji Iwaii as the character of the Director may be an obvious, if painfully

Stunning imagery of an industrialised Japan abounds throughout the film. Director Anno frequently employs wide-angle shots that lend a distorted, surreal vision of Japan in the 21st Century, and plays, in scene after scene, with the lattice work of innumerable train tracks that grid the world of the Woman and the Director. Anno's images initially look navigable but they represent a metaphorical labyrinth that leads both the characters and the viewer to a more uncertain place. Adding to the film's surrealism is the set design in the Woman's warehouse. Cavernous, stripped down, mono-coloured office spaces filled with red and white umbrellas, phones, refrigerators, mannequins, candles, all set against blindingly white walls further disorient the viewer. In terms of imagery, Anno achieves sparkling moments of poetic grandeur in his rendering of the city and the actors' navigation through different milieus (shopping thoroughfares, roadways and antique train-cars). One inspired

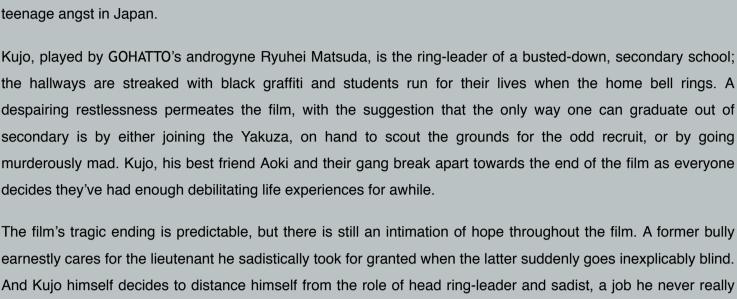
moment has the Woman guiding the Director through each floor space of her warehouse home; Anno shoots this

The interplay between digital video and film (played out as a visualized metaphor for memory and immediate

in fast-motion, lending the film an isolated incident of playfulness.

reality), and the restrained performance by the Director, suggest the deeply meditative film this could have been had Anno not fallen for the clichés associated with the art-house film. BLUE SPRING (Toshiaki Toyaoda, 2001) and DAD'S DEAD (Chris Shepherd, 2003)

Ryuhei Matsuda as Kujo in BLUE SPING. On a Saturday night a small quiet crowd was privy to cinema that cast away any stereotypical notions one might



frustration of the teenage youths in BLUE SPRING with creepy live-action combined with rotoscopic digital animation. This combination found its most disturbing realization in the distorted face of a sociopathic teen named Johnno who represents at least one disturbing demographic of the modern Englishman in Liverpool, England. Again, like BLUE SPRING, this is leagues beyond the idyllic, if marginally realistic, world of Degrassi Junior High. DAD'S DEAD is Liverpudlian working class environs with a horror film flavour that chronicles a degenerating friendship between two lads; one, a possible criminal with a conscience, the other, a criminal with a growing penchant for killing animals and "caring" for the disadvantaged on the dole with the express purpose of robbing them ("He's a saint!" say the ignorant and easily duped). What makes this film so provocative is how it is related through the eyes of the protagonist whose reliability is suspect; the viewer is not entirely sure how much

of the tale is a fabrication of the protagonist's own morbid desire to relate a story about his nasty best friend or

the actual truth as seen through his own admittedly unreliable point of view.

CUTIE HONEY (Hideaki Anno, 2004) and THE EXORCIST IN 30 **SECONDS (Jennifer Shiman)** I vowed to myself that being relegated to the back of the line and, consequently, nose-bleeder seating at the rear of the Hall Theatre was unacceptable for a cinematic event hyped as being akin to Guazzoni's QUO VADIS?. I queued up exactly one hour early for Hideaki Anno's CUTIE HONEY, arguably the fan favourite of this year's

Fantasia festival – remember the still, which was easily the most circulated image in the press, of the demure little girl in a purple and pink S & M outfit with the sword on the cover of Mirror? Thought so. This was easily the

most anticipated event for anime-devotees at Fantasia no doubt due to its live-action depiction of a popular, 70s manga comic. The film features manga-nymph Cutie Honey who typically practises calisthenics in a bra and

Young Honey Kisaragi, an android superhero, saves the world with her trusty Honey boomerang, eats rice cakes in order to activate her "Honey-Flash" (which, I think, is her unique "i-system" energy signature) and battles evil

with her 70s-style hipster N.S.A. agent-buddy and a really cute, hard-nosed female detective who dresses exclusively in black suits. The soundtrack is a kaleidoscope la la la, late-60s swinger music cooed by adolescent

teenage girls, whom I can only naively dream are the intended demographic for a movie like CUTIE HONEY. Regardless of whether or not manga come-to-life is your particular cup of tea (with honey), the film exudes an

appealing frantic energy. Director Hideaki Anno pays rapt attention to detail in translating the spirit of the comic to

panties, and transforms into superhero fighting form with an exultant, "Honey-Flash!"

the screen, and Eriko Satoh embodies Cutie with as much Honey-Flash as humanly possible. When Cutie does battle with an Alice Cooperesque Madame Tiger-Claw, who brandishes Wolverine blades and a wrist-mounted, multiple rocket launcher, the fight choreography and montage, combined with the computer-generated devastation and Satoh's irrepressible characterization, is, admittedly, spectacular. Everyone, including myself, was tickled pink (which, incidentally, is the predominate colour-scheme of Cutie Honey's superhero outfit) by how much this film brings GO NAGAI to dazzling life. P.S. Before CUTIE HONEY, one of the shorts was an animated film called THE EXORCIST IN 30 SECONDS by Jennifer Shiman. I f@%\$#^& loved this film. It was exactly what the title said it would be: Friedken's treatise on

playfully rendered, animated rabbits. One would be at pains (I hope) to describe the last time one saw an exorcism adhering to 16th century Roman-Catholic doctrine, but just try to imagine one that enlisted a pair of bunny-wabbit Catholic priests that repeat in helium voices, "The Power of Christ Compels You!" to a floating,

green-faced bunny version of Regan. Shiman expertly replicates scenes from Friedkin's film shot-for-shot. The most memorable one has to be the over-the-shoulder, two-shot of one Catholic priest lamenting, "I think I've lost my faith Tom," to another Priest, with the two of them sporting two prominent buck teeth, white fur and floppy ears. THE EXORCIST IN 30 SECONDS and other bunny shorts can be found at http://www.angryalien.com Fantasia Festival's Paul Naschy Retrospective The fact that I, a student of horror cinema, had never heard of Paul Naschy, King of Spanish Horror, before this festival, now makes me blush. He is an actor who has been honoured with Spain's Gold Medal Award ("Senor Excelentisimo") as a result of having acted in, directed and written close to one hundred and thirty films ever since he first appeared as an extra in a biblical drama back in 1961. Virtually all the films he's been associated

with in any capacity are fixed firmly within the horror genre and throughout them all, he's managed to refresh in

his own singular way over-represented stodgy juggernauts such as Dracula, Jack the Ripper, even Jekyll and

LOVE, that it was clear why Naschy has drawn so much praise for his work over the years. Naschy had an ability throughout the sixties and seventies to invigorate the tired and cliché conventions and characters inextricably associated with the horror film genre until then. Naschy's films are by no means lofty pieces of cinematic artistry. They mostly plumb the depths of exploitation with sadomasochism and apathetic soft-core pornography, but there were moments that were pleasures in the poetical, especially the slow-motion, midnight hunts by the two female vampires in DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE. While these films are enterprises in salacious exploitation, Naschy's screen presence as Dracula and the Wolfman manages to elevate itself far above the material, lending his characters an unlikely but communicable gravitas tragic to behold. BAND OF NINJA (Nagisa Oshima, 1967) Being an avid fan of anime goes the proverbial long way at Fantasia, especially with films such as Moon-Saeng Kim's WONDERFUL DAYS, which made its Canadian premiere at Fantasia. But there was nothing like Nagisa Oshima's BAND OF NINJA to cull the weak-willed from the strong, really testing the fortitude of even the most

devout of anime cultists this side of the Atlantic. The reason was this: BAND OF NINJA is composed entirely of

If this weren't enough to make a few in the audience wish they had read the Fantasia program a little more closely (like me), the flood of fervent Japanese that made up the soundtrack added to the confusion because of the lack of subtitles. After a few minutes of nervous audience giggling, a slick 60s American voice-over with all the authoritative drawl of a "Duck and Cover" atom bomb propaganda reel began to relate both the story and dialogue. It became apparent the problem was that unless one knew fluent Japanese, the film was tough to

follow because of the convoluted plot, multiple characters and inadequate translation. You know you are in trouble when it takes a translating voice-over ten seconds to relate three to four minutes of constantly changing

scene, dialogue and narration. The two people who accompanied me to BAND OF NINJA left after about 15

minutes, along with about ten others in the audience, but the theatre as a whole still remained full, perhaps just

out of a curiosity to witness Oshima's take on the medium of anime. This kind of dedication is no surprise

considering he has demonstrated his mercurial skill with films such as MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. LAWRENCE; IN

THE REALM OF THE SENSES; and GOHATTO, all three of which attest to his mastering of cinematic craft and

PRAYER BEADS (Masahiro Okano and others, 2004)

storytelling.

demonstrated the desire for Japanese horror in any media. Each episode begins with the series' opening credits, a disorienting, invasive, spiral view of someone's large intestine that could also very well be a vertiginous descent into Hell. Episode 7, ECHOES, begins by occupying a space outside the common modalities of horror (these familiar settings replaced by the bucolic world of a geriatrics' Japan), but the genre's topography finally peeks through when a small child discovers a severed arm while on a fishing expedition and an elderly couple revive their long-dormant sixth sense/telekinesis when they discover a young relative of theirs has been murdered. The episode taps, if perhaps simplistically, the potentially aggravated WW2 generational gap between the elderly and the young in a disturbing fashion befitting the horrific. In one sequence, a grandmother and grandfather searching for their murdered grand-daughter meet an upstart with a possible role in the murder in an alley. It is to director/writer Naoki Ksusmoto's credit, that through a display of heavily nuanced direction, the couple are imbued with only the slightest taint of the diabolical as they educate the young hoodlum in the consequences of crossing their path. CAT'S PAW, Episode 8, is just as much a stripped-down tale of revenge and comeuppance as ECHOES, except it shifts its focus from the vengeful elderly to a young boy who just wants to live a better life (i.e. no bullies, no abusive fathers and everyone in happy spirits). This is accomplished through the unsolicited help of a computeranime pussycat named Ryanta in the boy's home pc, but, predictably, problems never seem to be solved as easily in the real world as they are in animated ones. When a sadistic bully is dismembered and reassembled in Ryanta's cartoon world at the request of the bespectacled protagonist, the real world properly translates this

The final episode APARTMENT is a wicked little thriller that is, again, deceptively simple, but still sufficiently nightmarish. It is a dramatised study in patriarchal abuse as a teenage brother, sister and mother ride on the edge of emotional collapse when forced to endure the tirades of an abusive father. When a tense family dinner

Certainly, when browsing a film festival program, one doesn't immediately feel drawn towards watching grainy

television episodes blown up on the big screen but PRAYER BEADS challenges the stereotype of television as the

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS (Ji -woon Kim, 2003)

finally reaches its explosive apex, the reality of the family's situation leaves the viewer speechless.

gesture with disturbingly gruesome results.

lesser sibling of the two media.

with hundreds camped out in front of me.

One could argue that with A TALE OF TWO SISTERS,

sequence has the camera slowly drift past the dark floor boards of the house to follow a trail of blood leaking from

a burlap sack, the contents of which are as jolting as they are bizarre.

uninspired efforts. After having seen A TALE OF TWO SISTERS, the answer is yes.

This may sound like hyperbole but frankly, Ji-woon Kim's superb A TALE OF TWO SISTERS is, by far, the most frightening horror film to come out of East Asia (or anywhere else) in recent memory (yes, it is even more shocking than Japan's RINGU or JUN-ON). Case in point: after the thirty minute mark when really bad things start to happen to the first of the two teenagers in the film, Su-Mi and Su Yeon, the two stolid-looking guys seated to my left were reduced to embarrassed schoolgirl whispers after crying out in bald horror (along with the rest of the theatre) at the first set-piece: a young heroine receives a visit from a vaguely human something in a young girl's

teases out the subdued palette of a haunted home, something as simple as the manse in A TALE OF TWO SISTERS seems to seethe a barely restrained malice, never mind the strikingly photographed horrors themselves that coax home all the grotesque ingredients perfect for an unnerving film such as this worked in dark wood and bitter malevolence. Is the house itself evil or is the evil fuelled by a maleficent girl in a funeral dress? With the image-track already heightening the tension to a crescendo, the soundtrack, reminiscent of a Lynchian soundscape always throbbing in low rumble register, makes the overall film unnervingly vivid. Clearly, Kim excels at constantly intimating the abject: one drawn out

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS does well in allaying any fears as to the future of horror, East Asian or otherwise. I constantly ask myself if I can still be truly scared by a horror film, after having been disappointed by so many

THE CALAMARI WRESTLER (Minoru Kawasaki, 2004)

It may have been the lamentable fact that the end of Fantasia 2004 was close to final curtain, but the euphoria shown by the crowd on July 30th in the Hall theatre was surprising to say the least. But then again, when an audience is about to witness a spectacle entitled THE CALAMARI WRESTLER with the director in attendance, present to provide a clue as to where he got the idea for a film about a wrestler who happens to be a squid, it's no surprise the audience seemed unusually excited. Yes, Minoru Kawasaki's THE CALAMARI WRESTLER is about a WWF-style Japanese wrestler who happens to be a bipedal cephalopod in calf-high wrestling boots. And yes, this squid pits his grappling acumen and four-corner stylin's against assorted adversaries including an octopus and a pugnacious squilla. But despite, and because of, all its unashamed inanity, THE CALAMARI WRESTLER

slithers with ease past whatever doubt a viewer might have about creature-suit molluscs in a fight billed as a

Before the film began, writer/director Kawasaki, still visibly moved by the adoring applause that greeted his entrance at the front the theatre, took pains to remind the audience that this film was in the tradition of the

the frantic goofiness of the project, and even admitted that he had to perform some Machiavellian manoeuvring to secure sufficient investment for the film. Kawasaki admitted that the culturally-entrenched popularity of the Ultraman series was his impetus to become a filmmaker, but an obscure Prawn-Shrimp boxer movie made in England sometime in the 60s was the motivating reason that lifted THE CALAMARI WRESTLER out of the sphere of Kawasaki's private imagination and on to screen. Surpassing its own considerable hype, THE CALAMARI WRESTLER is as enjoyable as Kawasaki promised, with a self-reflexive, satirical sensibility throughout.

