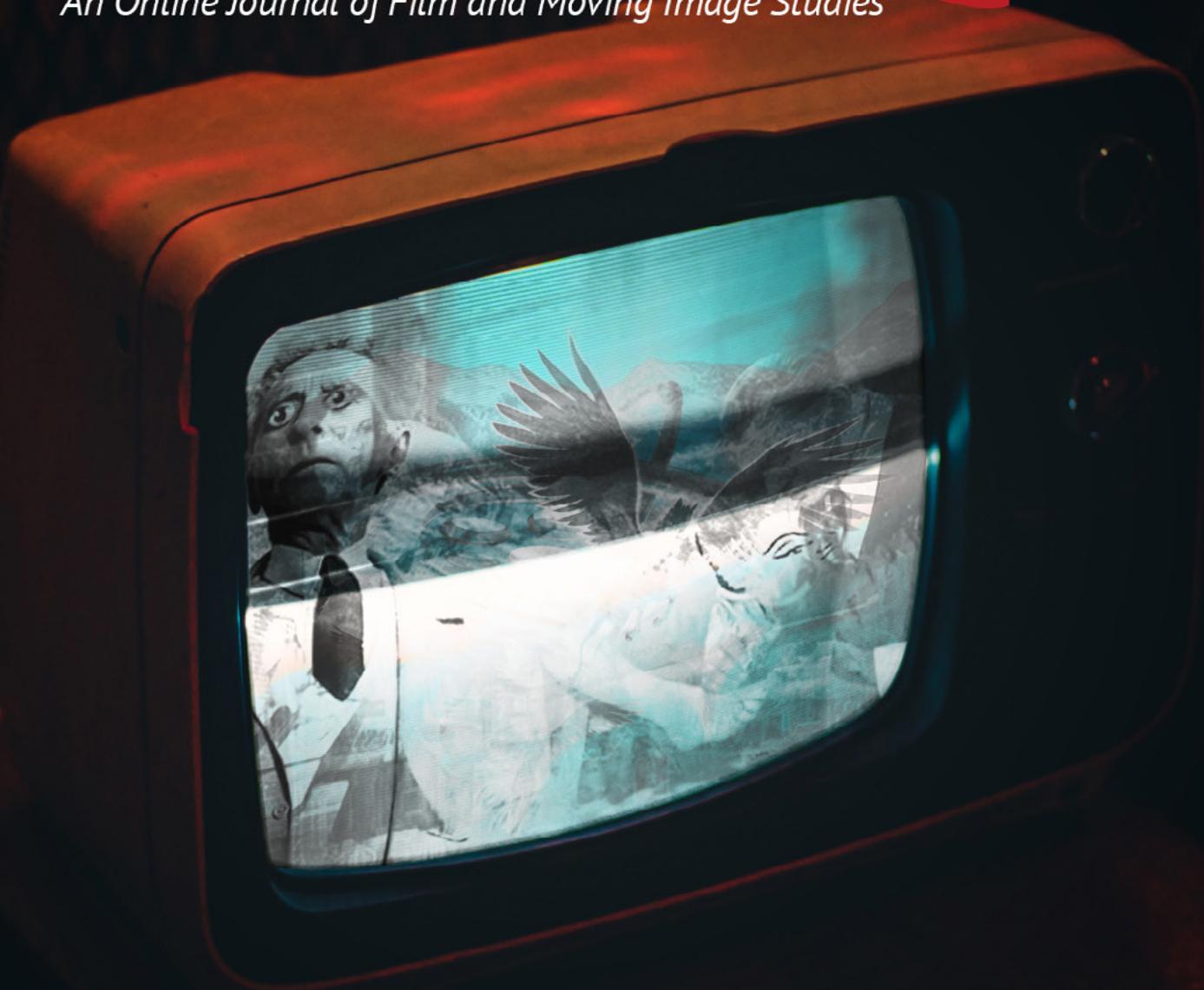


# SYNOPTIQUE

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# SYNOPTIQUE

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**OPEN-CALL**



## "50 Different Ways": Murder and Narration in *La chienne* and *Scarlet Street*

by Julien Lapointe

**T**here's no scene in any movie that 50 different directors couldn't have done 50 different ways," director Paul Mazursky once observed.<sup>1</sup> The claim at once seems hyperbolic, yet a comparison of Jean Renoir's *La chienne* (1931) to Fritz Lang's remake *Scarlet Street* (1945) reveals the truth of the statement. Each film concerns an introverted cashier who, smitten with a woman nearly half his age, murders her in what appears to be a fit of passion, after which her boyfriend is convicted and sentenced to death. Renoir's version, considerably more demure and ironic, resists facile pigeonholing in terms of genre and dramatic intent. Partly a social comedy, its random and loose narrative structure includes the murder as an unexpected twist. In contrast, Lang's remake is partly indebted to *noir* conventions, and moreover its construction of character is more rigorously integrated to a tightly woven script. Despite having some moments of wry humour of its own, its narrative nonetheless moves headlong towards its grim finale at a sufficiently accelerated pace that appears fatalistic, evoking what Tom Gunning has aptly termed the "Destiny-machine," the presumed "thematic core" in all of Lang's films by which "individuality and even desire always become subsumed into larger impersonal and even sinister systems." (xii).

Critics including Gunning have already commented on the stylistic discrepancies between both films. However, such discussions are typically grounded in broader analyses of each director's work; depending on the subject of study, the discussion

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Bordwell and Thompson 316.

is slanted to the Renoir film, for example, with only minimal attention paid to the Lang, or vice versa.<sup>2</sup> When both films have been studied together, the insights have tended to be largely interpretive.<sup>3</sup> While these analyses are certainly of interest, they speak only partly to the kind of stylistic concerns raised by the Mazursky quote at the start of this essay.

This paper will analyze how Renoir and Lang, in each version, stage and edit the aforementioned murder scene in relation to each film's intrinsic norms of storytelling, character construction, and style. This is therefore an essay primarily concerned with narration, based on David Bordwell's work on narrative poetics, and with a secondary focus on characterization based on Murray Smith's theory of cinematic character construction. While both Smith and Bordwell address the role of the spectator in comprehending and responding to film narrations and characters, this essay will be primarily concerned with stylistic analysis in order to reveal how each director's approach to narration informs the depiction of the murder.

David Bordwell's account of norms, in his text *Narration in the Fiction Film*, sheds light on some of the more precise patterns in filmic narration (149-155). A "norm," as the word suggests, is a convention or discernible practice according to which a film may be constructed. However, Bordwell also distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic norms -- that is to say, norms that are either identifiable as being extraneous to a given film, or specific to the text in question.

One never watches films in a vacuum and as such, one usually understands a given film in relation to other works of its kind, as well as its historical and cultural context. In *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), one is tempted to believe that L.B. Jeffries' (James Stewart) suspicions of murder, while hardly an everyday phenomenon in external reality, are entirely founded as malicious acts of this kind

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<sup>2</sup>See Gunning 308-312 or Sesonske 98.

<sup>3</sup>See for example E. Ann Kaplan's feminist interpretation, which, while offering some stylistic analysis, tends to subordinate the latter to the former.

are business as usual in an Alfred Hitchcock film. It is part of the norm of suspense films that a crime will be committed and, moreover, that by the end of the movie, the crime will have been solved and the criminal will be apprehended; this can be considered an extrinsic norm which *Rear Window* fulfills. More specifically, Bordwell notes that not all the norms exercised throughout the film are common to Hitchcock's oeuvre or suspense melodramas. Here, Bordwell introduces the general notion of the primacy effect.<sup>5</sup> In short, one forms expectations of what kind of film one is watching based on the information supplied in the opening scenes; thus, the subsequent scenes in any film will serve to confirm, undermine or revise the initial expectations of the viewer. For Bordwell, "[t]he first few scenes in *Rear Window* imply that we will be confined to what can be seen from Jeff's apartment." (151). This therefore can be grasped as the intrinsic *spatial* norm of the film.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, films can also have intrinsic *temporal* norms; for example, if the film is happening in "real time," or makes abundant use of cross-cutting, flashbacks or split-screen effects as seen in *Nick of Time*, (John Badham, 1995); *Intolerance*, (D.W. Griffith, 1916); *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), and Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill*, 1980.

No less significantly, intrinsic norms can be "transgressed" (Bordwell 1985: 150) and this may serve to jolt or surprise spectators. *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) cues spectators from the opening credits that the shark's presence will be signalled by forward and upward tracking subjective shots throughout the ocean, accompanied by John Williams's repetitive score. A corollary to this is the expectation that one will never actually get to see the shark due to Spielberg's

<sup>5</sup>At the risk of over-simplifying, one can say that according the primacy effect, first impressions are what counts. When encountering fictional characters for the first time, to say nothing of people in real life, our initial perception and understanding of them will most likely be defining, and will even serve as a kind of filter for any subsequent information we are given of them. See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 37-38.

<sup>6</sup>Note that "specific" need not mean "unique" or "exclusive." Plenty of films other than *Rear Window* confine their action to a single locale, particularly if they are film adaptations of theatrical plays. This is not unique to *Rear Window*. More importantly, there is no historical precedent for associating stage-bound narratives to crime thrillers or suspense melodramas, the latter two terms perhaps best designating what one is liable to expect from a Hitchcock film. It saves one a great deal of confusion if, when theorizing about norms, one remembers that individual films are almost always understood as belonging or being assimilable to a more general category.

reliance on first-person perspective. This is true of the first half, only for the film to break this expectation in the second half, providing a glimpse of the shark during one of the killings to the audience's surprise (albeit with Williams' score). This in turn sets a new pattern for the shark's presence, as it begins to appear in various shots from then on, usually surfacing in the water in anticipation of an attack, without the film's usual stylistic markers, particularly the subjective tracking shots and Williams' recognizable score. By then, spectators may have become so accustomed to the film's intrinsic norm of presenting the shark that its sudden eruptions in the midst of a shot stand as a veritable surprise. In short, as Bordwell reminds us, "the concept of intrinsic norm lets us study narration as a dynamic phenomenon, capable of developing through the film and shaping or challenging expectations in the process." (151). The challenge of film analysis becomes the task of more accurately identifying and pinpointing the dynamically shifting norms of a given text. A film's "norm-shifting," if you will, is never as simple as one might be first tempted to think, and can rarely be reduced to uniform conceptions of style, genre, auteur, or period.

Turning to *Scarlet Street*, one might say that among the film's intrinsic norm is that it gradually makes use of subjective point-of-view shots to mimic the protagonist's increasing insanity. More to the point, its slippages into subjective shots stand in contrast, as we shall soon see, with an otherwise distanced shot selection and tone – part of the film's richly woven style is that it appears at once as a sardonic and alienating black comedy, as well as a sincerely and intimately focused tragedy.

The plot centres on Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson), a modest cashier and amateur painter, who hazards one night upon a man beating a woman. He intervenes, and in the ensuing scuffle, the assailant makes a getaway. Little does he know that the man and woman, Johnny (Dan Duryea) and Katherine, aka "Kitty" (Joan Bennett), are lovers and will soon proceed to take advantage of him, believing him to be a wealthy, famous painter. Chris agrees to foot the bill when

Katherine takes up a new apartment, stealing from his company to do so. When he learns that Johnny and Katherine have been deceiving him, he stabs Katherine to death. It is Johnny, however, who is convicted for the murder, but not before Chris loses his job, goes insane and winds up living alone on the street.

Despite its fatalism, it is only partly accurate to describe *Scarlet Street* as a *noir* film.<sup>7</sup> As Tom Gunning has indicated, "if one invokes Aristotle's understanding of comedy as the portrayal of characters that are inferior to us, *Scarlet Street* certainly maintains through most of its course a comic, or at least ironic and satiric, tone" (311). The film initially portrays character-types and situations that one might provisionally associate with screwball comedies – the henpecked husband (Chris Cross), as well as Johnny's mixture of slang and swagger that could just as easily be out of a newspaper room comedy and at the level of the story, a simple misunderstanding that quickly escalates into an elaborate deception. The scene in which Kitty misinterprets Chris's hobby for a presumably lucrative profession is milked for a considerable amount of irony. Concluding that he is rich and famous, she exclaims: "To think I took you for a cashier." Chris, in one of the few moments when he appears more knowing than the characters who scorn him, diffidently looks down and mumbles something in seeming approbation.

More to the point, Gunning notes that the film establishes a degree of removal from its characters which fuels its sense of comedic incongruity. Just as Pudovkin has argued that a car accident will seem dramatic if shot and edited in accelerated close-ups but drawn-out and absurd if presented in long shots and long takes,<sup>8</sup> Lang creates vaguely comic effects. Particularly in the early portions of the film, he depicts actions that might otherwise seem surprising or dramatic, achieved mainly by distancing his camera-lens from his characters. For example, Chris is discussing painting with his friend Charlie in the former's apartment bathroom when

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<sup>7</sup>Tricia Welsch describes *Scarlet Street* as "a film noir that accents the fated hopelessness of its players through the jagged diagonal lines, harsh contrasts, and unnerving claustrophobia of its mise-en-scene." (57). In fact, what is frequently "unnerving" about the film is its frequent comedic effects, albeit within the context of otherwise tragic subject matter – as I hope to show.

<sup>8</sup>See Pudovkin 95-99.

Chris's shrewish wife Adele (Rosalind Ivan) enters in the background of a long shot, dressed only in a night gown and letting out a discomfited "ah!" Later, Johnny is attempting to impress Kitty with his plot to swindle Chris when her roommate enters from behind, accidentally knocking him in the back with the door. In either one of these instances, an otherwise unpleasantly over-assured character is made to seem momentarily ludicrous, if only because the viewer has a split second to register the surprise before they do: that Adele is about to be seen in her gown by two men, and that Johnny is about to be visited by an unwelcome bump.

But this distance is hardly maintained throughout and an early pair of scenes, from Chris being suckered into serving as Katherine's hapless sugar-daddy to him contemplating embezzlement, intimates the film's many slippages from humour to pathos. The music cues the spectator to the characters' various moods, as well as the general tone of the scene. During a lunch date, Chris begins to confide in Katherine, and the score is noticeably treacly, as if to underscore the largely sentimental nature of his infatuation. At the same time, the romantic music can be read as heavily ironic, as the scene makes clear that the not so guileless Katherine is knowingly squeezing Chris for money.<sup>9</sup>

The comical – and frankly cynical – tone of the scene culminates with Katherine asking, in the most calculatingly off-hand tone, for five hundred dollars. A stupefied Chris, already having vowed to help her no matter what, breathlessly repeats the amount. In the scene immediately following, he is shown retrieving money from his employer's vault. The tone, however, has shifted. The scene is more dimly lit, with shaded areas surrounding Chris; as well, the fact that he is hunched over indicates the secretive and somber nature of this transaction. Most notably, the music, with its sparse use of brass sounds and decrescendo, cues the viewer to understand the scene as ominous. Even if Chris ultimately opts to return the money, a stylistic precedent has been set, on which the film will follow through: *Scarlet Street*

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<sup>9</sup>Surprisingly, while Welsch's study purports to be about the use of sound in Lang's and Renoir's respective films, she has nothing to say about *Scarlet Street's* musical score (56-61).

gradually grows more pessimistic and dark in its storytelling and equally foreboding in its style. Most significantly, Chris's actions to keep hold of Katherine become increasingly desperate: he first steals from his wife's savings, then from work, and ultimately threatens to kill a rival suitor. At the same time, Lang makes use of a variety of visual and audio devices to convey that Chris's mental state is starting to become unhinged. In doing so, he also narrows the aforementioned "distance" the film is said to maintain towards its characters.

It is here that Murray Smith's concept of "alignment" becomes relevant. In brief, for Smith, "*alignment* describes the process by which spectators are placed in relation to characters in terms of access to their actions, and to what they know and feel." (83). As the above description implies, alignment involves "two interlocking functions, *spatio-temporal attachment* and *subjective access*" (*ibid.*). Habitually, one might conceive of the two functions as going hand-in-hand, but to a variety of degrees, alignment may be restricted, blocked or mitigated. As we shall see with *La chienne*, a film may follow one central character while impeding the viewer's access to his/her subjective state or conversely making the character's thoughts and feelings transparently obvious. To a qualified extent, David Bordwell's observations on the "restricted narration" of detective fiction are pertinent here (1985: 64-70). For Bordwell, mystery films limit the spectator's knowledge, understanding and perception of the narrative events to what the detective sees and hears. Bordwell expands on this point by discussing two adaptations of Raymond Chandler novels, namely *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946) and *Murder My Sweet* (Edward Dmytryk, 1944): "In both films, we typically enter or leave a locale when Marlowe does; most if not all subjective shots are from his optical vantage point; and he is often placed so that we look over his shoulder at the action." (65). With rare exceptions, one is almost never privy to narrative information to which the detective equally has access.

However, Bordwell further notes that the relationship between the spectator's and the detective's respective grasps of the narrative action needs qualification. Most

detective fiction “involves a play between various degrees of *depth* in representing the detective” (67); simply put, a spectator may see and hear everything Marlowe does, without sharing the latter's mental alertness or insight – not unlike, to cite an earlier sleuth, Watson's ability to accompany Sherlock Holmes on his adventures without ever being able to match the great detective's many inferences and conclusions. It is here that Smith's distinction between spatial-temporal attachment and subjective access proves indispensable. The bulk of detective fiction attaches audiences to the protagonist's perceptual field, while offering only partial or delayed access to their mental reasoning – a nuance lost with the slightly more monolithic concepts of “restricted” and “unrestricted” narration.<sup>10</sup>

Although several of the effects of alignment discussed below are achieved via POV shots, it is a mistake, as Smith cautions, to conflate the two, or to maintain that POV shots are a privileged means of accessing a character's subjectivity or person-hood. They are rather a device which might function differently within the contexts of various films: as Smith argues, the POV shots opening *Halloween* (1978) restricts one to what a character is seeing, but offers scant insight into his/her identity or intentions. Conversely, upon seeing Michel Simon's cashier plead and sob with his mistress in *La chienne*, no POV shots are necessary to fill us in on what is already obvious: he is, in André Bazin's well-chosen words, “*fou de douleur*” (26).

In the case of *Scarlet Street*, the film quickly establishes the norm of utilizing shots which represent a character's field of vision, usually Chris's. In a sense, the film uses this device to attach the spectator to the characters spatio-temporally. Additionally, Lang devises various means of granting one access to the various characters' subjective knowledge and feelings. While this in itself is unremarkable,

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<sup>10</sup>To be fair to Bordwell, he does enlist the work of Dorothy Sayers who identifies different levels of description: purely external; middle viewpoint; close intimacy; complete mental identification. (67). Such fine-grained differentiation is of interest, but its degree of precision lacks the eloquent compactness of Smith's attachment/access distinction. It also presumes that subjective access can only follow from spatial-temporal attachment, whereas the former can very easily surface without the latter: for example, if a character leaves behind a confessional letter which is then read aloud, in the character's absence.

what is exceptional in Lang's film is how the various uses of alignment (POV shots among them) help to position *Scarlet Street* within film noir territory, culminating in the murder scene and Chris's subsequent spill into dementia.

The film seems to introduce POV shots innocently enough. The opening scene is set at a stag party thrown by Chris's boss, J.J. Hogarth, for the office. Chris is first glimpsed in long shot at the end of an oval table, his back turned to the camera. As Chris receives a gold watch from J.J., the camera tracks in on him in a medium shot. After this, there is a medium shot of J.J., sitting at the other end of the table, who looks into the camera as he speaks to Chris. This, and a subsequent long shot of the table seen from roughly Chris's seat, prepare the spectator that one recurring stylistic device will be shots from Chris's perspective, whether they be strictly subjective or not. These stand in contrast to *Scarlet Street*'s dominant tendency for distancing long and establishing shots, and help point to its complexly dynamic and variegated style.

A later scene insinuates a variation on this pattern, and begins to sketch out the possibility that Chris as a character, both literally and figuratively, has a little "trouble with perspective." In one sequence, he is showing one of his tableaux-in-progress to a sympathetic colleague, Charlie. Lang begins by framing the scene in a medium long shot, with Chris and Charlie considering the painting. The back of the canvas is turned to the camera, unable to be seen by the viewer, while the subject of Chris's painting, a flower, sits in the bottom corner of the screen. That the oeuvre in question promises to be somewhat unorthodox is foreshadowed by the sceptical glance and raised eyebrow Charlie throws Chris. As he then leans over and puts on his spectacles, Lang inserts a close-up of the painting in question, a flower with a monstrously over-sized bud. The cut to this close-up, right after Charlie has leaned over, suggests that this is his point of view. This is a fairly intimate alignment with his perspective, at least in the form of subjective access: the camera is now specifically showing us what Charlie sees. This access is further strengthened when he asks Chris where he found such an unusual flower. Chris

then points to the flower beside them. Lang then returns to a similar camera set-up as before as Charlie asks “You mean you see this when you look *at that?*” As he says, “you see this,” there is a cut back to the painting, and subsequent quick pan to the flower with “look at that.” To a certain extent, one is tempted to share Charlie’s bafflement, not so much because one also shares his aversion to modern art, but rather due to Chris’ inability to recognize any discrepancy between the flower and its not-so verisimilar artistic depiction.

One must hasten to add, however, that the tone of this early scene remains jocular, in large part due to the music. The score involves fairly upbeat and melodious violin and flute instrumentation. While the joke is largely at Chris’s expense, the music in part conveying his simple nature, the irony is limited to revealing that Chris is an oddball or befuddled eccentric. It is only later in the film that his skewed and somewhat primitive view of the world is presented as potentially dangerous and even lethal. The above quote about Chris having “trouble with perspective” is, in the context of the film’s diegesis, a criticism of his painting: his flattened and depthless compositions make little to no use of linear perspective. However, the comment is also suggestive of Chris’s own imbalance: that his paintings can be seen as conduits of his mental landscape, which can never quite adjudicate the right response, rational or emotional, to his immediate surroundings. “I just put a line around what I feel,” he tells Katherine, a sentiment stated less tactfully by Johnny, who reacts to a painting by exclaiming: “the poor sap must be a hothead.” Without delving into the issue as to whether Chris’s paintings are meant to have artistic merit, or not,<sup>11</sup> what is significant is that Chris’s paintings, regardless of their repute are read within the diegesis as abnormal or unconventional. Or, to put the matter differently, the responses range from “They’ve got something... a peculiar something... but no perspective,” said by a fellow painter and vendor, to “They’re getting crazier all the time” said by Adele. What underlines all these comments is that they help characterize Chris-the-painter psychologically as someone who may have a few more facets to his personality than anyone might initially guess upon

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<sup>11</sup>On the film’s systematic ambiguity concerning this point, see Hall.

seeing Chris the cashier.<sup>12</sup>

Chris's less than temperate state is again evoked in his final scene when Katherine. Of course, any spectator seeing Chris impulsively stab the helpless Katherine to death must surmise that he is not exactly a paragon of self-control. But in terms of stylistics, what stands out during this episode are the effects of alignment, and specifically the POV shots. As Katherine mocks her would-be suitor for his far-flung aspirations ("Oh you idiot, how can a man be so dumb!"), Lang cuts to a shot which seems to indicate Chris's point of view: Katherine, in reverse shot, is looking approximately in the direction of where Chris should be standing. One not only sees and hears what he does but, upon witnessing Chris's pained gasp throughout much of this scene, also accedes to his relatively confused mindset. The blunt force of the scene arises not simply from one's shared sense of Chris's humiliation, but more to the point, his utter disorientation. Katherine, who has been affectionate and soothing in her treatment of Chris, reveals her true colours. Joan Bennett's performance, not coincidentally, exhibits here a noticeable change in register: hammering it up, she thrusts her chest forward, emphasizes her lines and slaps her palm on the bed. It is not simply that, in this scene, Bennett's performance appears much more over-the-top than elsewhere in the film; in aligning the spectator in these moments with Chris's own fraught perspective, Lang underscores how unrecognizable Chris's dear "Kitty" has become to him.

In contrast to *Scarlet Street*, *La chienne* forgoes many of the techniques of Hollywood film-making. Instead of over-the-shoulder shot/reverse shots and analytical editing, Renoir tends to favour either ensemble shots or isolating the characters in separate shots. However, his editing patterns and shot selections are

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<sup>12</sup>On the frequent link in 1940s Hollywood films between a character's presumed insanity and their taste in modern art, see Diane Waldman (cited in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 70; see also Waldman 54-58). Note that Hall argues against Waldman that one cannot simply reduce Chris's paintings to mere expressions of his insanity (40). But much of the ambiguity which Hall praises in *Scarlet Street* involves us entertaining the likelihood that Chris is as mad as his paintings are maddening, even if the film elsewhere insinuates that this may not be the only way to appreciate or perceive his art-work.

not always systematically deployed or readily predictable. It may be tempting here to overstate the film's unorthodoxy, but film critic Ginette Vincendeau has cautioned against this. In her article "The Exception and the Rule," she argues: "Renoir's cinematography is always seen as resistance to, or at least different from, Hollywood. This [...] ignores the fact that it was also part of the French mainstream." (36). Indeed:

[T]he fact is that long and mobile takes were quite common in 30s French cinema and many directors used longer takes than Renoir. Such shots were both a stylistic signature of auteur-directors like [Julien] Duvivier and [Pierre] Chenal, but also of less remarkable film-makers, including those considered 'hacks', like Pierre Colombier or Roger Richebé. Films such as *Crime et châtiment* (Chenal), *La Belle équipe* (Duvivier) or *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* (Colombier) all contain shots that are almost two minutes long, with multiple reframings and complex negotiations of cinematic space and decor. (*ibid.*)

While this is no doubt true, as long as one restricts one's analysis of Renoir and his French contemporaries to a certain level of generality, it simply will not do to imply that the films of this era all adhere indiscriminately to some monolithic "French mainstream." There are crucial stylistic discrepancies between Renoir's own films that problematize the idea of an undifferentiated national style, such that the "multiple reframings and complex negotiations of cinematic space" is counterbalanced, to varying degrees, by other effects of mise-en-scène and editing. The avowed mobility of the camera seems comparatively restricted, for example, in *La nuit du carrefour* (1932), Renoir's immediate follow-up to *La chienne*. Conversely, *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932) crosses the 180 axis on at least one occasion – a stylistic incongruity scrupulously avoided in *La chienne*.