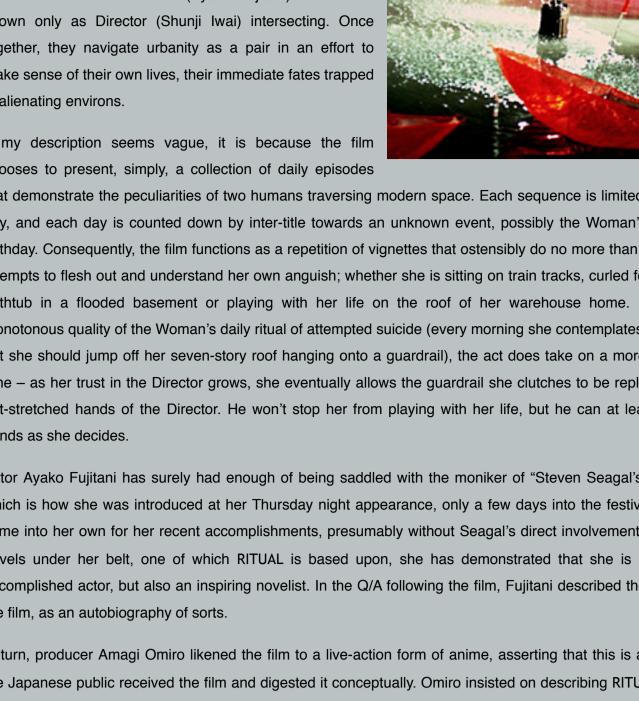
Plot-wise, it turns out that the Calamari Wrestler is in fact a reincarnation of a famous wrestler who has come back as a squid after he purges all desire through a rigorous Zen satori ritual. Eventually he rediscovers true love, finds out who his father and brother really are, and becomes the proud father of a healthy, baby squid. What is especially amusing about the film, besides the Calamari Wrestler himself and the vaguely disturbing dayglow sex sequences involving said Calamari and his girlfriend are repeated sequences that have wrestling pundits, businessmen, and aficionados in the film complaining about the degeneration of the sport of Japanese professional wrestling due to the participation of a cephalopod. For all the characters in the movie, the simple fact is that yes, this squid's a good wrestler, BUT HE'S A SQUID! The character's consternation is portrayed in such a straight-faced manner that it is obvious that Kawasaki has a superb understanding of farce and satire.

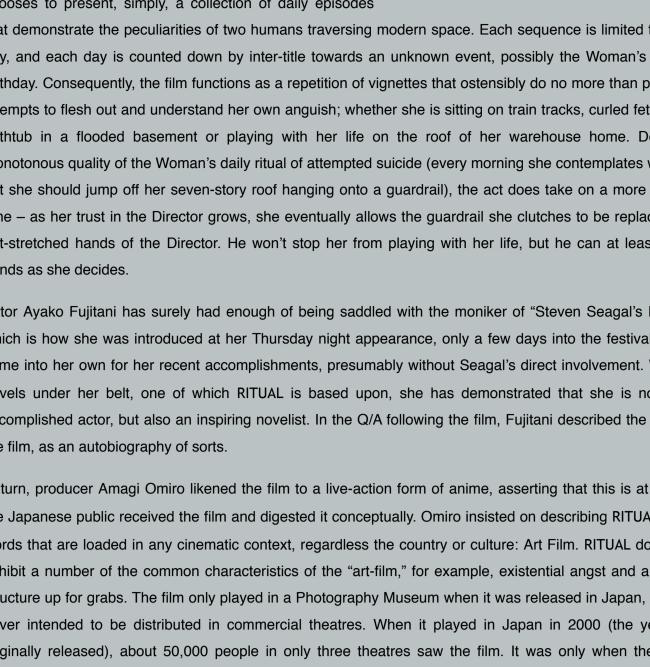
Shot on digital video, THE CALAMARI WRESTLER looks cheap because it is cheap. In this case cheap doesn't mean bad, because Kawasaki lifts farce to the level of the sublime with his instinct for what makes entertaining

> Next entry :: >>> **TEAM AMERICA**

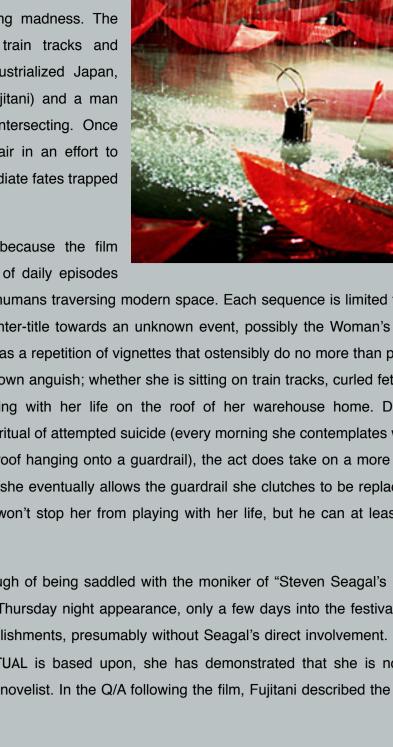
scene. It is one of those marginal East-Asian films that seems dinky and is under promoted, but succeeds in finding a new audience at a venue such as this. RITUAL is a delicately rendered art-film (as loaded and rickety as that term is) that attempts to manifest on the screen an eccentric, middle-class woman's attempts at assessing and treating her own spiralling madness. The physical setting is composed of the train tracks and abandoned warehouses of a hyper-industrialized Japan, with the lives of the Woman (Ayako Fujitani) and a man known only as Director (Shunji Iwai) intersecting. Once together, they navigate urbanity as a pair in an effort to make sense of their own lives, their immediate fates trapped in alienating environs. If my description seems vague, it is because the film chooses to present, simply, a collection of daily episodes that demonstrate the peculiarities of two humans traversing modern space. Each sequence is limited to a single day, and each day is counted down by inter-title towards an unknown event, possibly the Woman's suicide or birthday. Consequently, the film functions as a repetition of vignettes that ostensibly do no more than present her

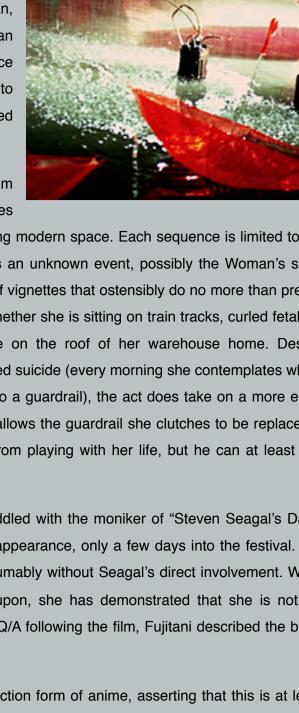
attempts to flesh out and understand her own anguish; whether she is sitting on train tracks, curled fetal-like in a bathtub in a flooded basement or playing with her life on the roof of her warehouse home. Despite the

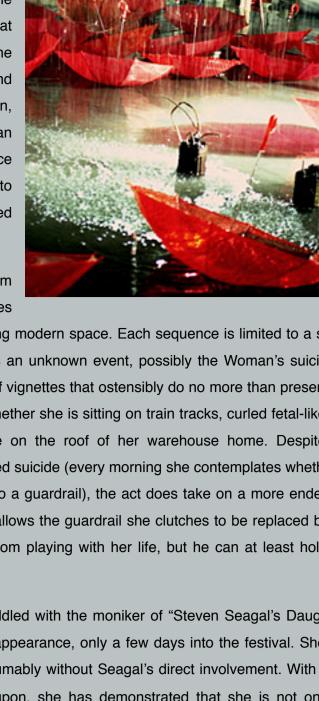


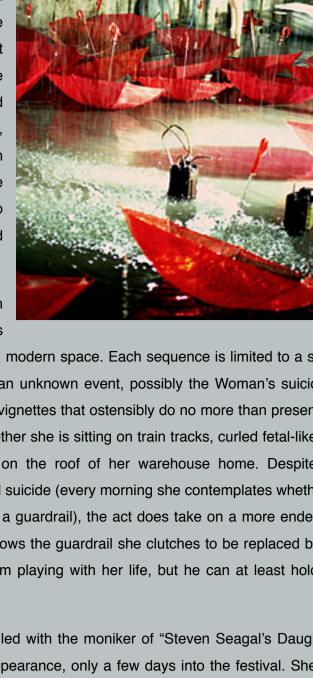


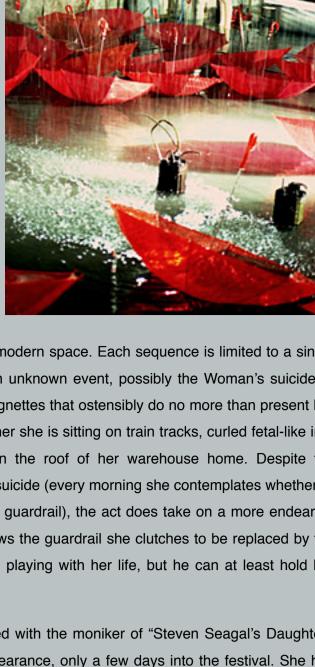


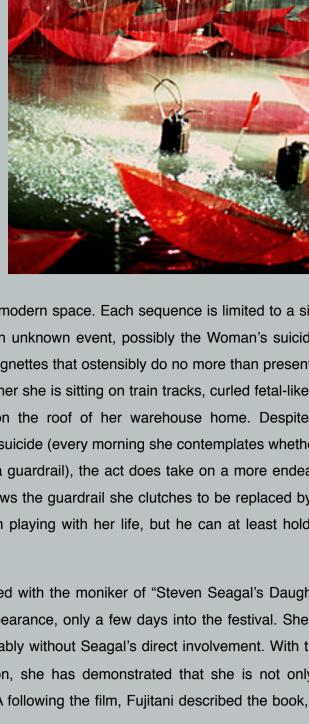


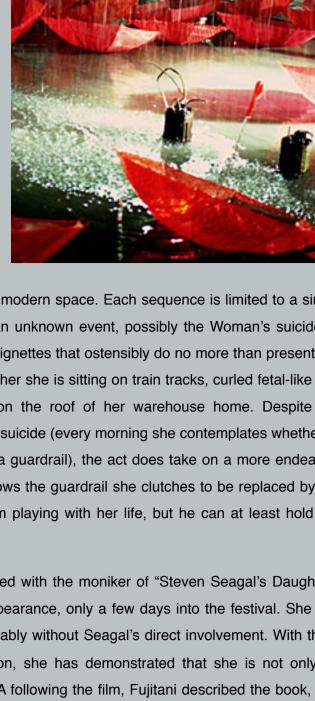


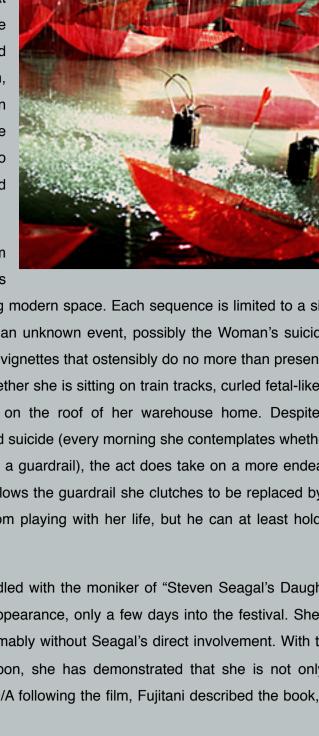


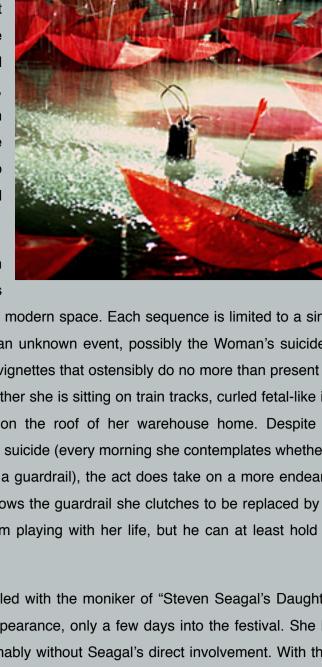






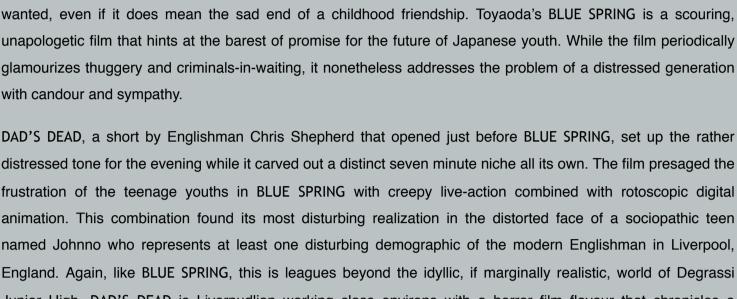








have of modern Japanese youth groomed for, and content with, a complacent role in Japan's reputation as an ultra-capitalist country. If Toshiaki Toyaoda's BLUE SPRING has any say, the cultural and social potency that drives Japan into the 21st Century is fuelled by bitter teenage nihilism. One of the trends in contemporary Japanese cinema about Japanese youth is the notion of distopic future for the next generation, as exemplified by Takashi Miike's FUDOH: THE NEW GENERATION. BLUE SPRING continues along this theme in the harrowing depiction of teenage angst in Japan.



Hyde. His most vaunted creation is the doomed, melancholic figure of the Wolfman named Count Waldemar Daninsky in human form. A recurrent character throughout Naschy's filmography, Daninsky has been crafted to resemble the typical tragic hero, albeit one cursed with lycanthropy in the same tradition as Lon Chaney, Jr.; that is, dressed in slacks and fashionable long-sleeved shirts, with the requisite fangs and hirsute make-up. Naschy's only edge over Chaney is his ability to drool; he can fill buckets with the stuff once he really gets going. Naschy was on hand to answer questions prior to the unveiling of his newest vehicle ROJO SANGRE, which he also wrote. The film is vigorously autobiographical in its telling of an aged, once great actor forced to compete with vapid young Turks and Hollywood silicone (he eventually decides the best way to deal with the competition is to murder it). Behind the film's rather high-gloss technical veneer, courtesy of director Christian Molina, there was a depressive, although at times satirical, cynicism woven within Naschy's onscreen embodiment, Pablo Thevenet. Thevenet understands he is a washed up thespian no one will touch. When they do dare to sully their manicured hands, it is to offer him humiliatingly base roles, that in his heyday, he never would have dreamed of

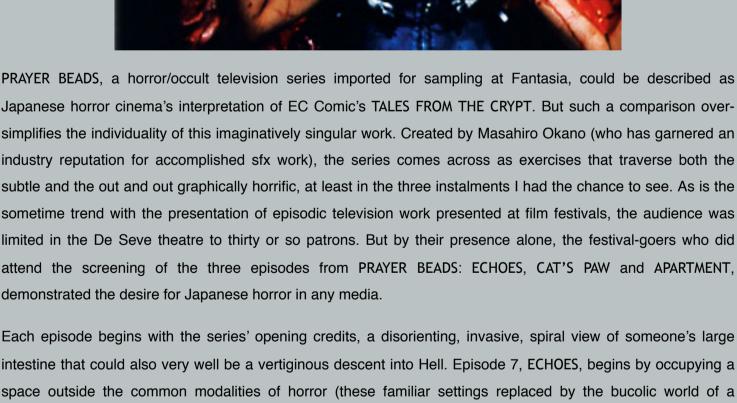
entertaining. By film's end, Thevenet's decision to forgo his soul for revenge and his eventual re-emergence on

top of the Hollywood game at the price of eternal damnation, obviously hints at Naschy's own Faustian thoughts

It wasn't until the Saturday night's double bill THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN and DRACULA'S GREAT

of his role as a fading horror icon and the possible resting place of his falling star.

fixed anime cells (it was inspired by the manga "Ninja Bugeicho") that are brought to life by camera pans and scans, which imbue the admittedly beautifully drawn images with the dynamism necessary to tell a particularly brutal and fantasy-driven tale of 16th century feudal Japan. True enough, some of the images in BAND OF NINJA were arresting as certain depictions of the aftermath of Samurai battle clearly evoked Goya's LOS DESASTRES DE LA GUERRA. But for non-anime fans, the film could be a trying two hour experience of static anime. This was distressingly – and at times comically – evident when in the first minutes of the film, the arresting (and arrested) quality of Samurai and Ninja characters flash-frozen in action stances, swords slashing through the air, were presented in proto, black-ink rendered, black and white images that made one feel as if one were reading a comic book.



dress, creeping about on all fours at the foot of her bed. I have to admit that while I didn't technically scream at any point during A TALE OF TWO SISTERS, I did let out what was in retrospect a mixture of a bark and a yelp, prompted by Scare #2: a quick peek at something covered in slime lurking underneath the kitchen sink cabinet. The film was so scary that I actually caught myself with my book-bag clutched in front of me shield-like, as if to

ward off any unwelcome ghosts that might accost me in my seat from the direction of the screen.

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS was as uncanny as Freud ever intended. The first half-hour establishes an utterly fractured familial dynamic (one sister hates the father, the other sister is too scared to choose sides, the father exists somewhere inside his own emotionally distraught world and the step-mother is a harridan who only wants

the father to herself, etc.) sequestered inside an old country house that becomes more and more unheimlich as

the plot progresses. South Korean horror cinema became well-known with MEMENTO MORI back in 1999, proving

that Korea was more than capable of taking on Japan with its own brand of horror (Japan's RINGU series crept

onto the screens in 1998 garnering a then unforeseeable amount of popularity). The resultant East Asian buzz

has prompted more of the cinematic same over the years and fuelled in part the frisson surrounding the premiere

of A TALE OF TWO SISTERS. I arrived one hour prior to showtime but was still significantly waaaaaay back in line

director Kim establishes bit by bit the generic boundaries of a Gothic imaginary. With sensual cinematography that

Japanese-Monster-Character-Rubber-Suit movies made most famous by Godzilla. He urged the audience not take the film seriously in any way, except during the love scenes between the eponymous squid and his paramour Miyako. In fact, he wanted the audience to "laugh as much as possible." He, himself, acknowledged

film. Friedrich Mayr reviewed DAY OF THE DEAD in Synoptique 1. http://articles.synoptique.ca/fantasia1/

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"Seafood Smackdown."





01 Nov 2004 3640 words

Written by: Bruno Cornellier and Bruno Dequen

> **Editor:** Nadine Asswad

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Bruno versus Bruno : Duel autour de TEAM AMERICA (ou comment prendre très au sérieux les aventures extraordinaires d'un groupe de pantins obsédés par le sexe et la destruction du monde)

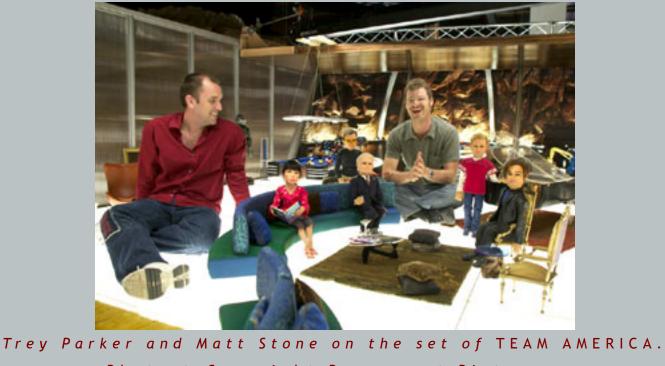


Photo © Copyright Paramount Pictures. Par une belle journée d'automne, Bruno D. et Bruno C. décident d'aller se détendre aux vues. Sérieux et

rigoureux, ils délibèrent longuement et choisissent enfin leur objet : TEAM AMERICA : WORLD POLICE de Trey Parker et Matt Stone, créateurs de la désormais célèbre télé-série SOUTH PARK. Le film : un pamphlet satirique où des marionnettes de ficelles et de latex cherchent à régler le sort du monde en combattant bien sûr les terroristes et tyrans qui l'assaillent, mais aussi les pacifistes américains (ou plutôt hollywoodiens). Le tout dans une lutte à mort où la gauche et la droite en prennent chacun pour leur rhume, pendant que tous un chacun en profitent, l'instant d'un moment, pour dynamiter quelques parcelles de cette Terre dont ils cherchent à faire sens : de Paris jusqu'au Caire, en passant par le canal de Panama et le Mont Rushmore. Bruno D. et Bruno C. sortent du cinéma pantois. Chacun prépare ses armes : le film est-il une œuvre subversive

et distant de l'écriture pour en débattre. Bruno C. se sent ainsi plus en sécurité. Une critique de film par correspondance, dirions-nous? Ou bien une critique « épistolaire »? Peu importe l'épithète. Faisons-en plutôt l'expérience. Ces « Siskel and Ebert » montréalais arriveront-ils un jour à

et explosive, ou un simple petit pamphlet réactionnaire faisant l'éloge du status quo? On choisit le terrain neutre

s'entendre? Commençons :

Cher Bruno C,

Je t'écris aujourd'hui en tant qu'ami et confrère. Car à la suite de notre visionnement de la dernière et Ö combien

subtile comédie des créateurs de SOUTH PARK, j'ai senti chez toi un certain malaise. Il est dès lors de mon devoir d'amorcer avec toi une thérapie par l'écriture qui te permettra d'exposer avec calme et retenue académique les problèmes que te pose le film. Comme tu le sais déjà, j'ai apprécié le film. J'admets que ce type d'humour n'est pas pour tous les goûts. Or je

n'avais pas autant ri au cinéma depuis un bon moment! J'ai de plus remarqué que tu as toi-même pleuré de rire à plusieurs reprises... Selon moi, le film fonctionne assez bien en tant que satire des discours médiatiques et politiques actuels. Représenter tous les débats politiques actuels aux Etats-Unis sous la forme d'une lutte entre

acteurs de cinéma est une façon intéressante de critiquer le simplisme et l'ineptie de ces discours, Michael

Moore étant selon moi aussi didactique et manipulateur que le clan Bush. La séquence finale du film, dans laquelle deux discours aussi stupides l'un que l'autre s'affrontent, est une satire pertinente d'un univers politique dans lequel le pouvoir de conviction et l'apparence extérieure l'emportent sur le contenu du discours. Après tout, le personnage principal du film est tout aussi abruti que l'est Alec Baldwin, son alter ego. Ceci étant dit, le film me pose quelques problèmes. Je me pose de nombreuses questions quant à l'efficacité réelle de la satire/parodie. En effet, le film, même s'il se moque ouvertement des productions hollywoodiennes à la Jerry Bruckheimer, en reproduit toutes les stratégies narratives. Ce choix a deux conséquences troublantes. D'une part, le spectateur, tout en étant conscient du jeu parodique, continue de jouir de l'efficacité du spectacle présenté. La scène de sexe ou bien les nombreuses et impressionnantes scènes d'action sont de bons exemples de cette ambiguïté discursive. Bref, reproduire, mimer les procédés de films que l'on veut critiquer, est-

D'autre part, les procédés narratifs classiques du cinéma hollywoodiens suscitent l'identification au personnage principal. Cette remarque relance, je le sais, un débat qui n'est pas récent. Hitchcock démontrait déjà il y a cinquante ans l'efficacité sournoise de ces processus d'identification. Dans le cas de TEAM AMERICA, cette identification aux personnages principaux a, je pense, des conséquences importantes lorsque vient le moment d'interpréter le film. En effet, ces stratégies cherchent à provoquer l'identification aux membres de l'équipe Team America. Ainsi, bien que les créateurs du film prétendent n'adhérer à aucune des orientations politiques qu'ils représentent, le film suscite malgré tout une identification envers les personnages représentant la droite américaine. Est-il possible de réaliser une satire sans parti pris en utilisant les procédés narratifs hollywoodiens?

J'attends avec grande impatience tes réflexions sur ce sujet. Bruno D. Cher Bruno D.