One can thus delineate the film's intrinsic norms, with regards to editing and mise-en-scène, as follows. Renoir either confines himself to ensemble shots, or alternates between medium close-ups and long shots. As well, he either begins or ends the action on a detail that is more or less peripheral to the central action. Finally, he most frequently use fades to mark a change in location and passage of time. But no less significantly, *La chienne* transgresses these norms at decisive

moments in the narration, just as it establishes certain principles of constructing the character of Maurice Legrand, the film's equivalent to Chris Cross, only to diverge from them. Similarly, while several scenes are comparable to one another in terms of staging and editing, creating stylistic continuity throughout the narration, Renoir also interpolates significant variations between these scenes, which indicate progression or change in the narrative arc. I address some of these after my analysis of the intrinsic norms.

Let us begin with the first of the aforementioned intrinsic norms. As the Vincendeau quote suggests, when filming conversations or other such encounters between characters, Renoir systematically eschews two of the most reliable conventions of classical Hollywood style: over-the-shoulder shot/reverse shots, and analytical editing. He opts instead to keep the conversing partners within the same frame, usually in a medium or long shot, cutting only when one of them exits the frame or he will abruptly cut, back and forth, between medium close-ups and long shots. A clear instance of the latter is during the meeting at the café between Maurice Legrand (Michel Simon) and Alexis Godard (Roger Gaillard), the former husband of Legrand's wife Adèle (Magdeleine Bérubet). Renoir first alternates between medium close-ups of the respective characters, only to cut to a long shot, of both of them seated at the table. After that, Renoir presents a series of variations, cutting from Alexis to the long shot, for example, or from Legrand to the long shot, or from Legrand to Alexis to the long shot and back to Alexis.<sup>13</sup> The former can be observed in an encounter between DéDé (Georges Flamant) and Lulu (Janie Marèse) -- the film's equivalent to Johnny and "Kitty" -- in her apartment. Renoir begins, as he does many of the scenes throughout *La chienne*, with a close-up on a detail, in this case Lulu's hand signing a cheque, under DéDé's dictation,. This is followed by a track back to a long shot, following the ensuing interactions between the two as they move from background to foreground, cutting when they leave the

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<sup>13</sup>See Branigan for a consideration of how such sudden shifts in the representation of space can seem at once arbitrary and disorienting for a spectator (77-80). Note too that in interpreting this scene, Alexander Sesonske characterizes Renoir's shot selection and sequencing as "asymmetr[ical]" and "disrupt[ive]" in its divergence from analytical editing (98).

room towards an adjacent hallway.

A more complex variation on this editing pattern occurs during Adèle's disputes with her hapless husband. Adèle is shown entering the apartment and nagging him in the living room. When she exits, Renoir cuts accordingly and the next shot encompasses two separate spaces: in the foreground, the bedroom to which Adèle has adjourned, and in the background, one can see Legrand in the living room. Legrand then comes forward into the foreground, and the adjoining room. The changes in camera positions serve to create different spatial relations among the characters: in one shot Adèle and Legrand are placed along a horizontal axis in the same room; in another, the axis is vertical, with Adèle at the front of the image, and Legrand in the back, in different rooms.<sup>15</sup>

Still at other times, in lining the various characters along a horizontal axis, Renoir will stage and cut the action unexpectedly. For example, during the first encounter between Legrand and Lulu, Renoir begins with an over-the-shoulder shot of Legrand looking down at Lulu in close-up. Renoir then cuts to a close-up of Legrand as an axial cut-in from almost the same angle he had framed him in the shot before. This is followed by another close-up of Lulu. As she rises, and as the camera follows her in a tracking shot, she moves rightward towards Dédé. The shot now centres on Dédé and Lulu, until Legrand's head bobs into the frame from the left. In short, whereas in shot-reverse shot editing, the space delineated in each shot is occupied for the most part by a single character, allowing the spectator to duly focus their attention, here no shot seems to "belong" to any one character.

In the instances when Renoir begins or ends a scene on an incongruous or peripheral detail, one can also note patterns and variations. Sometimes the detail will eventually be integrated into the narrative action and sometimes it won't.

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<sup>15</sup>On the interaction of background and foreground elements in cinematic staging, see Bordwell 2005. See also Aumont 14-17 for a similar analysis of Renoir's 1930 comedy *On purge Bébé* within the context of French mise-en-scène aesthetics.

Moreover, in transgression of this norm, Renoir will sometimes cut in the midst of a scene to a close-up of an object, although here too, this object is sometimes crucial to the narrative action, and sometimes not. In the case of beginning a scene with a peripheral detail, consider two scenes set at cafés. At the party which Legrand attends with his colleagues, Renoir famously opens the scene with a close-up of a cake, placed on a tray in a dumbwaiter; the shot is from the point of view, in a sense, of the dumbwaiter, while the banquet table seating Legrand and his colleagues remains in the background. Soon after, a waiter takes the cake and recedes into the background to begin serving it to the guests at the party, at which point Renoir cuts to a medium shot of one of Legrand's co-workers giving a speech. Likewise, he begins the scene at the café-bar between Alexis and Legrand with a close-up of two glasses of beer, which a waiter promptly carries over to the table seating the two characters.

One can see here that Renoir utilizes very similar camera set-ups and principles of shot selections to lead a spectator into a scene. The same holds true for how he concludes several scenes. An encounter between Adèle and Legrand ends with a tracking-in on some money Legrand has reluctantly turned over to her. Unlike the images of the cake and the beer glasses, it is not immediately apparent how, or even if, this object will have any relevance to the narrative. As it turns out, several scenes later, Legrand will steal from Adèle to help subsidize his affair with Lulu. Conversely, Renoir finishes this scene by centering the camera on a girl playing the piano in the background, one of Legrand's neighbours who appears in some of the shots but never figures prominently in the plot. Finally, in transgression of this norm, Renoir will sometimes insert a close-up of an object in the middle of scene, as if to break the flow of the narrative. During a meeting between Dédé and his friend Gustave, he cuts to a close-up of a nominally unidentifiable contraption on the wall behind their table, which makes a grinding noise and resembles a mini-juke box.

Regarding the fades, one can begin by expanding on Alexander Sesonske's

description of *La chienne* as “a series of relatively self-contained sequences” (98). The film’s episodic structure owes in large part to the use of fades, which habitually punctuate the action by denoting a change in location and a passage of time. When Alexis accosts Legrand in the rain and invites him to have a drink, Renoir ends this scene with a fade-out, and sets the subsequent scene at the café-bar in question. Conversely, when a change of location does not correspond to any temporal ellipsis, Renoir forgoes the use of fades. As Dédé is shown exiting Lulu’s apartment, a subsequent shot places him at the foot of the building, as he and Legrand, who is on his way to visit Lulu, cross paths without noticing each other; as can be expected, Renoir links these two shots by a cut.

However, there are notable exceptions to Renoir’s otherwise systematic use of fades. The first is the most conventional: Lulu and Legrand sit on the former’s bed and, following a fade, are shown lying in bed, the elision implicitly omitting their love-making. More unusually, at the end of the meeting between Alexis and Legrand, the former rises to leave. Renoir ends this shot with a fade as Legrand, chuckling and nodding his head, looks over in the direction of Alexis’s departure; however, the next shot returns us to the same location immediately after: a match-on-movement reveals Legrand looking in the exact same direction, with a near-identical expression on his face. It is in this scene that Legrand has hatched a plan to escape his loveless marriage, all the while duping Alexis. By joining two visually similar shots, the fade helps accentuate the repeated content in each of them: Legrand’s apparent joy in tricking Alexis.

I would now like to turn to the film’s style and techniques as they relate to the character portrayal and construction. Several of the characters can be associated with specific camera movements and/or shot-types. Legrand is often the subject of lateral tracking shots, following his movements across his apartment or office. Notwithstanding the prologue, our first real glimpse of him is at the end of a long travelling shot which moves along the row of heads seated at the banquet table

and finishes with him. Dédé, in contrast, is presented in a more stationary context: he is shown at least three times in a medium-close-up, chatting and gesticulating with his friend Gustave at the café-bar as the camera remains motionless.

However, both these stylistic patterns, and the attendant subject matter, are subject to variations. Legrand's actions and intentions change. In one scene he is shown painting, innocently enough, as the camera tracks back and leftwards, to reveal the neighbour's daughter singing in the background. A later scene has him crossing the apartment, and again the camera tracks leftwards and reveals the neighbour's daughter in the background, only this time he is less innocent and invidiously stealing Adèle's money. As for Dédé, he is shown later in the film chatting emphatically in a shot very similar to those featuring his meetings with Gustave. Only this time, instead of attempting to impress his friend with his obnoxious boasts, he is trying to talk his way out of several accusations directed at him during a police investigation.

The above account also hints at other patterns and variations running throughout the film. Whenever Legrand is shown in his apartment during the day, his neighbours can be seen in the background through their window, and both times they are associated with music: singing the first time, and playing the piano the second time. Several shots also employ frames, either that of a window or an open door. Sesonske has already noted that six shots are framed from the outside of the window on Lulu's apartment, each one gradually bleaker and more melancholic in tone (99). To this observation, one can add the numerous shots which make use of doorway frames; for example, when Legrand opens the door to his apartment's guestroom to reveal, before the police and a flabbergasted Adèle, the latter's first husband, or when Legrand opens the door to Lulu's apartment, only to see her in bed with Dédé, the latter's face is visible in the background and framed through the aperture. The latter shot recalls in staging, setting and shot selection an earlier episode when Lulu comes home to also find Dédé in bed: the shots of her and Legrand climbing the stairs to open the door are long shots which begin to tilt down

and rise as they reach the entrance. Finally, the film begins with a prologue of a marionette show, the square-shaped stage serving as a frame within the frame. It ends with a shot of Legrand and Alexis strolling along the street. As the camera tracks back, it reveals what seems to be a window-framing, indicating that the shot is taken from the inside of a room whose window looks out onto the street. Tracking further back still, however, it is revealed that what seemed to be a window-frame is in fact a marionette stage-frame, similar to the one appearing in the film's opening. Taken together, these two corresponding images also serve as book-ends to the entire movie.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of these initially maintained stylistic strategies, the film later presents divergences from its narrative norms. While most of the time the camera is immobile, or limited to lateral movements, one scene is different: when Dédé and Lulu dance at a soirée, the camera rocks back and forth in accompaniment of their circling across the room. As well, while much of the action is restricted to one location at a time, on rare occasions Renoir makes use of cross-cutting: right before Legrand hazards upon Lulu and Dédé in bed, or when he murders Lulu. Lastly, in two scenes Renoir has his characters look directly into the camera: when Alexis and Adèle stare at each other, reunited; when a witness offering damning testimony against Dédé looks directly at the jury, who reciprocally look back into the camera. The former helps underscore Alexis's and Adèle's shock at their unexpected reunion. The latter create the appropriate sense of encroachment and entrapment, as Dédé will soon be sentenced to the guillotine.

The establishing and rupturing of norms is also significant to the portrayal of Legrand. Generally Legrand has three patterns of behaviour or types of demeanour. Around his colleagues, he is evasive and emotionally muted. Even when he explains to one co-worker in the second scene why he won't accompany them to a brothel, his justification takes the form of a series of aphoristic metaphors ("I know it's possible to find nature in a bouquet of faded flowers, or the forest in a

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<sup>17</sup>On the significance of theatre to Renoir's cinema, see Braudy 65-103.

vial of perfume [...] but there is always the morning after!"), rather than a direct declaration ("Sex with a hooker is never what it's cracked up to be"). Around his wife, he is more openly contemptuous, without ever being assertively defiant. When Adèle chides his masculinity for not measuring up to her late husband, Alexis, he rolls his eyes and smirks, but avoids matching her insult with a retort. Finally, around Lulu, he tends to be far more emotionally expressive, at first tender and cajoling, and during the murder scene, alternately despondent and indignant.

Describing Legrand in the terms set forth by Smith, one might say that one's alignment with him is, if not entirely blocked, then at least mitigated and imperfect. One seldom has subjective access to him, as he only rarely states his thoughts, intentions and feelings, just as his visage remains largely inexpressive. As an actor, Michel Simon evinces an uncanny ability for maintaining a kind of emotionally neutered self-effacement throughout, evoking a measure of ambiguity which Renoir reinforces by not always providing spectators with a clear view of Legrand's features. As the latter lies in bed with Lulu and she asks for more money, he acquiesces uncertainly with his typical "poker-face" expression: as Renoir stages the action and positions his camera, he has Simon looking towards the ceiling, his eyes thus scrupulously avoiding the camera's lens. As well, when Legrand's colleagues mock him at the office, he sits silently at his cubicle, his face not only cast downwards but his features blocked from our view by the gilded cage surrounding his desk. The most ambiguous scene occurs during the police enquiry subsequent to Lulu's murder. Legrand, speaking of his infatuation, is reduced to tears. His pain seems authentically felt, except it also serves him well: the police perceive him as such a hopelessly meek man that they immediately dismiss him as a likely suspect .

The few times his emotions are forthcoming revolve around his encounters with Lulu – most notably when, following the reunion of Adèle and Alexis, he rushes towards her apartment believing he can claim her as his wife and exclaims "*la vie est belle!*" But in his two subsequent encounters with her, when he learns of her

involvement with Dédé and kills her the next day, Renoir again devises strategies to intrude upon our alignment with him, not so much by way of subjective access, but spatial-temporal attachment. After he has discovered Lulu with Dédé, Renoir cuts to a shot taken from outside the apartment, the rain-splattered closed window reducing Legrand to a shadowy figure in the background. It is only after a subsequent medium shot of Lulu, defiantly proclaiming Dédé as her lover, that one is granted a clear view of Legrand, his face looking predictably forlorn.