Je le reconnais (car de toute façon tu en étais témoin), le film m'a fait rire. Pleurer de rire même. Ceci dit, après

ce une méthode critique efficace?

avoir rendu à ma rate endolorie un repos bien mérité, et après avoir laissé au film le temps de germer et d'évoluer en moi, un certain arrière-goût persiste et me remonte en bouche. TEAM AMERICA : WORLD POLICE est certes, par son humour éclaté et grincant, un film séduisant. Mais il s'impose en fin de compte, malgré son vernis intempestif et subversif, comme un véritable petit cheval de Troie. Tu l'auras déjà noté, et je poursuivrai ta réflexion : peut-on réellement subvertir un système de valeur ou de pensée en répétant ou en calquant sa forme, sa structure? Peut-on essuyer de la fange avec de la vase, et espérer en bout de ligne des draps immaculés? Il me semble en effet qu'au-delà des questions formelles, l'inefficacité ou la faillite du film appartient aussi et surtout à la structure ou à la stature idéologique qu'il prend (ou du moins qu'il feint de ne pas prendre) : celle de

l'antinomie, du manichéisme, de l'opposition binaire et exclusive entre le discours belligérant et irrationnel de la

droite républicaine, et celui, pacifiste et béat, de la gauche libérale. On crucifie les acteurs politiques, l'utopisme et le manque de nuance de leurs discours en exagérant leur opposition, en dynamitant pour le rendre insondable le gouffre qui les oppose ou le terrain où ils auraient pu se rejoindre. « Exit » tout troisième terme, toute zone d'ombre qui pourrait survivre en dehors de la bêtise des polarités. On fait plutôt de la bêtise un veau d'or! Les cinéastes se goinfrent de cette simplification abusive du monde et des idées qui le gouvernent, du refus (appartenant autant à George W. Bush qu'à Michael Moore) de reconnaître la complexité de la situation actuelle, et sombrent dans la facilité du cynisme, du pessimisme, du nihilisme. Leur satire fait voler les idoles en éclat sans jamais poser ou diriger notre regard ailleurs. Plutôt, on tire partout, à gauche et à droite, violemment, radicalement, sadiquement, mais pour se ré-ancrer nulle part. Pointer vers le vide. On semble vouloir dire que si le monde est dicté par la bêtise de ces discours exclusifs et aveugles, autant démissionner et rire un bon coup! Bref, TEAM AMERICA ne m'apparaît pas comme une parodie de la simplicité des dogmes qui ramènerait à la surface du monde la complexité qu'ont besoin de dissimuler ces dogmes pour survivre. Il s'agit plutôt d'une comédie qui récupère les dogmes pour son propre profit, les tourne en dérision pour n'offrir rien d'autre en échange qu'un abandon du monde, un absentéisme politique. Du cynisme, rien de plus. Volonté de néant, nihilisme, anarchisme bête et populiste, réactionnaire et rétrograde. On ne critique pas la dichotomie, on en jouit! La critique n'est rien d'autre qu'un simple mécanisme d'abjection des acteurs politiques afin de nous épargner l'angoisse de voir en eux le Même, d'y voir un peu de nous. Des boucs émissaires, sans plus! La seule alternative au monde selon Bush (ou à celui de Marx) devient la démission du monde. Aussi bien en rire? Mais peut-on, compte tenu de la gravité de la situation politique présente, se permettre un tel cynisme? Peut-on ne pas prendre la situation au sérieux? Malgré sa satire agressive de l'esprit belligérant états-unien, ce film est peut-être le film le plus républicain qui ait été projeté sur nos écrans cette année! Car en s'appuyant sur la structure de pensée profondément

gauche pacifiste (dont le discours « moumoune » se fait littéralement enculé en conclusion du film). C'est là que les structures filmiques du cinéma classique hollywoodien dont tu parlais redeviennent plus qu'intéressantes. Car malgré leur idiotie, qui sont les héros de ce film? Quel point de vue le film et sa mise en scène adoptent-t-ils pendant près de deux heures? Ou pire : quels sont les seuls personnages générant la moindre sympathie dans ce film? Sûrement pas les pacifistes : tous des « fags », des « pussies », des « tapettes »! Un film neutre, désengagé, non-aligné? J'en doute... Bruno C. Où est donc passée ta célèbre retenue académique? N'oublie pas que ta rage peut te faire sombrer dans le côté obscur de la Force...

manichéenne dont l'idéologie politique de l'équipe Bush dépend, TEAM AMERICA, même s'il dynamite « également » tout le monde, reste beaucoup plus aisément récupérable par la droite « va-t'en-guerre » que par la

Comme toi, je ne pense pas que le film soit neutre et désengagé. Néanmoins, je n'irai pas jusqu'à dire que cette

farce grossière est le film le plus réactionnaire et républicain de l'année. Tout d'abord, la critique de la politique belligérante américaine que propose le film est beaucoup trop importante pour pouvoir être « aisément

proposer.

Bruno D.

Cher Bruno D.

récupérable par la droite ». Après tout, au-delà de la bêtise des personnages principaux et de leur incapacité flagrante de compréhension et d'infiltration des autres cultures (souviens-toi du maquillage arabisant du hérosespion...), le film soumet toutes les actions guerrières du film aux décisions manifestement très peu fondées et

souvent erronées d'un ordinateur. Même si le pastiche récupérateur du discours manichéen de la droite

américaine empêche, il me semble, la critique de fonctionner à fond, je te trouve un peu excessif dans ton jugement. Il est quand même indéniable que la droite en prend pour son grade. De plus, penses-tu vraiment qu'il faille prendre le discours final sur les « dicks, pussies and assholes » au sérieux? Selon toi, est-ce en fait le véritable discours des créateurs du film? Etant donné que le film baigne constamment dans un humour à plusieurs degrés (degrés qui ne sont, je te l'accorde, pas nécessairement subtiles), je ne pense pas qu'il soit possible d'interpréter les propos des personnages littéralement. Les éléments problématiques du film me semblent davantage liés au fait que cette œuvre est un pastiche humoristique. Or tout pastiche crée malgré lui un discours contradictoire. Ce que tu soulignes avec justesse dans ton texte : TEAM AMERICA, tout en prétendant moquer les dogmes, renforce paradoxalement le discours manichéen et stéréotypé de la scène politique et culturelle actuelle. Est-ce une raison pour nier l'impact de la critique dans le film? S'il-te-plaît, Bruno, ne soit pas si excessif. Tu ne veux quand même pas devenir une nouvelle Laura Mulvey... Si le film a une orientation politique (ou morale), celle-ci se situe probablement plus du côté du cynisme anarchiste, comme tu l'as noté toi-même. Ceci étant dit, je poursuivrai tes réflexions sur la portée ou l'utilité d'une telle démarche. La réponse à cette question dépend en fait du rôle que l'on attribue à la satire. Bien sûr, tu as raison, les réalisateurs tirent sur tout le monde sans proposer d'alternative. Selon toi, en adoptant une attitude aussi universellement critique envers les discours actuels, ils ont la responsabilité de présenter un « troisième terme ». Je n'en suis pas si sûr. Certaines satires peuvent effectivement critiquer tout en apportant un point de vue

Enfin, je ne crois pas que le film propose au spectateur une « démission du monde ». Bien au contraire, la critique des discours médiatiques dans le film invite le public à ne plus écouter passivement les débats actuels. Que le film n'expose pas une nouvelle forme d'engagement politique ou intellectuel ne signifie pas qu'il prône pour autant le nihilisme et l'absentéisme.

belliqueux). Mais d'abord, permets-moi une nuance. Quand je parle d'absence d'un « troisième terme », je

n'implique pas que les cinéastes aient le devoir, après avoir détruit la bêtise des pôles exclusifs du débat, de nous proposer une « réponse », une « alternative viable ». Mais du moins d'en reconnaître la possibilité. En effet, l'efficacité de la critique, il me semble, dépend d'une distance à partir de laquelle le « problème » (et non

sa « réponse ») peut se poser. En présence d'un tiers qui viendrait ancrer ou observer l'insuffisance des discours antinomiques, le film, déjà, ouvrirait la voix à la découverte que le monde ne peut pas être réduit à l'idiotie

nouveau, mais je ne pense pas que ce soit absolument nécessaire. La satire est un outil discursif que l'artiste peut utiliser afin de mettre à jour les problèmes qu'il perçoit dans le monde. Néanmoins, l'artiste n'est ni homme

politique, ni spécialiste en relations étrangères. Son point de vue sur ces questions peut parfois être plus que pertinent, mais la présentation d'une idée novatrice ou alternative ne doit pas être un devoir précédant le droit d'expression. Bref, ces petits cons peuvent, selon moi, chier sur tout le monde, même s'ils n'ont rien de mieux à

Je ne nie pas le droit « de ces petits cons », comme tu les appelles, de déféquer sur tout le monde. Mais je pose mon droit de critiquer la mauvaise foi flagrante de leur démarche. En fait, je crois que ton raisonnement est contestable là où tu parles de « critique ». Car justement, il me semble erroné, dans ce cas-ci du moins, de poser le pastiche des cinéastes comme « critique » (des médias, des politiques dogmatiques, du patriotisme

dogmatique – que ce soit celle d'un activisme gauchisant utopique ou celle d'un patriotisme ethnocentrique et belliqueux. Reconnaître que le monde n'est pas ou n'a pas à être ce que veulent ces acteurs politiques dogmatiques. Concéder que le monde, justement, échappe au dogme. En d'autres termes, la critique (sociale ou autre) repose sur la distance qui permet de remettre en cause les structures à partir desquelles l'opinion est posée comme « vérité » ou comme modèle. Or Trey Parker et Matt Stone ne s'attaquent ici qu'aux faits, à l'événementiel, et non à leur insuffisance dans une perspective d'ensemble. Ils ne posent pas le problème de l'incohérence de ces discours exclusifs comme pensée du monde, plutôt ils entretiennent la bêtise de ces discours à l'intérieur d'un modèle construit et pensé par ces discours eux-mêmes. En se complaisant dans l'outrance et la démesure de ces deux discours irréconciliables, ils construisent un monde binaire et manichéen qui est autosuffisant, qui est cohérent, plutôt que de poser un troisième terme, le point de vue d'un tiers, qui viendrait en souligner l'incohérence. Là résiderait la critique. Sans cette distance, celle de la critique, le film ne fait en réalité que poursuivre et amplifier le cercle vicieux qu'entretient le discours des positions noire et blanche qu'il prétend « critiquer ». Quant à la question de l'allégorie sexuelle entretenue par le film, ce n'est pas me recycler en nouveau puritain du XXIème siècle que d'en poser le problème. De fait, que les cinéastes adoptent ou pas l'opinion de leurs protagonistes m'importe bien peu. A la limite, ce n'est tout simplement plus pertinent. L'aspect ludique et parodique du film ne viendrait que bien lâchement et facilement excuser ou justifier la misogynie de leur humour.

C'est le problème du « troisième terme », encore une fois. Car parodie ou non, le film et sa structure n'existent et

ne sont fondés qu'en vertu de cette allégorisation sexuelle phallocrate qui n'est jamais critiquée mais plutôt justifiée et même légitimée par la parodie! Éloge machiste que ce petit pamphlet rétrograde, où « those who have balls », les « dicks », occupent et génèrent l'action, contre les « pussies », les « fags » (ces « faux-hommes

») associés à l'inaction, à la réaction. Qui sont les personnages les plus vils, les plus méprisables, les plus pathétiques du film? Les « fags ». Qui sont les seuls personnages générant la moindre sympathie dans ce film, et ceux dont la perspective et le point de vue dirigent la mise en scène du film? Team America et son jeune acteur, transformé en machine à tuer, qui profère le discours final et cathartique du film - son éloge du phallus comme allégorie militaire à la FULL METAL JACKET - sous les yeux éblouis de sa concubine, le « pussy » qu'il baisa allègrement et vigoureusement plus tôt dans le film. Jouissance du status quo sous le fallacieux prétexte de la de la subversion « southparkienne » du « politically correct ». La subversion et l'espace de la parodie comme caution pour pouvoir se complaire dans un humour machiste primaire et belliqueux; la subversion servant à s'enlever la culpabilité de jouir du status quo et de la misogynie. Pure démagogie! Mauvaise foi! Et encore, je n'ai pas parlé de l'anti-intellectualisme flagrant de ces deux hérauts de l'animation bon marché. Un anti-intellectualisme qui, comme toutes les antinomies – anti-américanisme, anti-sémitisme, anti-capitalisme, etc. - illustrent bien la pensée simplette et dogmatique de ses auteurs. Comment établir une critique basée sur une schématisation binaire et exclusiviste du monde? Où le monde n'est représentable qu'à l'intérieur de cette dichotomie?

Allez, perspicace Bruno D! Je te renvoie la balle. A ton tour de passer du côté obscur de la Force. (Une autre belle antinomie...). Bruno C. Cher Bruno C. Manifestement, nous ne pourrons nous mettre d'accord quant à la portée idéologique de ce film. En fait, je pense que nos opinions respectives sont plus proches que tu ne sembles le croire. Comme toi, je pense que le film pose problème. Comme toi, je pense que la récupération sous forme de pastiche des modèles narratifs et

discursifs préétablis encourage et renforce dans une certaine mesure ces modèles. Notre conflit semble

vraiment se situer au niveau de la portée critique du pastiche. Je ne suis toujours pas convaincu que le renforcement paradoxal des modes de pensée dominants détruise toute la portée satirique ou critique du film,

comme tu sembles le penser. Tu as raison d'affirmer qu'un troisième terme ou recul critique permettrait d'établir

une véritable critique des discours dogmatiques actuels. L'absence de cette perspective est certes dommage, mais elle ne m'invite pourtant pas à nier en bloc le discours critique du film. Bruno, suis-je en train de tomber

dans la mauvaise foi?

La suite de mon propos s'inspire de ta remarque sur l'anti-intellectualisme radical des créateurs du film. Je me suis soudainement rappelé l'essai d'Alain Finkielkraut intitulé La défaite de la pensée. Selon ce cher Alain : « Décrispé, 'cool', foncièrement allergique à tous les projets totalitaires, le sujet postmoderne n'est pas non plus disposé à les combattre. » En conclusion de l'ouvrage, il écrit : « Et la vie avec la pensée cède la place au faceà-face triste et dérisoire du fanatique et du zombie. » Ces mots me semblent bien résumer les problèmes que tu soulignes dans le film. Selon Alain, notre monde postmoderne aurait rejeté tous les acquis de la pensée des Lumières pour se complaire dans une société dans laquelle tout est culturel et rien ne doit être intellectuel. Nous évoluerions ainsi dans un univers sans pensée, dans lequel les plaisirs et les goûts adolescents prédominent. Il me semble que ces propos sont une façon intéressante d'élever notre débat à un tout autre niveau. Plutôt que

de continuer à argumenter sur la valeur critique du film, nous pourrions ainsi réfléchir sur TEAM AMERICA dans le

contexte culturel global décrit par Finkielkraut. Notre problème ne serait plus de comprendre comment le film fonctionne, mais plutôt pourquoi? En fin de compte, le problème du film serait-il qu'il a été fait par des « zombies

», contre des « fanatiques »? Bruno D. Cher Bruno D. De toute évidence, notre « joute de Titans » tire à sa fin. Dommage. Car plusieurs autres éléments de débats me

brûlent les lèvres (ou plutôt le bout des doigts - forme épistolaire oblige!). D'ailleurs, j'aime bien l'image sur

laquelle tu conclus ta dernière intervention : celle de cette lutte entre « zombies » et « fanatiques ». Bien sûr, il faudra (ou plutôt il faudrait, si le temps et l'espace nous en offraient le luxe) relativiser les ambitions de Finkielkraut. Le concept de « postmodernité » est certes riche lorsqu'on veut aborder et comprendre la mouvance et l'éclectisme dans la pensée contemporaine, mais il ne faudrait pas non plus tomber dans le diagnostique passéiste et prescriptif, dans le « jeunisme » ou dans une nostalgie « intellectualisante » toute académique. Mais ici je m'égare. Revenons donc à l'objet de notre débat : le film. En effet, il semble que nos opinions ne s'excluent pas tant que ça. Ce ne seraient donc pas les prémisses de notre argument qui divergeraient, mais bien nos conclusions (ou du moins le degré de notre « désœuvrement »). Je résume ma position : Peut-on opérer une véritable critique d'un état de pensée sans d'abord diriger notre

regard sur le langage et les dogmes qui le rendent possible? S'attaquer aux symptômes du problème tout en laissant intact le sol ou la mentalité qui l'autorise? En d'autres termes, si les cinéastes s'approprient les symptômes du racisme, du sexisme et du patriotisme belliqueux pour en souligner par l'humour les excès, ils le font sans jamais postuler la « défaite » de ce langage. On se donne plutôt un espace où, lâchement, il redevient possible d'en jouir. L'humour, une arme politique à deux tranchants : souvent libérateur, parfois « fascisant »... Mais soyons de « bonne foi » et reconnaissons tout de même que, indépendamment de ses qualités esthétiques ou de sa faillite politique, TEAM AMERICA, de par la controverse qu'il suscite et l'espace qu'il occupe dans la situation politique présente, constitue un fascinant objet de débat. Parfois malsain, certes, mais toujours provocateur. C'est toujours bien ça de gagné... Bruno C.

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http://articles.synoptique.ca/team_america/



SYNOPTIQUE [HOME 01 Nov 2004

Written by : Anna Phelan-Cox

790 words

Editor: Gareth Hedges

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Unnervingly, the latest trend in au-courant French cinema seems to demand that filmmakers on the cutting-edge primarily concern themselves with finding ways to out-shock each other. One need only look to examples like Catherine Breillat's FAT GIRL, Coralie Despentes' BAISE MOI, or Gaspar Noé's IRREVERSIBLE for proof; incontrovertibly, these films are as unsettling and grotesque as no-holds-barred slasher films, if not even more uncomfortable for the viewer.

But we're talking about "art" here—not the sort of film that demands a happy ending.

Don't get me wrong—I'm as cynical and self-indulgently triste as the next person. Even though these films are not intended to be "enjoyable," I can nonetheless appreciate them for their audacity in attempting to depict the devastating consequences of overwhelming tedium and unhappiness. If nothing else, these films offer compelling, rare, brave, and, most importantly, nuanced depictions of raw disappointment, so overwhelming, they almost justify the repugnant, unpleasant and aggressive behaviour exhibited on-screen, by characters who react even more violently.

But this cannot be said of Bruno Dumont's film, TWENTYNINE PALMS (named after the California desert in which it takes place). Instead, it represents a reprehensible and irredeemable extreme of this controversial French shockcinema.



Bruno Dumont on the set of Twentynine Palms

In keeping with the requirements of the genre, Dumont's film is superb in alienating the audience by boring it to death with the dull dialogue between a truly loathsome couple. And because it's a dialogue-heavy film full of boring dialogue, there aren't any interesting narrative developments (you know, like plot twists...) to engage the viewer.

Of course, Dumont stubbornly uses the first five-sixths of the film to establish an exaggeratedly tedious precedent to contrast with the shocking sensationalism of his film's queasy final 15 minutes. Naughty-naughty me for ruining the film for those who haven't seen it, but I'll reveal that the movie finally culminates in an excruciating sequence of violence and abuse exerted on the male protagonist. But wait—as if that visual experience weren't traumatic enough, in a last-minute sensationalist twist, it turns out that the subsequent shame of his humiliation forces the victimized male protagonist to subject his female counterpart to an even more shocking act of irrational violence that literally had audience members screeching and even sent one woman flying out of her seat toward the exit!

It's not the visual realization of the film's disturbing events that upsets me so much as the unstated overall message of the film. In his primitive and inconsequential sequences depicting the relationship between the appropriately ambiguously named protagonists, "Katia" and "David," (also the actors' actual names), Dumont explores the notion that humans are no different than any other animal in the fundamental urges that motivate our behaviour. I'm all for evolutionary theory, but I'll never come to terms with the notion that humans are no more evolved than the primates that gave rise to us.

Try as we might, we're still incapable of explaining our shameful, no-no behaviour, whether it's determined biologically or psychologically. In all likelihood, we'd rather remain blissfully ignorant of the (various) cause(s) of our aggressive and destructive actions. But not Dumont; in his imagined TWENTYNINE PALMS universe, hate—and hateful acts—stem from the same impulse(s) that inspire(s) love and affection. We're all frightened of coming off as naïve or idealistic, but call me old-fashioned—I still can't accept that the new romance is one where love requires hatred, malice and/or violence towards each other.

This is a dangerous film. It teaches a dangerous lesson—that we are nothing more than animals in the end, no more evolved than wild things. I can't recommend this film, because it taught me nothing. There was not a single interesting insight into the human condition. That is, TWENTYNINE PALMS, and films of its ilk, are essentially about what can happen when people have completely lost their faith in the optimism of life. Had Dumont offered up a more complex, nuanced or sophisticated depiction of his characters' reaction to their broken faith, I would at least credit the film with having something redeemable about it. As it is, however, the reality of TWENTYNINE PALMS is much less interesting, making the film a complete waste of time—and an unpleasant one, at that. Put another way, I hated this film. I mean, I truly hated it (on a profound, not superficial, level). I assure you this is no exaggeration, because "hate" is not a word I use lightly (and it's rare that I can admit to hating a film). This hate is well-considered. Well, actually, it's considerable, too.

To read Dan Stefik's favorable review see, Synoptique 2, "Zabriskie Pointless or Bruno Dumont's Latest

Masterpiece?": http://www.synoptique.ca/archives/edition2/29palms.htm

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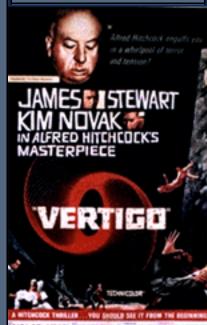


01 Nov 2004 930 words

> Written by: Michel Gatignol

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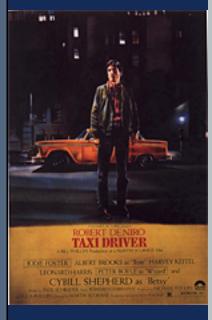
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À l'heure du mercantilisme triomphant, il en va pour les DVD comme pour tout produit de consommation courante : trompeur est l'emballage. Ne vous fiez pas aux annonces tapageuses et aux formules ronflantes (Director Approved Special Collector's Edition 2 Discs Box Set), les spécialistes en mercatique et autres plombiers publicitaires étant passés maîtres dans l'art de vous faire prendre des choses pour ce qu'elles ne sont pas. Bref, tout dévédéphile qui se respecte doit développer un certain nombre de qualités idoines : sang froid, discernement, connaissances techniques et mœurs spartiates (facultatif).

Ce petit rappel en guise d'introduction m'a semblé nécessaire avant d'aborder le sujet qui nous préoccupe aujourd'hui : les suppléments. Première constatation (merci à Colin Burnett, notre critique littéraire) : en règle générale, les boni des films réalisés depuis que l'usage du DVD s'est répandu sont d'un intérêt moindre, pour ne pas dire nul. Malgré la valeur ajoutée qu'induit le mot même de supplément, il faut bien reconnaître que la plupart du temps nous nous voyons offrir un répétitif exercice d'auto-glorification, au cours duquel metteur en scène, acteurs, producteurs et responsables des effets spéciaux nous expliquent, confortablement installés dans un décor de circonstance, combien le film, le metteur en scène, les acteurs et les effets spéciaux sont formidables. Bref, de la fausse représentation. Un exemple, parmi tant d'autres, FIGHT CLUB (divertissement fascisant pour mâle trentenaire occidental à enfance traumatisée par absence du père), dont le DVD comprend un disque entier d'interminables suppléments qui nous exposent par le menu tout le génie mis à contribution pour produire cette chose qui a la prétention d'être cinématographique. Même certaines extra features d'œuvres plus anciennes n'échappent pas à ce regrettable travers : à preuve celle de PULP FICTION qui n'est qu'un fastidieux panégyrique de Tarantino, cinéaste qui n'en n'a pourtant pas besoin. Fort heureusement, existent des suppléments dignes de ce nom qui nous informent pertinemment sur le film qu'ils accompagnent. En voici quelques-uns qui, à mon humble avis, appartiennent à cette catégorie.

VERTIGO (Universal) : Les films d'Hitchcock sont plutôt bien lotis au chapitres des suppléments : que ce soit Universal, Warner ou Criterion, les éditeurs DVD de sir Alfred ont bien fait leur travail. Je retiens VERTIGO pour son très riche documentaire qui, en seulement trente minutes, est un panorama très complet sur cette œuvre merveilleusement inaltérable, de ses origines littéraires jusqu'à sa récente restauration (avec Kim Novak et Scorcese en prime).

CITIZEN KANE (Warner) : Les extra sont à la hauteur du monument, puisqu'un disque est réservé à l'exceptionnel The battle over Citizen Kane, un incontournable numéro de la très sérieuse série The american experience produite par PBS et qui aurait pu s'intituler Comment Citizen Kane a trucidé Orson Welles. Deux heures de pur régal...

CLEOPATRA (20th Century Fox) : Cas intéressant où le supplément est meilleur que le film lui-même. Le coffret consacré à l'obèse et bancal opus de l'infortuné Manckiewiz (qui a fini le film sous amphétamines), contient deux disques pour le seul film et un troisième pour l'édifiant making of qui relate deux heures durant le comment et le pourquoi de ce ratage colossal qui accula la Fox à une quasi-faillite. Bush aurait été bien inspiré de le visionner avant d'envahir l'Irak.

COUP DE TORCHON (Criterion): L'entrevue exclusive accordée par Tavernier pour l'édition DVD nord-américaine de son film le plus cynique (et le plus réussi en ce qui me concerne), vaut à elle seule la location, sinon l'achat dudit produit. Un vrai cinéaste parlant de son film avec plaisir, simplicité et humour, voilà qui fait du bien.

THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE (Warner): D'une facture plutôt conventionnelle et présentée par un Robert Mitchum limite cacochyme, la biographie de John Huston, qui occupe le disque 2 du DVD, contient tout de même quelques perles rares (notamment d'excellents extraits d'entrevue du Monsieur). Pour 24\$, si vous ajoutez le film (chef d'œuvre quasi-biblique), vous en avez amplement pour votre argent.

MISSION (Warner) : Ce DVD souffre du syndrome Cleopatra : le disque 2 (les suppléments) est meilleur que le disque 1 (le film). Mission n'est pas franchement mauvais, mais le peu subtil Roland Joffé a vraiment gâché un sujet en or. En revanche, parmi les bonis, le reportage que la BBC a effectué sur le tournage est tout ce qu'il y a de plus intéressant puisqu'il se penche plus particulièrement sur le cas de cette petite communauté d'autochtones amazoniens qui, pour les besoins du film, fut entièrement transplantée à des milliers de kilomètres de chez elle. Au passage, Joffé enfonce Werner Herzog pour la façon dont il a traité les figurants amérindiens lors du tournage de Fitzcarraldo.