Indisputably, the shot of the rain-splattered window conveys that Legrand is crestfallen by his discovery. What is notable about this scene, however, is Renoir's willingness to put considerable physical distance between Legrand and the camera. Prior to this, the film has tended to attach us to Legrand's actions and movements without furnishing any assured insight into his inner life; now, the process is reversed – we may be as close as we have ever been to Legrand's heart and mind, but we are far from his body.

This is continued during the murder scene, which mobilizes certain norms, while undermining or establishing variations on others. Most notably, Renoir introduces two fades, neither of which conforms to this device's habitual use throughout the film. The first fade occurs presumably shortly after Legrand has stabbed Lulu. As Legrand is shaking Lulu while she jeers him, Renoir cuts to a close-up of a letter opener, the fateful object which will be the cause of Lulu's demise, and then to an ensemble shot of a crowd gathering around two musicians at the foot of the building. The camera then tracks up the building, only to fade out at the third floor. As the shot fades in, one sees a black cat on the ledge before a window sill; the camera then tracks up and in to reveal, through the window, Legrand kneeling before Lulu's slain body. From the third floor window to Lulu's apartment window, there has been little if no change in location. As well, there is most likely minimal temporal lapse, especially given that the same diegetic music continues without any breaks or jumps over the fade.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>For an extended analysis of the soundtrack during this scene, see Leutrat 34-39.

The second fade, occurring soon thereafter, does mark some shift in time, but not in location. As Legrand remains bereft before Lulu with the diegetic music continuing, there is another fade. However, as one returns to the base of the building in the next shot, there is a jump in the music, at which point Legrand quietly exits onto the street, unseen. Taken together, both these fades create a startling effect. They not only contravene against the habitual use of fades throughout the film, but they also occur within a short proximity of one another (less than one minute), which is unprecedented for *La chienne*. They thus constitute an unusual set of breaks in the narrative continuity, serving to emphasize that a twist of some import has occurred in the plot.

No less significantly, the scene makes use of and transgresses other norms. The close-up of the letter-opener, a repetition of an earlier such shot during the scene, suggests that this item will play a pivotal role in the ensuing narrative. Recall that Renoir, in presenting an object in close view, usually does so to dwell on something which is superfluous to the principal action . In this case, given the mounting tension and incipient violence, even the most inattentive spectator is likely to register its ominous significance. Moreover, as in the scene during which Legrand stumbles on Lulu and Dédé, Renoir makes exceptional use of cross-cutting between the musicians outside the building and Legrand/Lulu inside the apartment, thus lending a more dynamic rhythm to the narrative. Finally, there is a variation on the use of lateral tracking shots in conjunction with Legrand; here the camera moves, only not from side-to-side, but up the wall of the building.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is the portrait of Legrand. As noted above, he tends to be somewhat muted in his interactions with his colleagues and wife, while evincing greater emotions around Lulu. At the same time, Renoir develops various means of placing the spectator at some removal from Legrand's affective and emotive states, and cutting away from him at crucial points in the action. The latter, as we have seen, occurs notably when Legrand realizes that Lulu has been

unfaithful, and Renoir defers any clear view of the poor cuckold's face, no matter how obviously apparent his emotional state must be. Here too, Renoir maintains some subjective access to Legrand even as he blocks one's spatial-temporal attachment: the murder occurs off-screen. More importantly, as with in Legrand's discovery of Lulu's infidelity, this reverses the general norm of how Legrand has mostly, up till now, been presented: spatial-temporal attachment with minimal subjective access.

In light of David Bordwell's well-known call for film scholars to abandon the totalizing methodologies of what he dubs "Grand Theory" and devote themselves to so-called "middle-level research," my own delimited focus throughout this essay might seem perversely "low-level" (1996: 26-30). This, in turn, can only weaken my approach in the eyes of theorists who evince scepticism towards the prospects of such modestly defined research programs. Consider Warren Buckland on the subject:

I am reminded of the story of the elephant and the six blind men. The one who felt the elephant's leg said that it was like a tree trunk; the second, who felt its tail, said it was like a rope; the third, who touched the elephant's trunk, said it was like a hose; and so on. Piecemeal theorizing may not be able to see the wood for the trees if it completely abandons the tendency to develop a unifying theory. (142-143).

At the same time, Bordwell himself has indicated that historical poetics requires a far higher degree of contextualization than I allow for here; the analysis of individual works must be fitted into larger paradigms, such as his own "historical modes of narration," or the stylistic norms of the classical studio system.<sup>19</sup> His tendency towards generalization has been so pronounced that, in contradistinction to Buckland, one of Bordwell's harshest detractors once accused him "pigeonholing" Hollywood cinema in the name of "pure unmitigated Theory." (Britton 427). Insofar that the above criticisms bear some pertinence to my essay, it is

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<sup>19</sup>See Bordwell 1985: 156-310 and Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson: 3-84.

appropriate that I assess them, however briefly, for the remainder of this paper.

Needless to say, the charge of pigeonholing is precisely what I have sought to avoid in my departure from some of the more reductive descriptions of *Scarlet Street* and Jean Renoir's cinema. In the early pages of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, Bordwell concedes that: "No Hollywood film *is* the classical system; each is an 'unstable equilibrium' of classical norms." (5). In other words, the artistic conventions which mark a given era will nonetheless be represented to different degrees in the works of the period. No two films will ever be exactly alike, and no single film can ever be the sum total of a "poetics of classical narration."

This is not to say that one ought to abandon all descriptive categories. On the contrary, the diversity of films in a given mode or national style nonetheless adhere to what Bordwell has termed a "bounds of difference," a delimited set of conventions out of which these films are not liable to stray (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson: 70-84). My discussing the intrinsic norms of *Scarlet Street* and *La chienne* can be seen as better differentiating them within the context of a period's reigning norms. This differentiation, in turn, has allowed me to focus on the finer nuances and specificity of their narrative construction and style, a degree of precision that would have been much more difficult to attain had my study been more broadly historical or theoretical.

Not enough theory might indeed lead to one seeing the forest for the trees, but the opposite is equally true. From a certain bird's eye perspective, one can fail to see what might seem crucial and noteworthy upon closer inspection. The interest of a certain "low-level" scholarship is that it allows that even when all trees are of the same genus, there will always remain a multitude of tactile variations from one to the next, or within the area of cinema studies, from one film to another.

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## Ambiguous Symbols: Cocteau's and Verlaine's Strategies for Defamiliarisation

by Alison Frank

In 1920s France, Impressionist filmmakers such as Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein and Marcel L'Herbier were making films based on a notion inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic and Symbolist tradition: namely, that art should communicate its creator's 'personal vision', and that this personal vision should make its impression on the audience 'not by making direct statements but by evoking or suggesting' [my emphasis].<sup>i</sup> With the introduction of sound in 1929, it became difficult for these directors to pursue their visual experiments: the cost of sound film production obliged them to move towards commercial, narrative-driven filmmaking.<sup>ii</sup> Some Impressionists believed, in any case, that dialogue would necessarily distract from the image and that the takeover of the talkie had permanently spoiled cinema's poetic capacities. In 1930, however, Jean Cocteau received funding from the Vicomte de Noailles to make *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930), the first film in what would be known as his Orphic trilogy, which would also comprise *Orphée* (1950) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960). In these three films, Cocteau developed his own approach to poetic cinema, one which would rely on both sound and image.

Cocteau's visual style was less impressionistic than that of the 1920s filmmakers but his practice built on their Symbolist-inspired concept of the poetic function. Objects in his films act as symbols but the meaning of these symbols is plurivalent: rather than a single object being connected to a single idea, one object will be the locus of many different associations. In this respect, it is of interest to compare Cocteau's films with the poetry of Paul Verlaine, one of the leading practitioners of Symbolism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, the atmosphere of Cocteau's films and Verlaine's poetry is quite different: this is a natural result of the different eras in which they lived. However, both create a

surprisingly similar impression of mystery and wonder through their placement of objects with ambiguous meaning.

The Russian Formalists, most notably Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky, argued for the similarity between poetry and film. In '*Décadence du cinéma*', Jakobson quotes Lev Kuleshov, who said that 'Un plan doit agir comme un signe, comme une lettre'.<sup>iii</sup> Jakobson goes on to explain that both language and cinema will be orientated towards either prose or poetry according to the writer or filmmaker's stylistic choices: a greater emphasis on metonymy results in prose, while a preference for metaphor results in poetry.<sup>iv</sup> Rather than rehashing the Formalists' argument for the validity of the comparison between poetry and cinema, this article will demonstrate it by comparing the work of Verlaine and Cocteau: in particular, selected poems from three of Verlaine's collections, *Poèmes saturniens* (1866), *Fêtes galantes* (1869), and *Romances sans paroles* (1874), and Cocteau's Orphic trilogy, with particular emphasis on the most self-conscious film of the three, *Le Testament d'Orphée*.

As it looks at Verlaine's and Cocteau's use of symbols, this comparison will rely less on Jakobson's work treating cinema specifically, and more on the Formalists' notion of 'defamiliarisation'. In '*L'Art comme procédé*', Shklovsky argued that the routine familiarity of our everyday surroundings and activities anaesthetises us to the sensations of life. The role of art, in Shklovsky's view, is to render the familiar unfamiliar, and it does so by abandoning clichéd expressions which the audience can absorb quickly and unthinkingly. Poetic techniques which draw attention to the means of expression and represent the world in a new way through unusual associations, crucially force the audience to stop and think in order to understand.<sup>v</sup> Through their attention to form and through symbols that bring together many different and often unexpected ideas, both Cocteau and Verlaine trouble our perception of meaning. This results first in defamiliarization, and ultimately in a powerful impression of mystery when competing meanings cannot be resolved into one clear interpretation. This article will examine three aspects of symbols present in the work of Cocteau and Verlaine: plurivalence (that is, many meanings associated with one object), defamiliarization and uncertainty.

**Plurivalence.** At the end of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, Cocteau's voice directly affirms the central significance of a flower that reappears throughout the film: 'Ma vedette est une fleur d'hibiscus'. Other characters in the film also make it clear that the hibiscus is not just a hibiscus, but stands for something else: the flower has a decidedly symbolic function. Close study of the flower's recurrent appearances in the film reveals that it represents many possible ideas: in other words, it is 'plurivalent'.

Just before he identifies the hibiscus as his 'vedette', Cocteau says, 'Et voilà. Une vague joyeuse vient de balayer mon film d'adieu'. In the immediately preceding scene the hibiscus, lying in the middle of the road, is swept away in the dust raised by a passing car full of cheering youths. Cocteau's statement, then, leads viewers to identify the hibiscus with the film. Cégeste's explanation of the hibiscus suggests further possible meanings: he says to Cocteau, 'Cette fleur est faite de votre sang. Elle épouse le syncope de votre destin'. His statement evokes the title of *Le Sang d'un poète* and associates the poet's blood with his artistic oeuvre, his death, or his fame. In a sense, all of these possible connotations are interdependent. The poet's blood is both his life (inside his body) and his death (when blood is shed). As his work, the poet's blood offers him immortality: he has put his blood, as a metaphor for his self, into his art which in turn offers the potential of lasting fame. That lasting fame, however, requires his death: many poets only receive recognition posthumously, and as Cocteau says in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, works of art 'rêvent de tuer leurs pères et mères'. No wonder, then, that when he first encounters the hibiscus, Cocteau says, 'Je n'aime pas cette fleur'.

Other scenes in the film also associate the hibiscus with notions of death and rebirth. Cégeste twice tells Cocteau to bring the flower back to life, and Cocteau finally does: a considerably long take captures the director's hands magically repairing the hibiscus that he had just torn apart. Later, when Cocteau approaches Athena, flower in hand as an offering, she rejects both flower and poet. Cocteau observes that 'Lazare non plus ne sentait pas très bon'. The fact that Cocteau is making reference to a resurrected human suggests a parallel between himself and Lazarus, but the reference to scent supports a comparison between the hibiscus and the biblical figure.

In fact, the flower is associated with rebirth from the moment it first appears in the film, coinciding with Cégeste's first appearance. Cégeste appears to leap out of the sea, hibiscus in hand. Next, there is a close-up of the flower in his hand, and the camera pans to follow the flower as he presents it to Cocteau. During this shot, three vibrato musical notes add sonic emphasis to the close visual focus. The flower as a symbol of rebirth, then, connects Cocteau and the character he has created. The connection between them actually extends beyond this film: the character of Cégeste is revived from *Orphée*, and the actor who plays him is Cocteau's adoptive son. In this way, there is not only the suggestion of rebirth in the relationship between the artist and his creation but also in a father surviving through his child. This makes it easier to understand the gravity of Cégeste's accusatory 'N'avez-vous pas honte?' when Cocteau tears the flower apart.

The flower can also represent the poet himself, as illustrated in the greenhouse scene: Cocteau tries to draw the hibiscus but draws his own portrait instead. As he does so, the paleness of his head and the darkness of his tie seem to echo the flower's pale petals and dark stem, supporting the analogy between artist and flower. The film's ending reinforces this link as Cocteau's identity papers transform into a hibiscus.

Thus the flower's plurivalence in *Le Testament d'Orphée* is extensive. The depth of meaning that the flower represents is only accessible, however, by thinking closely about the symbol's multiple associations.

Ekphrastic<sup>vi</sup> symbols in Verlaine's 'Le Faune' and 'L'Amour par terre' also encourage careful reflection. Even more than the hibiscus in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, the central symbolic objects in these poems suggest different points of view and different ways of seeing. Both poems foreground statues, which feature in the title and constitute the poem's initial focus. Readers who come to the poem with preconceptions about the object in question, or think the symbolism is obvious at first, will be surprised to find more than one possible meaning associated with the object.

In 'Le Faune', the title object '[r]it au centre des boulingrins, / Présageant sans doute une suite / Mauvaise à ces instants sereins'. The fact that the faun is specified as being 'vieux', its connotations of rampant sexuality, its goat-like features biblically associated with evil, as well as its permanently frozen laugh,

might make the reader feel that this pagan figure in the midst of the manicured ‘boulingrins’ (lawns) symbolises a threat to the ‘instants sereins’ that the narrator and the addressee are spending together. Indeed, the fact that the statue is ‘[p]résageant sans doute une suite / Mauvaise’ implies that the figure’s predictions might even be responsible for the approaching misfortune.

However, the faun may not be associated with destruction in such a cruelly calculating way after all. The poet observes that the statue is ‘de terre cuite’: this is a perishable material, not one used for high art or statues of lasting significance. One might be surprised that such a statue should be a worthy of a poem. The faun’s laughter being only as durable as the material of which the faun itself is made, this laughter is ultimately as temporary as the fleeting ‘instants sereins’. The faun effectively participates in the melancholy of the elusive moment, rather than being a mocking figure of triumph over the passage of time.

There is a notable juxtaposition between the pagan nature of the faun and the religious allusion in the word ‘pèlerins’. Again, the two seem to be in opposition at first, but the pagan and Christian spheres are drawn together in the final line by a reference to an hour’s ‘fuite’ that ‘[t]ournoie au son des tambourins’. The fleeting hour is connected with the poet, while the tambourines’ association with nature worship and the uncontrolled connotations of the verb ‘tournoyer’ connect them with the faun. Although the faun is laughing and the pilgrims are ‘[m]élancoliques’, neither the religion of nature nor more conventional forms of religion are immune to the fleeting moment. This unexpected connection may make readers revise their notions of permanence and impermanence, or even question the idea of a hierarchy of religions.

Although a marble statue is a more conventional object of ekphrasis than a terra cotta faun, the symbolism in ‘L’Amour par terre’ also overturns the reader’s expectations, specifically regarding art’s timelessness and unchanging meaning. The poem begins, ‘[I]e vent de l’autre nuit a jeté bas l’Amour’. This statement is surprising, and becomes more so as it is repeated, almost identically, at the beginning of the second stanza, where the speaker adds that it is a marble statue that has been knocked down by the wind. The threat to the permanence of art, specifically to the artist’s immortal fame, is evoked by the lines, ‘le nom de l’artiste / Se lit péniblement parmi l’ombre d’un arbre’. In

separating the statue from its pedestal, the wind has already broken the essential link between the work of art and the artist, a separation echoed by the poem's structure. Particularly in the second and third stanzas where there is specific reference to the separation, the combination of caesuras and enjambements create jarring line breaks to emphasise this idea.

'L'Amour par terre' is reminiscent of Shelley's 'Ozymandias', which centres on a statue of a king once powerful, now obscure: the remains of the statue are described first as 'two vast and trunkless legs of stone', 'a shattered visage', and finally 'these lifeless things'. The statue's form is similarly negated in Verlaine's poem. There is a shift from the full detail of the first stanza, which describes a fallen figure that '[s]ouriait en bandant malinement son arc', to the purely material 'marbre / [qui] Au souffle du matin tournoie, épars' in the second stanza. Finally, the last stanza demotes the broken art work to 'débris dont l'allée est jonchée'.

The statue of 'Amour' is not only a symbol of love (the capital used for the name of the god also suggesting a reference to all love, or love in general), but specifically of past love: the broken statue is already associated with the 'songe[s]' it evoked in the speaker and his companion at the time (the use of the *passé simple* emphasising that the events are long past). In the final stanza, the narrator's 'est-ce pas?' suggests that he is not at all certain that the addressee is 'touchée / D'un si dolent tableau' that the statue represents for him. Instead, her eye follows the 'papillon de pourpre et d'or', its joyful colour and present movement in stark contrast to the speaker's melancholy fixation on the past. As in 'Le Faune', the symbol of the statue forces readers to revise their initial impressions, understand that art is not necessarily solid or immortal, and recognise that art's meaning will not be the same for everyone.

**Defamiliarization.** In both Verlaine and Cocteau, the notion of defamiliarization is introduced self-reflexively: within the work itself, there is reference to characters who see the world differently, either through a fresh or visionary perspective, through their status as different or out of place, or through an attempt to overcome the normal boundaries of everyday existence.

In the fourth of the 'Ariettes oubliées' Verlaine's speaker employs imagery associated with femininity and childishness, which were closely related in the

general imagination at the time Verlaine was writing. The poem's central conceit of returning to a state of lost innocence requires not only the speaker and addressee to become 'deux enfants', but specifically 'deux jeunes filles'. In the first stanza, the poet feminises himself along with the addressee, describing them as two 'pleureuses' (mourners). In the second stanza, they are referred to as 'âmes soeurs', a common expression but nonetheless one that implicitly feminises. The adjective 'puérile' in the following line, although it has its root in the Latin word for 'boy', takes on the feminine ending to agree with the noun it modifies.

The desire to 'cheminer loin des femmes et des hommes, / Dans le frais oubli de ce qui nous exile' is reminiscent of Baudelaire's 'L'Invitation au voyage' which also offers escape to an ideal fantasy location. The difference, however, is marked: Verlaine's proposed escape features 'chastes charmilles' (chaste tree-covered walks)—no 'luxe' or 'volupté' here. Rather, poet and speaker are '[é]prises de rien et de tout étonnées', the negation of the adjective '[é]prises' serving to entirely desexualise the context. The chiasmus of that line emphasises an opposition between 'rien' and 'tout', evoking a childish binarism that flees from the uncertainty of nuance to take comfort in the certainty of absolutes. In Verlaine, however, nuance is integral, and readers who know his work will not be fooled by professed aspirations to simplicity, or phrases suggesting a pure and happy ignorance ('frais oubli', '[s]ans même savoir').

The poet is well aware that the state of innocence he describes can only ever be a dream. There is more to the poem than infantilisation or desire for an impossible return to childhood. Although the phrase 'de tout étonnées' may evoke an image of brainless wide-eyed astonishment, from a poet's point of view there are clear advantages to seeing everything through the eyes of a child. 'Frais oubli' can thus connote freshness of vision rather than simple amnesia. It is worth noting that the *Ariettes oubliées* belong to a collection that Verlaine wrote when he fled his conventional married life in Paris and travelled through Belgium and England with his younger lover, the poet Arthur Rimbaud. From a biographical perspective, then, the fourth 'Ariette oubliée' may reflect the poet's own sense of seeing the world differently, in terms of a departure from the heteronormative.

More generally, for a poet, freeing oneself from pre-conceived notions and clichéd associations is a key method of escaping from the banality of everyday perception and finding new meaning. The Russian Formalists believed that this was one of the most important functions of art, to ‘rendre la sensation de la vie’, lost to most people through everyday habits and routine. By slowing down perception, art restores the process of perceiving the object in detail, the object in all its particularity.<sup>vii</sup>

One way in which poetry slows down perception is by drawing attention to the sign. Poetic images are not assimilated automatically, like simple prose: instead, they are savoured, experienced and understood little by little.<sup>viii</sup> Jakobson speaks of poetry's characteristic ‘direction de l'intention non pas sur le signifié mais sur la signe lui-même’.<sup>ix</sup> Poetry and film both draw attention to the sign. Poetry does so through rhyme and line divisions, and by making readers consider many possible meanings associated with one word. Film draws attention to the sign by turning every object into a sign:<sup>x</sup> it leads viewers to ask why the director chose to include a given object and what significance that object may have beyond its practical function in the film (particularly if there is no clear practical function).

When readers/viewers are presented with objects that are evidently symbolic, they are made aware of the interplay of identification and distinction between sign and object.<sup>xi</sup> For example, in the poem just considered, readers will first envision the images literally. Ultimately though, rather than simply accepting that the poet wants himself and his companion to be as innocent as ‘deux jeunes filles’, readers will wonder why the poet selected such imagery and what broader significance the poem may hold on a symbolic level. By drawing attention to particular objects and creating symbols, making it clear that there is further meaning beyond surface appearances, poets and filmmakers help their audiences to renew their powers of perception and drop their usual, automatic ways of looking at objects.<sup>xii</sup> The audience is encouraged to explore new ways of thinking about these objects and the ideas that they represent.

At the end of *Le Testament d'Orphée*, Cégeste says to Cocteau, ‘la terre, après tout, n'est pas votre patrie!’ The poet is, in essence, at home nowhere, and in this sense will always possess the freshness of vision of Verlaine's ‘deux jeunes filles’. Throughout, the film also emphasises the artist's ability to see

beyond everyday appearances: this idea is formulated most explicitly during the judgement scene when Cocteau is accused by Heurtebise of having continually tried to enter a world to which he does not belong—not the everyday world of 'la terre' this time, but a mysterious world beyond. Cocteau accepts that he is guilty of having wanted to jump over 'ce quatrième mur mystérieux sur lequel les hommes écrivent leurs amours et leurs rêves'.

In *Le Testament d'Orphée*, as in *Le Sang d'un poète*, Cocteau believed that he rendered poetry on screen;<sup>xiii</sup> in this fusion of two modes of expression one should therefore always look for a visual counterpart to the symbolism in the poetic dialogue. In *Le Sang d'un poète* the poet was trapped in a room without windows or doors: he had to pass through a mirror in order to escape. *Orphée* also showed its title character using a mirror as a gateway to another world. In *Le Testament d'Orphée*, then, Cocteau's reference to the fourth wall may be intended to evoke the last wall that shuts people inside the box of everyday existence: others have written their stories and poetry on this wall, as though drawing windows and doors by which they might escape. Cocteau's crime is, similarly, to have wanted to overcome this wall. We should also recall that the original word for the movie camera, the 'cinématographe', was based on the notion of cinema as a form of 'writing of movement'. When projected on the fourth wall of the cinema (*i.e.* the screen), this 'movement-writing' also creates a door through which the audience can escape from their everyday lives, to a world of true wonder and discovery in the case of the best films.

Of course in cinema, the term 'fourth wall' most commonly refers to the space behind the camera: the camera's field of vision can only ever encompass three walls of a room at once, thus the 'fourth wall' behind the camera will always hold a degree of mystery. The 'fourth wall' can even be likened to the unconscious, because in order to participate in the film's illusion, viewers must repress their knowledge of the camera and the creatives working behind it. Cocteau's film also incorporates this notion of the 'fourth wall' as any space normally hidden from the audience's view: *Le Testament d'Orphée* actually attempts to overcome the repression. Like the film's opening sequence, the judgement scene takes place in a part of the studio that audiences are rarely allowed to see: behind the sets. The props required for these scenes are placed at the centre of the studio, but unrelated props are in plain view in the

background. Cocteau has effectively removed all walls, so that the audience can see beyond the surfaces of the conventional studio film. Through this denuding of sets, as well as the use of camera tricks, actors who play themselves in addition to their fictional roles, and references to the film itself and the artist's creative process, Cocteau perpetually draws attention to the status of his film as *film*. Cocteau thus creates defamiliarization by making the audience more acutely aware of the medium and its constructedness.

There is a similar sense of pushing limits and transcending surfaces through defamiliarization in Verlaine's 'Crépuscule du soir mystique'. As the title implies, that which is attained will remain veiled in mystery. The poem itself has a circular structure: with its first line identical to its last, it gives on the one hand an impression of having gone nowhere, but on the other an impression of having experienced something that cannot quite be formulated in words. An additional sense of spiralling is created by the relentless enjambements, the only significant pause coming in the line '[d]ahlia, lys, tulipe, renoncule': as this line is repeated, it too ultimately adds to the circularity. The structure reflects a giddiness in the content of the poem: in the reference to 'mainte floraison.../ [qui] S'élance autour d'une treillis, et circule / Parmi la maladive exhalaison' there is a double circular movement, both of the flowers winding around the trellis, and of the vortex of their scents intermingling in the air, a combination that overwhelms the narrator.

Although in its subject matter, circularity and repetition the poem is similar to Baudelaire's 'Harmonie du soir', its approach and effect are fundamentally different. Baudelaire's poem gives readers a feeling of giddiness but allows them to maintain their sense of reason. The poem's alexandrines are self-sufficient, not making use of enjambement. In 'Crépuscule du soir mystique' by contrast, Verlaine presents his images in such a way that readers become disorientated, as though experiencing a 'pâmoison' (swoon) themselves. Some have wrongly implied that Verlaine did not employ a method as 'consciente et réfléchie' as Baudelaire,<sup>xiv</sup> but in this poem Verlaine uses numerous techniques contributing to an effect different from that of Baudelaire's poetry but equally intentional. Through enjambement and circularity of form, Verlaine's poem reflects a sense of the incessant cycle of days and memories, but his most impressive and distinctive technique is his layering of impressions. If readers

are to progress smoothly through the poem (as the enjambements would have them do), it is necessary to renounce any effort to separate the layers of images and associations: instead, they should allow these layers to wash over them so that their senses, like the narrator's, 'drown'. For the purpose of analysis, however, it is worth examining more closely exactly how that wave of sensations is created, and studying the interplay of symbols.