LE NOTTI DI CABIRIA Nights of Cabiria (Criterion) : L'essentiel des suppléments de ce film sublime est constitué d'une captivante entrevue exclusive avec Dominique Delouche, improbable et éphémère assistant-réalisateur de Fellini, dont l'expérience auprès du maître est singulièrement émouvante. On y apprend beaucoup sur sa façon de travailler et son état d'esprit de l'époque (1955).

TAXI DRIVER (Columbia): L'exemple parfait du making of instructif. Le genre qui vous fait encore plus aimer le film, ce qui n'est pas une mince affaire dans ce cas-ci. Sobriété dans le ton, clarté dans la présentation, intelligence du propos. Bref, Martin Scorcese.

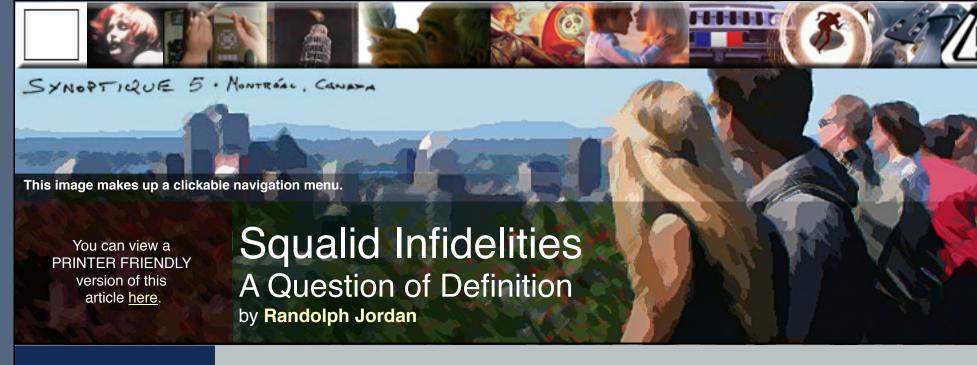
Je reviendrai sans aucun doute sur le même sujet, les parutions de DVD éditions spéciales de films précédemment sortis tout nus se succédant à un rythme effréné. Mais qui s'en plaindrait ?

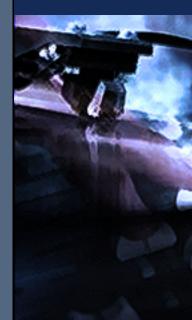
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Written by:

Randolph Jordan

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Andrea Ariano

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Randolph Jordan's first installment in an ongoing column exploring the concept of fidelity as it has been understood in a variety of contexts. Using issues raised in sound theory as the foundation of this column, ideas about fidelity are explored first in terms of sound reproduction and then applied to larger social contexts. Of particular interest is the concept of marital fidelity and the varying ways in which people grapple with the idea of remaining faithful to one's partner. As such, each installment will focus on a particular film whose narrative addresses marital fidelity in conjunction with a use of sound design that raises important questions in contemporary sound theory. The first installment lays the theoretical framework for the film analyses to follow in subsequent editions.

I've taken the title for this column from one of the most formidable on-screen marital confrontations in recent memory: Charlotte Rampling explaining to Stellan Skaarsgard in SIGNS AND WONDERS (Jonathan Nossiter, 2000) 01 Nov 2004 3272 words

how he destroyed his family by taking off with home-wrecker Deborah Kara Unger. "First you betray me with your squalid infidelities," she says in a voice so scathing that I can feel it beneath the surface of my skin. "Then after I forgive you, because I'm still in love with you, you repay me by destroying the few things that you left unbroken. Have you any idea what we went through when you left?" The question that she poses to her ex-husband here concerns the relationship between what's going on in his mind and the reality that exists outside of it. This is a questioning of the faithfulness of reality's representation

within the mind of a human being. Or perhaps, it is a questioning of what we mean when we use words like "reality" in the first place. The look on Skaarsgard's face while on the receiving end of Rampling's brilliantly delivered wake-up call indicates that he's living on another planet: safe within his own perception of the way things are. Furthermore, his reality is one that he wishes to manipulate to his own ends. This is evident by his selective re-contextualization of the aforementioned conversation, which he accidentally recorded on a portable cassette machine. While sitting on the subway after leaving his ex-wife that night, and then later while out for a walk with his daughter, he isolates the words "I'm still in love with you" from the context of the rest of the sentence in which it was spoken; he hears what he wants to hear. The tape recording is an outward manifestation of his selective perception. He remains faithful only to an idea in his mind. And, the recording technology is at a loss to present him with anything further. So, to answer Rampling's question: no, he has no idea what they went through when he left. We're all familiar with the weight the concept of marital fidelity carries with it. The fact that a transgression of

fidelity can be described as "squalid" emphasizes the binary positive/negative relationship that our idea of fidelity has with its opposite. It is not surprising to find this concept within areas of human experience that would seem quite a distance from considerations of one's marital vows and always in use with similar connotations of grave importance. One such area is the idea of fidelity as it is found in the realm of the audiophile. Fidelity of the highest order is the Holy Grail for the culture of the Hi-Fi and its attendant enthusiasts. But the question that gets asked over and over is, to what are we trying to be faithful? And if there does exist something concrete to which we have decided to be faithful, what exactly constitutes this faithfulness? Many have explored the different ideas of fidelity that have emerged in the world of sound recording, either from audiophile perspectives, or from film scholars wrestling with the place of sound in the domain of the moving

in the realm of sound recording and transmission. In each installment, I will be placing issues of fidelity and sound theory within the context of broader areas of human experience. To that end, each column will concentrate on the analysis of a specific film which makes productive use of our conflicting notions of fidelity within their forms and narratives (if anyone still finds this distinction palpable). Particular attention will be paid to films where sound design raises important issues in sound theory. Such films can be related to their treatment of the concept of marital fidelity within the stories they tell. My hope is that these films will be understood from a fresh perspective by focusing on their sound design. All the while, issues in sound theory will be better understood by relating them to more common realities of everyday thinking. So, to begin our journey, a little tour of the ways in which the word "fidelity" has been applied over the years will prove useful to my purpose here. Before getting practical, however, let's take a conceptual detour. If we think about fidelity in the marital sense, what we have in many instances of squalid transgressions is a desire of the

offending parties to have their cake and eat it too, do we not? Ideally, there is a sense that someone participating in an infidelity would want to enjoy the fruits of a deeply committed relationship, while pursuing interests outside

of this relationship. The desire to have the best of multiple worlds often places these multiple worlds within a dichotomy: a contradiction that seems hard to embrace. But if we are to believe the postmodernists (whoever they really are), we must accept that contradictions are a necessary and unavoidable part of life. Therefore, the

only way to deal with a contradiction is to embrace it (or so the story goes...).

image. This column will be an ongoing exploration of how the notion of fidelity has been understood and applied

Does this mean that it may, in fact, be possible to enjoy the experience of a live concert while sitting in our living rooms? Does this make any sense? No, of course it doesn't. The conflation of living room space with that of a concert venue is a contradiction. And yet, slogans like "Is it live or is it Memorex" tap into the idea that having a live band playing in our living-rooms through the magic of Hi-Fi media is something to strive for, if not expect. Even if we talk about sound, in and of itself, as the primary substance of our live music experience (which it really isn't), we still can't come close to recreating a live sound in our living rooms and we never will (for reasons that are more architectural than anything else). However, this doesn't mean that listening at home is inferior to "seeing" it live. The live music ideal has been so glorified that it's hard to imagine someone suggesting that they prefer to listen to music at home. But there are those who claim that listening at home may, in fact, sound better. There was a time when we might have been able to get away with the snobbery of the symphony-goer, given that this particular form of music lends itself well to being heard un-amplified within specially designed acoustic spaces. But we live in a world of many sounds, and many of these sounds are problematic for the symphonic ideal. The notion that Western Classical musical standards embody the Platonic forms, to which all of us must reach for but never grasp, is dying. Indeed, we now have music that actually cannot exist in a live context. What

are we to make of that? And to what must our Hi-Fi units be faithful when representing these kinds of sounds?

Let's return to the notion of having one's cake and eating it too, or at least the problems of contradiction that this

well known metaphor conjures up. The other day, I was walking along the street and I saw someone riding a bike

in high-gear but moving very slowly. He was struggling hard to push the pedals, though the surface on which he

was pedaling was flat. At the time this image struck me as bizarre. It seemed, in fact, to be happening in slow motion. His pedaling movements were clearly those of someone in high gear, yet his forward momentum was at a snail's pace. What do we mean when we say, "someone is in high gear"? We generally reserve this term for someone moving at a very fast pace. Here we have an example of someone who is literally in high gear, yet remains in the wrong context for this high gear to translate into fast motion. This results into a kind of visual paradox, even though the cause and effect of the cyclist's movements are nothing hard to understand. On a deeper philosophical level, this example illustrates that there are ways in which we can discover fastness within slowness, and vice-versa. Whether we're talking about music or quantum physics, perceptions can be adjusted to observe both the long and the short of our objects of analysis. Consider the hand-painted films of Stan Brakhage, one of the world's greatest proponents of the power of perceptual awareness (beyond that which is taught by Renaissance perspective and the prison house of

language). A recurring complaint about these films is that they move too quickly, that the detail of each

exquisitely hand-painted frame is lost by their split-second existence in the spotlight. The result doesn't seem to

flow smoothly, as we are bombarded with 24 paintings per second over the course of several minutes. What happens, though, is that this speed of movement creates an environment where we can see into other areas of the image. We find the underlying rhythmic structure and textural patterning, which depends on our inability to focus on any one of the motion's single elements. And so, slowness emerges from the fastness, creating simultaneity of experience. This may seem theoretically contradictory but, in practice, it is plain to behold. The example of Brakhage's hand-painted films suggests our ability to experience simultaneities. Things can be both slow and fast at the same time, and each world can be a part of the other. Many would argue that similar things could be said about the idea of fidelity in the context of marital relations. Why must a commitment to one person exclude involvement with another? Why must a fast moving image negate the possibility for the experience of the slow? Isn't it just a matter of defining our terms and then shifting our focus to accommodate

meaning? Does commitment in a relationship mean only one thing: abstinence from sexual encounters with other

Commitment, like so many things, is open to interpretation depending on context. So, let's think about context for a moment. In "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound," Rick Altman spells out what has been one of the main problems with the theorization of film sound: "the apparent assumption that all film sounds have the nature

people? Surely not.

of musical notes...[that] they are single phenomena, produced instantaneously, emitted from a point source, and perceived in an immediate and direct fashion." [1] Discussing the problems inherent in applying Western music theory to examinations of sound in film, he continues: "musical notation diverts attention from sound's discursive dimensions, concealing the fact that sound is in reality multiple, complex, heterogeneous, and threedimensional." [2] Thus, for Altman, every sound is a unique narrative event that is not heard identically by any two listeners. Adding the level of recording to this understanding of sound, he then notes that "when we listen to recorded sound we are therefore always listening to a particular account of a specific event." [3] Evoking the proverbial "tree falling in a forest," he continues: "By offering itself up to be heard, every sound event loses its autonomy, surrendering the power and meaning of its own structure to the various contexts in which it might be heard, to the varying narratives that it might construct." [4] So, he brings the role of perception to the forefront of discussions on sound. The narrative analysis of sound that Altman speaks about is an analysis of what he calls the sound's "spatial signature." [5] He refers to the subjectivity of interpreting these narratives, based on the listener's spatial position with respect to the source of the sounds, as the Rashomon phenomenon (in reference to the ubiquitous

Kurosawa film – 1950 – and its play on the idea of subjective realities). [6] To complicate matters, Altman notes

that in addition to spatial signature, sound recordings also carry signatures of their own, "some record of the recording process, superimposed on the sound event itself." [7] Given all these factors, Altman's main conclusion

is that every sound is effectively a heterogeneous event that can never be heard by any two listeners in the same way. Thus, when analyzing sound, great care must be taken to pay attention to every little nuance. It is in these nuances that key information about the sound's production and propagation through space will be found. In his chapter on sound theory in Sound Technology and the American Cinema, James Lastra lays out the theoretical foundations behind Altman's position and situates him in the context of the bigger picture. He finds that debates about "originals" versus "copies" are at the heart of discussions about sound's heterogeneous nature. He identifies the philosophical category of non-identity theorists (including the likes of Rick Altman, Alan Williams and Thomas Levin) whose basic premise is that "even the original itself is intrinsically multiple and internally differentiated - a fact we recognize every time we choose between 'good' and 'bad' seats in an auditorium." [7] Wherein lies the coveted original sound at a concert consisting of multiple sources playing to

potentially thousands of different points in the space of the hall? Given this lack of an identifiable original sound, he notes that Levin argues for a "critical analysis" of the sound apparatus to understand what transformations a

sound undergoes in the act of reproduction. However, Lastra feels that it would be problematic to base such an

analysis on the assumption that original sound can in fact exist and be measured against its reproduction, given the stance of non-identity theorists that no original can actually exist. [9] So he asks the question: "Why, then, is the [idea of the] 'original sound' so persistent?" [10] He finds that the answer lies with Theodor Adorno's work in "The Radio Symphony" written in 1941. Adorno argues that the technological transformation of certain kinds of music—in this case, a Beethoven symphony can serve to tamper with the structure of the piece itself and thus degrade its essence. [11] The idea of this loss of essence in a mechanical reproduction (calling to mind Walter Benjamin's important essay on the subject) [12] lingers to this day. It not surprising that this notion can be found in the questions posed about sound in relation to film. As Lastra suggests: "By defining sound recordings as partial, transformed, or to some degree absent with respect to the original, they present an almost Platonic theory of recording, where both truth and being decline as

one moves toward the copy." [13] However, he also notes that:

to a particular situation, and need to be analyzed as such. [14]