One notable characteristic of this poem is that words for abstract concepts such as 'Souvenir' and 'Espérance' are capitalised. 'Crépuscule' is also capitalised: is this because the word is associated with 'Souvenir' and therefore holds equal importance? By contrast, 'horizon' is not capitalised although it is even more closely associated with 'Espérance'. The poem appears to capitalise only abstract entities. While 'horizon' is something that can be located at any time, 'Crépuscule' is more fleeting and elusive, and in this way is more similar to the concepts of 'Souvenir' and 'Espérance', which need to be capitalised in order to emphasise their active role in the poem.

Abstract entities having been given a weight that is equal to their concrete counterparts, the poem combines 'Souvenir' and 'Crépuscule'. Although both memory and sunset are arguably intangible and in this sense abstract, it is not easy to visualise '[l]e Souvenir' reddening on the horizon. The next challenge is to understand the meaning of 'l'ardent horizon / De l'Espérance en flamme'. It is difficult to decide which words should go together: is one to imagine a 'horizon / De l'Espérance' or 'l'Espérance en flamme', and what would this imply about 'l'Espérance' in each case? To what exactly are 'Souvenir' and 'Espérance' being compared and what is their relationship? It becomes impossible to understand the complex symbolism of the poem with any certainty. Nonetheless, when one reads the poem without stopping to unravel the complexities, one receives a powerful impression in terms of its tone and the emotion underlying the poem. It is a poem that seems languid and fainting, overwhelmed by physical and emotional sensation. This impression is created not only by the poem's structure, but also through a rich *champ lexical* including such words and phrases as 'tremble', 'ardent', 'en flamme', 'maladive exhalaison', 'parfums lourds et chauds', 'poison', 'noyant mes sens, mon âme et ma raison', and 'pâmoison'.

More than languidness, by the end of the poem there is a sense of noxiousness and unhealthy growth: the flowers' scents at first seemed to mingle '[p]armi la maladive exhalaison' of an unspecified source, but finally they are identified as the source of 'le poison' of these 'parfums lourds et chauds'. The reader realises that it was the flowers releasing toxins into the air from the very beginning, and thus there is again a sense of circularity as readers are forced to revise their initial impressions. In relation to the flowers' toxicity, the '*Espérance*' that 's'agrandit' as it 'recule' now evokes a pullulating degradation: something that grows larger as it decays. By the end of the poem all of the visual and olfactory impressions dissolve into each other and the reader is left with a confused but very strong impression, the source of the poem's disorientating effect: a bewildering build-up and dissolution of concrete and abstract sensations that perfectly communicates the speaker's experience.

The dense symbolism of the poem means that no object can be innocent; the reader is led to search for additional meaning in every item mentioned. It is difficult to resist interpreting the types of flowers Verlaine chooses to mention, particularly as they are mentioned twice and set off from the rest of the poem with dashes. Dictionaries of flower symbolism yield trite and uninteresting results. There will not be a single answer to the significance of the four types of flower mentioned, but it is worthwhile noting that the first and last, the dahlia and the ranunculus, are remarkably dense flowers: they have multilayered petals, rather like the dense and multi-layered poem. The tight ball-like ranunculus and the radiating petals of the dahlia could easily be compared to the sun mentioned in the poem. The lily and the tulip can be associated with death (funerals) and rebirth (springtime) respectively, relevant concepts if the poem is read in terms of what the poet is losing and what he is gaining.

The wall against which the flowers grow makes for a compelling comparison with the 'fourth wall' mentioned in Cocteau's film. If '*l'Espérance*' represents the sky, its comparison to a 'cloison' would make the sky into a wall, the limit of earthly existence. In this sense, all of the images of decay and degradation could represent the collapse of the world that the narrator knows, so the 'soir' that follows will undoubtedly be 'mystique'.

By creating symbolic associations that force readers to think about objects in a different way, Verlaine makes these objects unfamiliar. Although that which

is discovered remains ambiguous, the process of discovery and transcending familiar surfaces motivates both poet and reader. Referring to Sir William Empson, Jonathan Culler identifies this ‘exploratory process’ as more worthwhile than ‘any semantic conclusion’ that may result.<sup>xv</sup> Similarly, Shklovsky’s writings on defamiliarization stress that the aim of art is to encourage a certain way of seeing objects rather than simply to create images of the objects themselves; ‘créer [l]a vision . . . de l’objet’ is, specifically, to defamiliarize perception.<sup>xvi</sup> Verlaine successfully meets the requirements of the best poetry, presenting objects in such a way that they appear unfamiliar to the reader.

**Uncertainty.** Crucial to the notion of renewed vision is to see more than one would normally see, as opposed to reducing any symbolic object to a single meaning: for this reason, audiences should never feel that they have completely understood a symbol. However many meanings a symbol may have, overall meaning must remain veiled. To this effect, in *Le Testament d’Orphée* Cocteau is repeatedly chided for asking too many questions and wanting to know too much. This may be seen as an acknowledgement of the poet’s power as a visionary, one who threatens the *status quo* precisely by questioning familiar, everyday appearances. Equally though, by thwarting Cocteau’s curiosity the film affirms the importance of mystery. As Mallarmé said, ‘Nommer un objet, c’est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu’,<sup>xvii</sup>—note that the verb is ‘deviner’, not ‘connaître’.

Whereas symbolism in everyday speech tends to consist of clichés which are understood instantly but have lost their vividness and become symbols without depth, art makes one hesitate before finding meaning in its symbols: this is the very basis of defamiliarization. As Shklovsky puts it, art ‘prolongs perception’, making it difficult, so that one is surprised and considers a larger range of meanings than usual.<sup>xviii</sup> The fundamental uncertainty surrounding the meaning of symbols in Verlaine’s and Cocteau’s work effectively serves to prolong perception indefinitely.

One of the first images presented in *Le Testament d’Orphée* is a slow-motion shot of a smoke-filled bubble being burst by a knife. Because the clip is played in reverse, the audience may not be sure exactly what they are seeing

the first time, and thus experience defamiliarization. The shot is obviously an important one however, as it recurs, played forward instead of backward this time, at the very end of the film. Is the audience to understand a comment on the nature of understanding, to the effect that experience and its accompanying knowledge come just after they are needed? It is necessary to watch the film at least twice in order to appreciate certain symbols within it. Similarly the poet, having the metaphorical privilege (as Cocteau says) of dying many times only to be reborn, has the advantage of the knowledge gained from each successive life. Nonetheless, it is not possible to fully comprehend every aspect of the symbolism in *Le Testament d'Orphée* even after multiple viewings. Like Cocteau in the film, the audience will be perpetually rebuffed in their efforts to understand completely. By the end, although viewers are better able to discern the image of the knife bursting the bubble, understanding its symbolism remains difficult.

The knife seems an ominous choice of implement for bursting the bubble; is it a symbol of death, the bursting of the fragile bubble of existence containing the immaterial smoke of the soul? Such an interpretation is consistent with one of the film's themes, focusing on the nature of existence, a theme that will necessarily involve uncertainty. The dispersing smoke from the burst bubble reappears, intercut between scenes of the film's opening sequence, where Cocteau fades in and out of different stages of a scientist's life. Here, the smoke may reflect the fluid, ethereal nature of time and existence: this is expressed in the narrative by both Cocteau's ability to travel in time and his difficulties in doing so with precision.

Smoke is again connected with questions of existence in the traveller camp scene. There, phoenix-like, a photo of Cégeste reconstitutes itself in the campfire. The photo then flies up out of the fire into the hand of one of the female travellers, who takes it to a table where she and two other women examine it. The oldest of the three women, seated at the table, smokes a cigarette in a holder; she blows smoke across the photo as she looks at it, and when she tears the photo up, she hands it to Cocteau using the same hand with which she holds the cigarette, so that smoke again blows across the photo. Here, smoke could symbolise the interplay between reality and representation,

as the photo of Cégeste becomes instrumental in bringing the character back to life.

One of the smoke-related shots in the traveller camp sequence is reminiscent of *Le Sang d'un poète*. Positioned behind the oldest woman, the camera looks over her shoulder as she examines the photo. Her cigarette holder appears as a strong diagonal silhouette, not unlike one of the guns that the poet sees through the first keyhole in the corridor sequence of the earlier film. There, the guns repeatedly shoot at a Mexican, who looks like the poet<sup>xix</sup> and springs back to life each time. Here, the cigarette smoking like a fired gun is also related to multiple deaths and rebirths. Like a phoenix, the photo is reborn through fire. The photo is then destroyed when it is torn up by the woman who is smoking. Later, when the pieces of the photo are thrown into the sea, Cégeste will be reborn and remind the poet that he, Cocteau, is 'expert en phénixologie'.

In the shot of Cocteau, near the end of the film, laid on his back as if at his funeral, the smoke slowly issuing from his mouth is also related to death and rebirth. The smoke might conventionally symbolise his soul leaving his body, but this cliché is brushed aside by Cocteau's own voiceover which intones, 'Faites semblant de pleurer, mes amis, car les poètes ne font que sembler d'être morts': at this, the poet springs back to life once again.

Cigarette smoke, in particular, tends to be used in *Le Testament d'Orphée* to evoke the idea of things not being what they appear to be. This specific theme is introduced from the very first sequence where the scientist says that Cocteau has proven that he is not a 'fumiste' (denoting a 'fraud'). The scientist then asks him, 'vous fumez?', and lights a cigarette for him. As he begins to smoke the cigarette, Cocteau tells a story, explaining how in order to be able to smoke in 1770 he had to pretend to have invented the cigarette. This anecdote could be interpreted as nothing more than comic; however, it is also a first example of the crime that the poet will be accused of during the judgement scene: 'pénétrer en fraude dans un monde qui n'est pas le [sien]'. During that very judgement scene, the cigarette appears again, clearly more than just a casual prop as there is a break in the continuity of the film in order to include it. When the Princess opens her cigarette case and picks up a lighter, she is using objects which are not present from the beginning of the scene, but which

inexplicably appear partway through. The cigarette is most unmistakeably foregrounded when, during one of the Princess's monologues, the camera focuses on her hands in an extended shot as she gestures with the cigarette holder between her fingers. In a preceding shot, there was a close-up of the princess's eyes with cigarette smoke passing in front of them as she said, 'Il n'y a pas d'ici où nous sommes'. This statement already suggested that the location they are at, although it appears to exist, actually does not, or exists in a way that the poet cannot understand. When the focus is on her hands and the smoking cigarette, the Princess goes on to explain to Cocteau that he cannot be certain of where he is, because any familiar objects he encounters might have been purposely placed there in order to create for him the illusion of being in a place that he knows. In general, in *Le Testament d'Orphée* smoke is used to suggest that time and space are diffuse, and that one cannot trust one's empirical knowledge of them. As in Verlaine's poetry, the symbolism in Cocteau's film contains a challenge to our habitual manner of perception, dependent on certainties.

The first of Verlaine's 'Ariettes oubliées' is suffused with uncertainty as the poet sets up a comparison but defers revealing the crucial second half of it. In this way, Verlaine initially blocks the reader's efforts to perceive what is being described. The poem is one of immense delicacy, where the objects that are described seem barely to exist: in this way the reader's cognitive grasp of the poem is undermined. The fact that the poem's title refers to it as 'forgotten' serves to question its very existence. The rhyme scheme of the poem, too, with its dominance of *rimes plates* endows each stanza's single separated *rime croisée* with a sense of attenuation. The content of the poem is delicate in a different way, with its refusal to name its subject until the final stanza, as though needing to give a complete sense of the atmosphere and every facet of the comparison before even hinting at the tenor of these multiple vehicles.

The poem opens with an anaphora of '[c']est' that does not specify what 'it' is, but compares the mystery subject first to two abstract entities ('l'extase langoureuse', 'la fatigue amoureuse') before comparing it to something more concrete that exists in nature ('frissons des bois / Parmi l'étreinte des brises')—but even here, the poem refers to movements and sensations that are elusive and exist only fleetingly. The next comparison again describes something that

can barely be perceived, '[l]e choeur de petites voix'. The faintness of this 'chorus' is insisted upon in the second stanza, as though the sound is the subject of the poem. What the second stanza actually contains, though, is a layering of comparisons, not as confusing as that of 'Crépuscule du soir mystique' but one that similarly creates an overall atmosphere in which the subject becomes temporarily lost in a whirl of intermingled sensations. Man and Nature become difficult to separate in the personification of 'frissons' and 'étreinte', 'l'herbe agitée' that 'expire' with a 'cri doux', and the introduction of a human subject in the second stanza ('[t]u dirais') after so many lines restricted to the natural world.

In the last stanza, the poem finally reveals its subject: a shared 'âme'. The attempt to describe something as abstract as 'âme' seems to justify so many comparisons, both abstract and concrete. When it comes to identifying the subject, however, the speaker seems to lose the certainty that existed at the beginning of the poem in the unspecified but adamant '[c]est'. As in 'L'Amour par terre', the fact that the speaker defers to someone else by saying 'n'est-ce pas?', and that the poem ends with an additional question mark, lends an ambiguity to that which the poem describes and thus to the poem itself.

Verlaine's 'Après trois ans' also creates an ambiguous atmosphere by omitting the subject: in this case, though, that which is missing is never named. The poem is nonetheless rich in detail. There is a sense that every single object in the garden holds a particular meaning for the poet, and the importance of every object is emphasised by the restrictive, '[r]ien n'a changé. J'ai tout revu.' In spite of these absolutes, however, the reader suspects that things *have* changed. Did the gate always 'chancelle', and was the plaster of the 'Velléda' statue already beginning to 's'écailler'? In the third stanza the flowers are personified ('[l]es roses . . . palpient', 'les . . . lys' are 'orgueilleux'), as are the birds ('[c]haque alouette' is 'connu' to the speaker): but these plants and animals will be a new generation, not the very same ones he saw three years ago. The speaker refers to the 'humble tonnelle' (humble arbour) and 'chaises de rotin' (cane chairs), then ellipsis points seem to represent absence. Where are the people? The speaker goes on to describe the 'murmure argentin' of the fountain and the 'plainte sempiternelle' of the tree, again employing personification. There is, finally, a statue at the end of the garden but no human

being apart from the speaker. Has something else changed in the space of three years, something that the speaker cannot bring himself to acknowledge? The poem ends with an implicit sense of diminishing, from the soft, light, feminine rhyme of 'Velléda' and 'réséda' to the diction of the last line (words such as '[g]rèle' and 'fade'). Even if one does not detect a more serious loss than the passage of time itself, Verlaine nonetheless succeeds in creating atmosphere through a collection of objects, the exact significance of which the reader cannot know. As John Charpentier remarks of Verlaine, 'Il suggère; il ne formule pas; et le miracle c'est que nous croyons toujours nous trouver là où il est'.<sup>xx</sup> The poem only gains from its ambiguity, as it will remind readers of similar moments from their own lives, scenes where every object holds a particular and personal meaning for them, creating an experience which they would have difficulty communicating to others.

Bringing together the poetic cinema of Cocteau's Orphic trilogy and a selection of Verlaine's Symbolist poetry, this study has demonstrated that both filmmaker and poet develop symbolic objects in similar ways and with comparable effect. Objects in both Cocteau's films and Verlaine's poems are characterised by the variety of meanings that become associated with them, meanings which are never resolved into one over-arching or 'master' signification. Objects such as the hibiscus in *Le Testament d'Orphée* and garden statues in Verlaine were shown to take on numerous, sometimes contradictory associations. In addition, as the last section demonstrated, both director and poet incorporated objects which represent the state of mystery and ambiguity *per se*: smoke in Cocteau's film, and deferred subjects, tenuous states of being, and the element of the unspoken in Verlaine's poetry.

The personas which Cocteau and Verlaine create (characters in films and speakers in poetry) also self-reflexively point to the artist's own role as a visionary: one who sees the world differently and whose work serves to communicate this unfamiliar vision to a wider audience. As explained, this vision is communicated through unusual juxtapositions which create new associations for familiar objects. This new vision is also communicated by the way in which poetry and poetic films draw attention to the means of expression: in form, this means poetic style, and in content, references to the work of art or the creative

process. In their unusual juxtapositions, attention to form and self-conscious content, Cocteau's films and Verlaine's poetry correspond to the Formalists' definition of the role of art: to defamiliarize our perception of the world by rendering the process of perception difficult.<sup>xxi</sup> Poetic techniques draw attention to the specificity of objects, restoring the sensation of our everyday surroundings, which had been dulled to our perception by their very familiarity. The object-orientated way in which defamiliarization functions in both the poetry of Verlaine and the films of Cocteau lends weight to another Formalist theory, that poetry and film can function in a similar way.

Lucky enough to have had a benefactor at a time when his peers were abandoning their project for a poetic cinema, Cocteau was able successfully to pursue his own vision of poetry on film: his Orphic trilogy, *Le Sang d'un poète* in particular, is still readily available to watch, and continues to inspire audiences and filmmakers to this day. I hope that my study may lead other researchers to examine further the relationship between poetry and film, whether it be a continuation of the legacy of Jean Cocteau and Symbolist poetry, or the intersections of other poetic movements and poet-filmmakers.

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<sup>i</sup> Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 90.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>iii</sup> Roman Jakobson, 'Décadence du cinéma?', in *Questions de poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 106

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>v</sup> V. Shklovsky, 'L'Art comme procédé' in *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), 83.

<sup>vi</sup> From the Greek for 'description', ekphrasis can refer to any vivid description of visual reality in literature; I use the term in its more restricted sense to refer to the description of a work of art (v. J.A. Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed [London: Penguin, 1999]).

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>ix</sup> Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague, 'Les Thèses de 1929', in *Le Cercle de Prague*. (Seuil: Paris, 1969), 39.

<sup>x</sup> Jakobson, 'Décadence du cinéma?', 107.

<sup>xi</sup> Roman Jakobson, 'Qu'est-ce que la poésie?', in *Questions de poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 124.

<sup>xii</sup> Shklovsky, 'L'Art comme procédé', 94.

<sup>xiii</sup> Jean-Jacques Kihm et al, *Cocteau: L'homme et les miroirs* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1968), 377.

<sup>xiv</sup> John Charpentier, *Le Symbolisme* (Paris: Les Arts et Le Livre, 1927), 21.

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<sup>xv</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), 182.

<sup>xvi</sup> Shklovsky, 'L'Art comme procédé', 91.

<sup>xvii</sup> quoted in Robert-Benoît Cherix, *L'esthétique symboliste*: Thèse présentée à la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse) (Fribourg: Imprimerie de l'Oeuvre de Saint-Paul, 1922), 37.

<sup>xviii</sup> Shklovsky, 'L'Art comme procédé', 83.

<sup>xix</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Le Sang d'un Poète* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1957), 41.

<sup>xx</sup> Charpentier, *Le Symbolisme*, 16.

<sup>xxi</sup> Shklovsky, 'L'Art comme procédé', 83.



## Contextes de production en Argentine : Le cinéma durant la dictature militaire et le *Nuevo cine argentino*

par Julie Ravary

D epuis l'avènement de la révolution numérique et de la globalisation, plusieurs champs d'études du domaine des sciences sociales et humaines se sont penchés sur la question de l'« identité nationale ». Est-elle toujours pertinente? Doit-on revoir sa définition et le concept auquel elle réfère? L'influence de frontières géographiques sur une société est-elle toujours aussi grande qu'elle l'était au début du vingtième siècle par exemple? À l'évidence, le milieu des études cinématographiques n'a pas échappé à ce débat. En effet, depuis les dernières années, on questionne de plus en plus la pertinence de l'appellation « cinéma national ». Les œuvres cinématographiques d'une région définie possèdent-elles toujours une « identité nationale »? Est-il encore possible d'observer des cohésions thématiques et esthétiques ou encore d'étudier des mouvements artistiques nationaux tel qu'on l'a fait avec le *Néoréalisme* italien ou le cinéma direct québécois? Est-ce que l'emplacement géographique et l'espace socioculturel dans lesquels s'inscrit une œuvre sont toujours des facteurs importants à l'analyse de celle-ci? Lorsque ce « cinéma national » est construit sur un modèle de production cinématographique financé par l'État, il est de notre avis que les politiques culturelles et nationales peuvent effectivement avoir une influence observable dans la production et de la création cinématographique. Cet article souhaite offrir un exemple phare de la façon dont une analyse d'œuvres cinématographiques d'un même pays, et donc sous une même législation de financement, se voit enrichie lorsque ces dernières sont étudiées à la lumière de l'évolution des politiques culturelles nationales. Le modèle choisi pour cette étude est celui du cinéma argentin. Ce dernier offre un parfait exemple de la manière

dont l'évolution des politiques culturelles nationales et leurs implications dans les secteurs de productions et de distributions de l'industrie cinématographique peuvent avoir un impact majeur sur la création des œuvres et même sur le développement d'un mouvement artistique que l'on nomma *Nuevo cine argentino* (Nouveau cinéma argentin). En divisant les trente dernières années de productions cinématographiques en trois périodes, soit l'ère dictatoriale (1976-1983), le retour de la démocratie (1983-1989<sup>1</sup>) ainsi que le *Nuevo cine argentino* (1995 à aujourd'hui) nous serons non seulement en mesure d'offrir un portrait du lien existant toujours entre le cinéma et la nation en Argentine, mais également de démontrer la pertinence du concept de « cinéma national », particulièrement dans un contexte de financement public de l'industrie cinématographique.

**Le cinéma argentin pendant la dictature militaire.** Une des périodes les plus marquantes et déterminantes de l'histoire argentine est sans contredit la dictature militaire de 1976-1983. Surnommé par ses dirigeants « Proceso de Reorganización Nacional », ce régime fit plus de 30 000 disparus, 15 000 fusillés et plus de 9 000 prisonniers politiques. Durant cette période, plus d'un million d'Argentins fuirent le pays. Cette dictature militaire débuta le 24 mars 1976, alors qu'Isabel Martínez de Perón fut déposée par la junte militaire formée d'un représentant de la marine, un de l'armée de terre et un de l'aviation. L'idéologie nationale-catholique de la junte se voulait protectrice de la morale chrétienne et s'opposait formellement au mouvement communiste. Dans sa phase extrémiste, la junte promouvait l'intégrisme et l'antisémitisme. Ce parti autoritaire et répressif proscrivait l'éducation et condamnait toute forme d'art dû à son potentiel subversif. Comme l'écrit Tamara L. Falicov dans son livre *The Cinematic Tango* (2007), cette période historique adoptant des mesures inexorables pour la création artistique eut forcément des répercussions sur l'industrie cinématographique :

The military considered the sphere of cultural production to be a transgressive zone for potential “enemies of the state”. [...] The military's concern for potential violations of national security by the film

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<sup>1</sup> On choisit l'année 1989 comme marquant la fin du cinéma de la re-démocratisation puisque c'est durant cette année que Manuel Antín quitta l'*Instituto Nacional de Cine* et que cet établissement vit son idéologie politique changer radicalement.

industry translated into a tightly controlled National Film Institute run by a series of navy commanders<sup>2</sup>.

Durant cette période, nombreux films furent censurés et plusieurs cinéastes fuirent leur pays de peur d'être arrêtés, torturés ou assassinés. Pensons entre autres à l'un des évènements les plus médiatisés internationalement: l'assassinat du péroniste Julio Troxler, acteur de *La hora de los hornos* (1968) et collaborateur de longue date du cinéaste Fernando Solanas. Troxler fut abattu par le triple A, l'Alliance Anti-communiste d'Argentine. Après cet assassinat et un attentat de kidnapping envers sa personne, Solanas et son *Grupo Cine Liberación* s'exilèrent à Paris pour ne revenir en Argentine qu'au retour de la démocratie en 1983.

On doit majoritairement la chute du régime de la junte militaire à la guerre des Malouines. Ce conflit, se déroulant d'avril à juin 1982 entre l'Argentine et le Royaume-Uni pour l'indépendance des îles Malouines, affecta énormément les troupes argentines. Devant une opposition grandissante et une multiplication de menaces d'attaques militaires en provenance de nombreux pays, la junte militaire choisit de se retirer du pouvoir en 1983. Raúl Alfonsín succéda à ce régime par le biais d'un scrutin démocratique.

**Antín, l'INC et le cinéma post-dictatorial.** À peine dix jours après son entrée au pouvoir le 10 décembre 1983, Alfonsín nomma un nouveau directeur de l'INC (Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía, aujourd'hui l'INCAA, l'Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales). Cette institution était dirigée durant la dictature par un commandant de la marine puisque, durant la dictature, la junte militaire utilisait la production cinématographique comme une plateforme propageant l'idéologie de la dictature et visant à former une cohésion sociale.

Le 21 décembre 1983, le cinéaste vétéran Manuel Antín devint le nouveau directeur de l'INC. La stratégie première d'Antín est de promouvoir, à travers les productions argentines, une image positive de la nouvelle démocratie autant au sein de l'État qu'au niveau international. Dans une lettre publiée dans le quotidien argentin *La razón*, quelques jours après sa nomination au sein de l'INC mais avant

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<sup>2</sup> FALICOV, Tamara L. *The Cinematic Tango*, Édition Wallflower, Sussex, 2007. p. 42.

son entrée en poste, Antín se prononce sur le programme du gouvernement en matière de cinéma:

*Al futuro gobierno le interesa mucho apoyar al cine, porque lo considera no solamente un vehículo de cultura sino una comunicación con el mundo, una ventana abierta al exterior para dar fe de la democracia que hemos conquistado./ Le futur gouvernement est très intéressé à appuyer le cinéma, puisqu'il considère qu'il est non seulement un véhicule culturel, mais également un moyen de communication avec le monde entier, une fenêtre ouverte vers le monde extérieur pour attester de la démocratie que nous avons conquis<sup>3</sup>.*

Autrement dit, pour Antín, le prestige international que les œuvres cinématographiques obtiendraient grâce à un généreux financement de l'INC, servirait également à redorer l'image de l'Argentine. Il était primordial pour lui que les films abordent, de façon directe ou indirecte, le sujet de la dictature afin d'exorciser ce moment, de le sortir de son tabou pour qu'ainsi la société argentine puisse tourner cette page de son histoire. Durant l'année suivant la chute du régime de la dictature militaire, soit 1984, 16 des 26 films qui prirent l'affiche abordaient directement la problématique de la dictature et/ou l'un de ses événements marquants<sup>4</sup>. Le désir d'Antín d'utiliser la production cinématographique nationale comme porte-étendard de la démocratie proscrit dans une certaine mesure un cinéma moins engagé et plus expérimental sur le plan narratif et esthétique. Gustavo Aprea, dans son livre *Cine y políticas en Argentina: continuidades y discontinuidades en 25 años de democracia* (2008), explique que la vision qu'Antín avait pour le cinéma argentin a encore une fois découragé l'expérimentation et en quelque sorte un renouveau cinématographique comme l'avait fait la dictature militaire 7 ans plus tôt :

*Dentro de estas historias [l'auteur fait référence plus haut dans son texte à *Camila*, *La historia oficial*, *El exilio de gardel*, *Sur*], que pretendían representar el funcionamiento de amplios sectores de la sociedad, abundaban los personajes “positivos” con los que el espectador debía identificarse emotivamente y que expresaban de manera más que evidente la opinión de los autores del film. Este tipo de realismo era*

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<sup>3</sup> ANTÍN, Manuel. « El cine que vendrá » dans *La razón*, 26 novembre 1983. p. 5. Traduction libre.