Lastra maintains that, for most people, not every nuance of a sound's characteristic is inherently meaningful. This also harkens back to Adorno's work, since for him some music is not as affected by electronic transmission or recording as others, and it depends on the particular nuances of the piece in question. [15] Thus, the extreme attention to detail called for by non-identity theorists like Altman seems to detract from the more important task of analyzing how sound is being used in film to put forth meaningful information. Lastra suggests that this latter perspective is more in line with Christian Metz's ideas. Metz suggests that if the legibility of sound allows us to

understand what it represents, then the difference between the experience of real or recorded sound is minimal

universalizes the acutely sensitive symphony listener [...] Such sensitivity is not characteristic of the way we engage with most sounds [...] They are functions of a mode of listening appropriate

Non-identity theorists assume their own equally biased model of listening—one that

[16] In this model, the idea of an original sound is manageable if it is taken to refer to a sound's legibility as opposed to its minute details and possible variances based on the listener's spatial orientation. Given the vagaries inherent in various arguments about original sounds and their copies, the final upshot of Lastra's argument lies in understanding sound recording as "representation" instead of "reproduction." With this distinction Lastra eliminates the onus of recording technology to actually reproduce a sound in favor of simply representing it. As Lastra suggests, the conceptual difference between reproduction and representation is clearly articulated in the way that recording sound for film has brought together two contradictory, though not necessarily incompatible, traditions of representation: those of the phonographic industry, and those of the telephonic

industry. For Lastra, the question of fidelity comes down to two main perspectives on the subject: the

phonographic model, which emphasizes perceptual fidelity, and the telephonic model, which emphasizes intelligibility. [17] Perceptual fidelity refers to the idea that the sound represented remains faithful to the sound as

it might be heard if the listener were occupying the space represented. Telephonic intelligibility, as one might

guess, gives prominence to the treatment of narrative elements, in particular the spoken word. Thus, the telephonic model of representation seeks to render the human voice as clearly as possible, most often at the expense of other noise that would ordinarily be heard in the space represented. Indeed, this removal of background noise, and the enhancement of the human voice, has become the holy grail of telephone designers in the age of digital transmission, hence the appropriateness of the term "telephonic." If we think about these two modes of representation even for a moment, it becomes readily evident that one does not exclude the other in any given film. We regularly encounter films where one scene will make use of the telephonic model while another will emphasize perceptual fidelity. Moreover, surround sound technologies can actually give us both approaches simultaneously by using center channels to transmit intelligible dialogue, while the surround speakers deliver the immersive sound of the space represented on screen. Does this constitute a contradictory philosophy, or a stylistic incongruity on the part of the filmmakers? Or is it more a matter of understanding that the use of one mode, in any given place, doesn't necessarily undermine any other use of the

alternative mode? Let's put it this way: does sleeping with one person necessarily undermine one's relationship with another person? Might a shift in expectation, by moving from reproduction to representation, somehow relate to a shift in our understanding of marital fidelity? It comes down to defining the terms of a relationship within the context of that relationship's existence. In Audio-Vision, Michel Chion uses the term "definition" in the way that audiophiles use fidelity: the resolution of the sound in question. "Fidelity" implies a faithful representation to something; "definition" concerns the quality of the representation in and of itself. So, in the same way that Lastra moves from "reproduction" to "representation," Chion moves from "fidelity" to "definition." Both Chion and Lastra thus avoid the problems associated with the notion that something that has been recorded or transmitted can stand in for something that has not been mediated in these ways. I would suggest that the negotiators of any given relationship should move away from abstract notions of what it means to be faithful. Rather, they must concentrate on defining the terms of their

Armed with this backstory, our next installment will turn attention to the first of the films to be scrutinized in light of issues of fidelity: EYES WIDE SHUT (Stanley Kubrick, 1999). Here, Tom and Nicole have clearly experienced issues with the differences between the inner world of their thoughts, and the outer world of their actions. This all comes to a head in a mass orgy presided over by a choirmaster who manipulates synthesizers and samplers, the very technologies that lie at the heart of contemporary debates about originals versus their copies! We'll have a field day. Stay tuned...

particular relationship in order to clarify their situation within its singular context.

ed. New York: Routledge, 1992. 15.

² ibid :16.

4 ibid:19.

⁵ ibid:24.

6 ibid:24.

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Les suppléments : Le bon grain et l'ivraie

¹ Altman, Rick. "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound." Sound Theory, Sound Practice. Rick Altman,

Randolph Jordan interviews Richard Kerr elsewhere in this edition.

7 ibid:26. 8 Lastra 2001:125.

⁹ *ibid*:127. 10 ibid:127.

12 Benjamin, Walter. THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION. *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed. Harry Zohn, trans. New York: Schocken Brooks, 1968: 217-252.

H. Gillespie, trans. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002:258.

¹¹ Adorno, Theodor W. THE RADIO SYMPHONY. 1941. Reprinted in Essays on Music. Richard Leppert, ed. Susan

13 Lastra 2001:131.

¹⁴ Lastra 2001:132. 15 Adorno 2002: 252.

16 Lastra 2001: 126. ¹⁷ *ibid*. 138-39.

Randolph Jordan is a recent graduate of the MA Film Studies programme at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University in Montreal, and is currently enrolled in Concordia's Interdisciplinary PhD Humanities programme. His research in the MA programme focused on sound/image relationships in the cinema, specifically within the films of David Lynch. In the Interdisciplinary PhD Humanities programme he is continuing his interest in sound theory and practice, combining the fields of film studies, electroacoustic music and intertextuality studies to explore how the complex audio-visual relationships that inherently make up cinema of all

kinds can benefit from perspectives outside the realm of film scholarship. He is also a practicing musician and filmmaker, and is a regular contributor to http://www.offscreen.com. For more info and links to all his webpublications, visit the Assistant's Corner at http://www.soppybagrecords.net.

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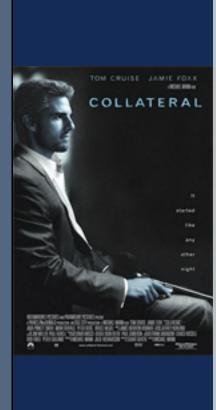


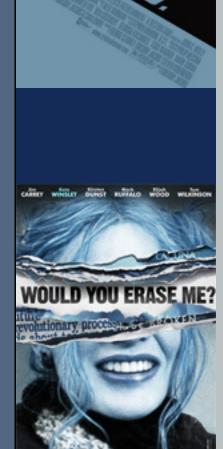


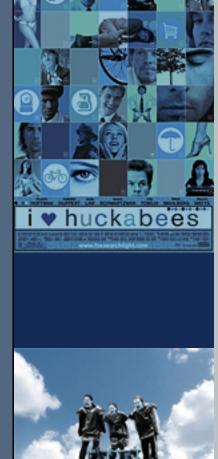
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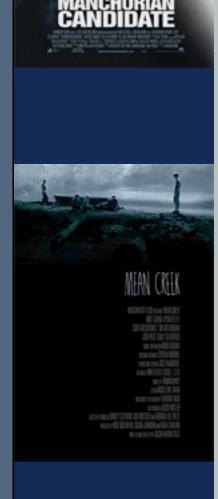




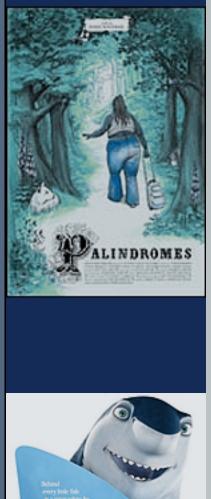






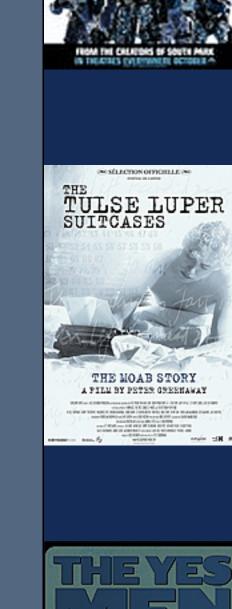












I HEART HUCKABEES, GARDEN STATE, THE GODS OF TIMES SQUARE, GOING UP MIND, LA MALA EDUCACIÓN, THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, MEAN RIVER, ROBOT, LADDER 49, ORCA: THE KILLER WHALE, PALINDROMES, SHARK TALE, SHAUN OF THE CREEK, OUTFOXED, SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW, TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE, THE TULSE DEAD, LUPER SUITCASES, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BUSH, and THE YES MEN.



In the wake of "wardrobe malfunction" related hysteria it's a good thing we have John Waters to knock some sense into us with his most joyful film yet. While most of his cast, as is often the case, is overly wooden and campy, Tracey Ullman is inspired as the prude who reaches a sexual awakening after being hit on the head. This

film is a well deserved rap on America's noggin. -Collin Smith STRONG>A DIRTY SHAME (2004) John Waters' NC-17 attempt to restore his gross-out street-cred is, in fact, one of his tamest films in years. Waters has a gift for making sexual perversion seem totally innocent. He also has a gift for making films that are completely frivolous, trivializing every issue they raise. This alone probably isn't grounds to dismiss A DIRTY

SHAME but Waters is also guilty of shamefully recycling material from CECIL B. DEMENTED, SERIAL MOM and several of his other films, a sad admission that he's fresh out of ideas. At their best, Waters' films can be extremely charming. At their worst — and this is one of his worst — they're shallow and off-putting with

characters so ridiculous that they barely seem human. -Jon Doyle STRONG>COLLATERAL (2004) The very least we've come to expect from Michael Mann is carefully crafted formal austerity and there's plenty of that in COLLATERAL. But Mann's gift for characterization is almost entirely absent, replaced by half-baked plot complications and illogical action set-pieces. Add Mann to the list of Hollywood auteurs (ie. David Fincher) who, in an effort to re-establish their box office credibility, have been side-tracked by impersonal mainstream entertainment. Mission accomplished now here's hoping he attempts something a little more ambitious next time. -Jon Doyle

STRONG>CRIMINAL (2004) Working as a producer in recent years, Steven Soderbergh has used his clout in the film industry to enable

DANGEROUS MIND, Don Cheadle with the upcoming TISHOMINGO BLUES, and OCEAN'S ELEVEN screenwriter Ted Griffin with the untitled Jennifer Aniston comedy that he was recently fired from). It would appear that Soderbergh has taken this practice to a new extreme with CRIMINAL. The film's co-writer/director Gregory Jacobs has been Soderbergh's assistant director for several years and doesn't appear to have any major qualifications to direct this American re-make of NINE QUEENS. But surprisingly, with Soderbergh's (pseudonymous) screenwriting assistance, Jacobs has crafted a modest but distinctive con movie that effectively avoids most of the genre's tired clichés. -Jon Doyle STRONG>ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND (2004) How happy is the multi viewer's lot!

several of his closest friends to become movie directors (ie. George Clooney with CONFESSIONS OF A

STRONG>I HEART HUCKABEES (2004) Five years after completing his impressive first trio of films (SPANKING THE MONKEY, FLIRTING WITH DISASTER, THREE KINGS), David O. Russell returns with a fascinating disappointment. While inferior to Russell's previous films, I HEART HUCKABEES features some truly inspired scenes, ideas, and characters. Playing a philosophically troubled, anti-petroleum, pro-bike-riding firefighter, Mark Wahlberg steals the film. He's one of many lively,

Watching Joel fight for his memory dots.

I would joyfully watch it eight more times.

-Shawna Plischke

ETERNAL SUNSHINE burned a spot on my mind!

dysfunction. In the insane era we're living in, it's encouraging to see a film that makes an intelligent, heartfelt, and philosophical case for human compassion, even if that film is a total mess. -Jon Doyle STRONG>GARDEN STATE (2004) Dear Miss Portman, I don't normally write letters like this but I just saw your new movie and I think you are so pretty. You smile pretty and walk pretty and have pretty skin and clothes. And I really like you in your silly hat. I just wish you didn't cry so much. It's pretty too but you shouldn't be so sad all the time. Maybe it's because of the epilepsy. If you were bed sheets, I'd sleep without my pyjama shirt, that's how much I like you now. Make a new movie soon. Your newest fan,

Yet another actor attempts to prove himself as a credible director by creating a hodgepodge of stylistic rip-offs.

Although writer-director-star Zach Braff (from the TV show Scrubs) aspires to a stylized, Wes Anderson-like, reinterpretation of iconic American comedies from the 60s and 70s (ie. THE GRADUATE, HAROLD & MAUDE), he

lacks Anderson's energetic originality and he has little affection for his film's easily ridiculed supporting cast.

There's an irritating air of cynical superiority in the film's point-of-view, as Braff overloads his characters with

obvious weaknesses then mocks them with the same simple-minded cynicism that the film pretends to critique.

Richard Sandler didn't set out to do anything more than record the manic street preachers, zealots and cranks in

original, and hilarious pieces in this chaotic puzzle but there's also several maddening pieces (Jude Law, Naomi Watts, Shania Twain!). The filmmaking is rough and wildly undisciplined but Russell's appealingly hopeful worldview is a pleasant change of pace, especially when dealing with dire issues of identity, mortality, and familial

While GARDEN STATE has moments of genuine wit and formal invention, it's ultimately a sentimental, heavyhanded, and predictable look at the romance of depression. -Jon Doyle

-Gareth Hedges

strategically devised.

-Collin Smith

STRONG>THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (2004)

STRONG>THE GODS OF TIMES SQUARE (1999)

STRONG>GOING UP RIVER: THE LONG WAR OF JOHN KERRY (2004)

STRONG>GARDEN STATE (2004)

-Brian Crane

Times Square, and as THE GODS OF TIMES SQUARE shows, he barely did that. Completed over half a decade with a passion less befitting a documentary of this kind than a half-hearted homework assignment, it catalogues where it should probe, repeats itself ad nauseam, and allows queries like "so... (uhm) tell me about God" to stand in for deeper questions of faith, sanity and New York City. Incidentally, Sandler caught the emergence of the new religion of Times Square, as Mickey Mouse moved in, which only serves to make his film seem—indeed like many of his subjects—schizophrenic, as he temporarily abandons his original mission. That mission—exploring people so desperately alone that they're a literally screaming in the streets—is one deserving of better a documentary than this. (If you'd like to discuss it further, you'll find me out in the streets screaming at strangers until one of them makes that better film.)

Kerry campaign advertisement. In fact, the film is most impressive while illustrating the rarely seen rebellion of Vietnam vets, trashing their war medals and dismissing their country's military and political leadership. More than thirty years later, this imagery remains powerful and it's a little rattling to see a realistic candidate for president lead the revolt. Just as liberals will applaud Kerry's anti-war activities, conservatives will (and have) label him unpatriotic. But, for those desperately seeking an alternative to George W. Bush, George Butler (PUMPING IRON)

reveals a John Kerry with dimensions not apparent in the more moderate image his campaign team has

GOING UP RIVER persuasively argues John Kerry's place as the logical successor to John F. Kennedy, one of

America's most popular presidents. With his "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for

your country" ethic, Kerry is presented as the living embodiment of JFK's famous words. But this isn't simply a

-Jon Doyle STRONG>I, ROBOT Filled with predictable plot developments, cardboard characters, and overly familiar science fiction ideas, I, ROBOT should be totally unwatchable. Miraculously, it's not. I'm definitely not an expert on this topic but, by my judgment, I, ROBOT has some of the most impressive special effects ever created. Unlike Michael Bay and countless other CGI hacks, Alex Proyas (THE CROW, DARK CITY) knows how to bring a film to life with special effects. If you possess the absence of brain-power necessary to overcome shockingly stupid dialogue and one of Will Smith's most irritating performances, there's a lot to enjoy in this dopey effects extravaganza. -Jon Doyle STRONG>LADDER 49

Some of the fire-fighting scenes are mildly enjoyable and John Travolta has been worse...maybe. That's the best

I can say about LADDER 49, a totally juvenile exercise in fire-fighter hero worship. I respect the sacrifices that firefighters make but, if they're really as simple-minded and obnoxious as these characters then I seriously fear for

the well-being of anyone trapped in a burning building. Amazingly, the filmmakers seem to think these characters

are endearing and likable. After twenty minutes of their "charming" frat-boy shenanigans, I was ready to see them burn. And, thankfully, some of them do. But seriously, this film's nightmarishly sentimental, FOR LOVE OF THE GAME-like flashback structure is painful to watch and unintentionally funny. Every scene is intended to make a single un-insightful point or introduce a single, run-of-the-mill, safety-oriented plot concern: a child is worried about his father's safety, a wife is worried about her husband's safety, etc. Okay, fire-fighting is dangerous. We get it. But why did they have to make this movie? -Jon Doyle STRONG>MALA EDUCACIÓN, LA (2004) This is probably the most normal movie Almodóvar has ever made. In fact, it's even a little mundane. In the end, it's all about Gael Garcia Bernal and whether he is more beautifully stunning as a man or as a woman.

Hot on the heels of his widely loathed – but sadly under-rated – CHARADE re-make, THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE, Jonathan Demme returns with his take on another beloved American classic from the early 60s, THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. Un-like Demme's last re-make, this is pretty close to the original film in terms of content. However, Demme re-works the cold, detached, precision of the original and creates a film that is more emotionally involving and entertaining. It is also worth noting that Meryl Streep's wild performance as Raymond's domineering mother is in the same league as Angela Lansbury's. Still, Frankenheimer's version had an originality and visual inventiveness that this new film lacks and the original's ultra cynical ending was more satisfying and disturbing than the awkward variation that Demme's team has devised. It's a worthy re-make but not a replacement. -Jon Doyle

Rarely does a good film collapse as completely in its second half as MEAN CREEK does. In its first half, there's an odd, ambivalent sense of anticipation, as a group of kids plans the (potentially violent) humiliation of a peer

they've had problems with. These characters constantly contradict themselves and reveal surprising dimensions

and complexity. The unreasonable turn diplomatic and the peacekeepers turn violent, all in the blink of an eye. It's rare to see such a complex and nuanced depiction of children in a modern American film. It's also rare to see

such portrayals dramatically self-destruct with a single plot development. With nowhere to turn creatively, in the

second half of the film, the filmmakers settle for all the moralizing, black-and-white clichés that were so

not entirely sure, but I do know that by film's end I was drawn into the story's silly little drama. Not by Ennio Morricone's far-too-accomplished score, often matched with polished montage sequences of killer whales at sea, or by the presence of the ever-reliable (but not here!) Charlotte Rampling, whose band-aid voice-overs must

have been commissioned to replace some blundering expository scenes left on the cutting room floor, but by

Richard Harris—in one scene, one shot. "I'll fight you, you revengeful S.O.B.," growls Harris, the film's Quint,

eyes like daggers, and from there we're hooked. Honorable mention goes to the film's opening Great White

-Jon Doyle STRONG>ORCA: THE KILLER WHALE (1977; DVD) Far from just being JAWS meets Sea World, ORCA, released approximately a year after Spielberg's era-defining blockbuster, is a fascinating stew of mildly success creativity and artistic catastrophe. What the end result is, I'm

seriously you may weep.

-Collin Smith

-Collin Smith

as such.

-Colin Burnett

-Zoe Constantinides

-Colin Burnett

STRONG>THE YES MEN

<>< :: Previous entry

Squalid Infidelities

STRONG>SHAUN OF THE DEAD

However, for film geeks, this is a dream come true.

STRONG>SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW (2004):

something exhilarating about TLS's gleeful abandonment of tradition.

STRONG>THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BUSH (2004):

OF THE MOON. This time the joke's on him.)

pleasantly absent from the first half of the film and it quickly falls apart.

sequence that uses stunning file footage sooooo well integrated (by one of the film's three editors) that one's left wondering just why Spielberg ever built that phony fish! -Colin Burnett STRONG-OUTFOXED: RUPERT MURDOCH'S WAR ON JOURNALISM (2004) Presumably, to outfox the Fox, one must be as narrow in focus and sloppy with research as the Fox. The Fox in question is the Fox News Channel, a right wing cable network that is right at home in George W. Bush's America. That the Fox News Channel is but one element of supervillain Murdoch's vast media empire doesn't matter much here; in fact, Outfoxed doesn't have much to say about Murdoch, news or journalism at all. Not surprising as it comes from moveon.org & Robert Greenwald, the producer/director of another triumph of low-risk earnestnessover-insight filmmaking, STEAL THIS MOVIE. What emerges in OUTFOXED is an amusing clip reel interrupted by high and low profile talking heads—including Walter Cronkite and reformed neo-con hitman David Brock-who say much less here than they have said

elsewhere (especially in the case of Mr. Brock), which would be fine if it wasn't so insufferably earnest (Don Henley's "Dirty Laundry" plays over the credits). As hollow polemics go, this film takes stating the obvious so

This only goes to show that fighting fire with ire only makes more fire and can never match fighting fire with pies

(which would at least restore levity and introduce the much needed element of surprise).

this would have been a disappointment, but from these people it's business as usual.

-Gareth Hedges STRONG>PALINDROMES (2004) I have nothing against films being a forum for the discussion of ideas; in fact I hope that they will be. But after watching PALINDROMES, an astonishingly cynical rant on how nothing changes, I wish those ideas could have been accompanied by some sort of engaging narrative. Instead, Solondz views story as an obstacle to making his points and showing off his skill. While PALINDROMES provides us with some interesting ideas to chew on, there is little reason to want to. -Collin Smith STRONG>SHARK TALE (2004)

The folks at Dreamworks Animation and PDI seem more concerned with putting big stars in their movies than making endearing, enduring characters. Audiences never get a chance to forget they are watching Will Smith, Robert Deniro, Jack Black, etc. And why should we care? The story is the same boring morality tale that we have

seen over and over again, but with "up to the moment" popculture jokes already past their due date. Finally, the animation style is so A.D.D. that you never get to appreciate all that you are seeing on screen. From anyone else

George A. Romero, the widely acknowledged master of the zombie film (NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, DAWN OF

THE DEAD, DAY OF THE DEAD), recently said that SHAUN OF THE DEAD is the only zombie movie he prefers to his own trilogy. I don't know if I agree with Romero but this is high praise and SHAUN OF THE DEAD is a worthy recipient. Like Romero's DAWN OF THE DEAD, SHAUN succeeds largely because of its hybrid of inventive comedy and suspenseful zombie hijinks and paradoxes. But even more than Romero's films, SHAUN OF THE DEAD uses characterization to great effect. Unlike the constantly able characters in DAWN OF THE DEAD with their militarylike precision, SHAUN OF THE DEAD revolves around hung-over, incompetent twenty-somethings who'd rather play video games and deal with romantic entanglements than fight zombies. It's a unique take on the genre and, unlike this year's DAWN OF THE DEAD re-make, one that lives up to its legendary zombie predecessors. -Jon Doyle STRONG>SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW (2004)

I felt like such a nerd watching this film. I spent the entire 107 minutes with a big grin on my face going, "Cool! Cool! Cool!" The film is too hyperstylized for the blockbuster crowd and its references will go over their head.

A decidedly personal and experimental piece of filmmaking that film culture simply isn't prepared to acknowledge

STRONG>TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE (2004) Fuck yeah. -Brian Crane STRONG>THE TULSE LUPER SUITCASES (2003-2004) The world premiere of Peter Greenaway's seven-hour HD opus THE TULSE LUPER SUITCASES occurred in Montreal on October 20-22, 2004. I note the date because despite Greenaway's insistence on the mutability of History, this film is firmly lodged in a specific aesthetic moment. TLS is a catalogue of Greenaway's familiar formal and philosophical obsessions: the written word, bathtubs, theatre, vengeance, framing, repetition, geography,

and cataloguing itself. That said, this film is unlike anything Greenaway has done before – it marks Greenaway's rejection of his own celluloid lineage. Referencing the past doesn't necessarily imply nostalgia and there's

A feeble and obsequious Lefty diatribe. You know, it's a genuine shame: what's "left of the Left" is so Hell-bent on

besmirching Bush and pleasing its own in the process that its members now regularly and unabashedly discard bare-minimum standards of critical thinking and self-scrutiny. In this case filmmaker William Karel establishes painfully tenuous links between Bush and crew and every Lefty boogeyman under the stars, from the Nazis to the Israelis. (I hasten to point out the glaring paradox of forcing these last two to play for the same team; reminds me of a silly little tag I once saw scribbled onto the side of a condemned building: Israel=(insert swastika).) First the appearance of articles and columns all over the place hoping for the U.S.'s failure in Iraq, then Moore's documentary, then Naomi Klein's call for jihad on NYC in *The Nation*, and now this. Clear! The Left will soon find something else to shock some life back into itself!

(Oh, and you might note that this film bears the signature of that prevaricating jokester who helmed DARK SIDE

Put simply, this is a non-fiction film about fictional spokespeople for the World Trade Organization. By now, it's hard to believe that anyone could support the WTO and THE YES MEN's title characters prove that maybe nobody does. When they abruptly (and dishonestly) announce that the WTO is disbanding to a group of Australian economists, the economists actually seem to agree that this is a positive development. In the recent wave of political documentaries, THE YES MEN is the first (that I know of) to include a massive inflatable penis with a live surveillance feed of sweat-shop workers. Unfortunately, in adopting the WTO's identity, the yes men also adopt their bland speaking and performance style and this doesn't make for very effective punch-line delivery. While they take a moral and humane position on world trade, they are only intermittently effective as satirists. As a result, this well-intentioned (and dangerously self-congratulatory) documentary is only intermittently effective as entertainment. -Jon Doyle

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