<sup>4</sup> ANDERMANN, Jens. *New Argentine Cinema*, Édition I.B. Tauris, Londres, 2011. p. 3.

*reforzado por otros componentes visibles en las películas que establecieron el modelo hegemónico para este período.* / Dans ces histoires [ l'auteur fait référence à *Camila*, *La historia oficial*, *El exilio de gardel*, *Sur*] qui prétendaient représenter le fonctionnement de grands secteurs de la société, abondaient les personnages «positifs» avec lesquels le public devait s'identifier émotionnellement et qui exprimaient de manière fort évidente l'avis de l'auteur du film. Ce type de réalisme a été renforcé par d'autres composantes visibles dans les films qui ont établi le modèle dominant pour cette période<sup>5</sup>.

La lignée de films discutée par Aprea a atteint non seulement un succès local en battant des records de box-office, mais a aussi été louangée par la critique nationale et, par le fait même, a atteint la reconnaissance internationale visée par Antín. Ces films créèrent un précédent important et, par leur succès à tous les niveaux, influencèrent durant plusieurs années les standards artistiques. Ils contribuèrent à l'implantation d'une tradition cinématographique hégémonique qui favorisait un cinéma accessible, mais engagé; tendancieux, mais divertissant.

Antín demeure à la tête de cette organisation gouvernementale de décembre 1983 à juillet 1989, c'est-à-dire durant la période exacte du mandat d'Alfonsín. Au cours des six années de son mandat, les films argentins rafleurent d'impressionnantes prix internationaux dont un Oscar pour *La historia oficial* (Luis Puenzo, 1985), et sont primés dans les plus grands festivals, entre autres à Berlin (*No habrá más penas ni olvido* d'Héctor Olivera remporte le prix du jury en 1984), à Venise (*La pelicula del rey* de Carlos Sorin obtient le Lion d'Argent en 1986) et à Cannes (*Sur* de Fernando Solanas reçoit le prix de la réalisation en 1988).

Après son mandat à l'INC, Antín crée en 1991 la Fundacion del Universidad de Cine (FUC) dans le district de San Telmo au sein de la capitale argentine. Cette université est d'ailleurs, toujours en 2012, la plus grande institution de formation cinématographique du pays. La FUC est l'une des institutions ayant bénéficié de l'important engouement pour la formation en cinéma que l'on observe en Argentine au début des années 1990. La floraison de cette tradition de l'éducation du cinéma ainsi que l'établissement de la *Ley de cine* (loi du cinéma) sont d'ailleurs deux des

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<sup>5</sup> APRERA, Gustavo. *Cine y políticas en Argentina: continuidades y discontinuidades en 25 años de democracia*, Presses de Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, Buenos Aires, 2008. p. 32. Traduction libre.

plus importants facteurs qui influencèrent l'arrivée d'un renouveau dans le cinéma argentin, renouveau que l'on nomma congrûment le *Nuevo cine argentino*.

#### **Le *Nuevo cine argentino*, Ley de cine et l'émergence des écoles de cinéma.**

Au milieu des années 1990, on voit apparaître des œuvres cinématographiques bien dissemblables de la tradition militante et engagée du cinéma des dix dernières années que l'on surnommait de cinéma post-dictatorial. On appose le terme *Nuevo cine argentino* à ce nouveau phénomène artistique. On remarque dans ces films un certain rejet de la tradition classique cinématographique hégémonique observée dans la génération précédente. En effet, on les rassemble au sein d'un même mouvement principalement pour leur dissociation commune du cinéma précédent plutôt que pour leurs similarités. Le terme *Nuevo cine argentino* pose un certain malaise chez les cinéastes de cette génération qui, dans une grande majorité, refusèrent cette appellation. Il est vrai que leur cinéma a beaucoup moins de points en commun qu'en possédait le *Néoréalisme* italien, la *Nouvelle Vague* française, le *Cinema Novo* du Brésil ou même la *Nueva Ola* du cinéma argentin des années 60 par exemple. Par contre, il faut tout de même admettre certains parallélismes concomitants entre les cinéastes de cette nouvelle génération : ils appartenaient en grande majorité à la génération X et ils ont été, par le fait même, les premiers à pouvoir bénéficier de l'émergence des nouvelles écoles de l'ère post-dictoriale et finalement ils furent les premiers à jouir de la nouvelle législation culturelle, la fameuse Ley de cine, qui fut instaurée en 1994 et qui, en moins d'un an, doubla le budget alloué à l'INCAA en taxant les capitaux reliés à la distribution d'œuvres cinématographiques locales et internationales en terre argentine. On observe dès lors un virage soudain de la part des cinéastes, qui délaissent les sujets traitant des ravages de la dictature, encouragés Antín, et se tournent vers des œuvres plus intimes et expérimentales.

Avant d'examiner les retombées concrètes du système d'éducation cinématographique en Argentine et du système subventionnaire qui révolutionna le cinéma argentin au milieu des années 1990, voici un portrait de la période qui succéda au cinéma post-dictatorial d'Antín et qui précéda ce renouveau dans le

cinéma argentin, l'ère Menem de 1989-1994. Cette période sombre du cinéma argentin permet de mieux comprendre les motivations derrière l'implantation d'une loi visant à protéger la production cinématographique nationale.

**Ley de cine.** En 1989, Carlos Menem et son Parti Judicialiste succèdent à l'Union Civique Radicale d'Alfonsín. Afin de contrer la récession et l'hyperinflation économique argentine que lui a cédées Alfonsín, Menem délaisse le conservatisme de son parti pour une politique économique orientée vers les marchés. Une des tactiques visant à redresser l'économie argentine est de privatiser une majorité des entreprises publiques. Dans cette vague de coupures, Menem annule les fonds de l'État accordés par Alfonsín depuis 1984 à l'INC. Entre 1989 et 1994, le cinéma argentin connaît un important ralentissement en termes du nombre de ses productions cinématographiques. Seulement 12 longs métrages argentins prennent l'affiche en 1990, 17 en 1991, 10 en 1992, 13 en 1993 et 11 en 1994<sup>6</sup>. Cette période de maigres productions cinématographiques incita le président Menem à changer son programme politique de subventions gouvernementales au cinéma national :

The virtual disappearance of the Argentine cinema led the state to backtrack from its initial denial of state funds. Taking into consideration that film is part of the so-called cultural industries and that culture needs to be protected, Law 24,377 which sought to reinvigorate domestic film production was passed in 1994<sup>7</sup>.

Cette loi implantée en octobre 1994, mais dont le financement de projets ne débute qu'en 1995 et qui est toujours en vigueur en 2012, agit non seulement sur la production, mais également sur la distribution. La loi 24 377, communément appelée *Ley de cine*, s'étend sur trois fronts principaux. Tout d'abord, elle taxe 10 % de chaque entrée en salle, que ce soit pour les productions argentines ou les films étrangers. Autrement dit, tous les spectateurs, même ceux qui consomment

<sup>6</sup> DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDIO E INVESTIGACION DEL SINDICATO DE LA INDUSTRIA CINEMATOGRÁFICA ARGENTINA. *DEISICA 20: Los aspectos económicos y culturales de la industria cinematográfica argentina*, Buenos Aires, 2011. p.57.

<sup>7</sup> ROCHA, Carolina. « Contemporary Argentine Cinema during Neoliberalism » (2009), *Hispania*, vol. 92, No.4, Décembre 2009. p. 841-842.

uniquement des blockbusters étrangers, financent le cinéma national. On taxe également 10 % sur toutes les ventes ou locations de VHS, DVD ou Blue Ray et finalement, on récolte 25 % des profits nets annuels du comité fédéral de la diffusion des films à la télévision<sup>8</sup>. Après être revenu sur sa décision de 1989 de couper les vivres à l'INC, le gouvernement de Menem décide non seulement de perpétuer la tradition d'Alfonsín, mais de l'améliorer. Dès l'implantation de la *Ley de cine*, la production cinématographique de 1995 s'élève à 24 films, soit le double de l'année précédente. Depuis, la production cinématographique n'a cessé d'augmenter, atteignant 37 films en 1996, 45 en 2000, 65 en 2005 et 84 en 2010. Les parts de marché du cinéma argentin, par rapport au cinéma étranger, ont également augmenté de 6,43 % en 1994 à 28,09 % en 2010<sup>9</sup>.

Dès 1995, l'INCAA implante des lois et des modèles d'attribution de fonds afin d'encourager la relève ainsi que la production de films à plus petit budget. Agustin Campero explique, dans son livre *Nuevo cine argentino: de Rapado a Historias extraordinarias* (2008), les objectifs derrière le décret 531/00 de la *Ley de cine* :

*Mediante el decreto 531/00, el INCAA puso un límite al monto para créditos y subsidios para que las películas «grandes» no se llevaran todos los fondos que el Estado destinaba al cine, y desde un primer momento se propuso apoyar al cine independiente y estimular las óperas primas*./ Par le décret 531/00, l'INCAA mit une limite au montant des crédits et des subventions afin que les «grands» films n'accapparent pas tout le financement public. L'institut a ainsi cherché à appuyer le cinéma indépendant et à stimuler la production de premières œuvres<sup>10</sup>.

La *Ley de cine* n'a pas seulement eu un impact sur la quantité de films produits, elle a également amélioré les conditions de la production cinématographique et donc rendu possible un important développement de

<sup>8</sup>CAMPERO, Agustín. *Nuevo cine argentino: de Rapado a Historias Extraordinarias*, Buenos Aires, Édition Biblioteca Nacional, 2008. p.30.

<sup>9</sup> DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDIO E INVESTIGACION DEL SINDICATO DE LA INDUSTRIA CINEMATOGRÁFICA ARGENTINA. *DEISICA 20: Los aspectos económicos y culturales de la industria cinematográfica argentina*, Buenos Aires, 2011. p.57.

<sup>10</sup>CAMPERO, Agustín. *Nuevo Cine Argentin: de Rapado a Historias Extraordinarias*, Buenos Aires, Édition Biblioteca Nacional, 2008. p. 41.Traduction libre.

nouvelles stratégies ainsi qu'une plus grande liberté créative en permettant une répartition plus large et équitable des subventions gouvernementales.

L'implantation de la *Ley de cine* engendra une transformation au sein des modes de financement et de distribution et eut, par le fait même, un impact direct et concret sur la production cinématographique nationale. Il est donc devenu inévitable d'interpréter les changements formels et stylistiques qui caractérisent le *Nuevo cine argentino* développé dans un système de financement gouvernemental qui mit en place un modèle permettant une plus grande flexibilité artistique.

**Émergence des écoles de cinéma.** Un second facteur contribua à la formation de ce *Nuevo cine argentino* : l'émergence des écoles de cinéma après la dictature. Les premières écoles de cinéma apparaissent en Argentine dès 1957. Leur existence ne sera par contre que d'une courte durée. Dès 1976, la junte militaire décide de fermer toutes écoles pouvant inciter, voire simplement permettre, l'expression d'un engagement social. Le gouvernement s'attaque non seulement aux écoles de cinéma, mais également à tous les départements universitaires de sociologie et de philosophie. Au retour de la démocratie en 1983, après de longues années de censure, on observe une importante renaissance et un fort essor de la culture en Argentine qui résultent entre autres, en une ouverture massive d'écoles de formations artistiques.

Ce n'est par contre qu'au début des années 1990 que la formation en cinéma s'impose comme la principale porte d'entrée dans l'industrie, supplantant la tradition hiérarchique du plateau de tournage comme lieu unique d'apprentissage cinématographique. La liste de cinéastes diplômés au cours des années 1990 à la Fundacion del Universidad de Cine (FUC) ou à l'Escuela Nacional de Experimentación y Realización Cinematográfica (ENERC) est longue (Lisandro Alonso (1975 -), Daniel Burman (1973 -), Israel Adrián Caetano (1969 -), Albertina Carri (1973 -), Lucrecia Martel (1966 -), Celina Murga (1973 -), Julia Solomonoff (1968 -), Bruno Stagnaro (1973 -), Pablo Trapero (1971 -)). Tel que souligné plus tôt, une grande majorité des cinéastes de ce *Nuevo cine argentino* appartiennent à la génération X, née entre 1960 et 1979. En 1990, au moment de

cette transformation dans l'enseignement et la formation cinématographique, les cinéastes cités ci-haut avaient tous entre 15 et 24 ans. Ils furent donc les premiers à bénéficier de cet engouement social pour l'éducation cinématographique.

Le *Nuevo cine argentino* se développe durant une période très particulière de l'histoire argentine : la « crise économique de 2001 », une crise économique et sociale qui durera de 1998 à 2002<sup>11</sup>. Plusieurs éléments menèrent l'Argentine à cette débâcle nationale : l'ultra libéralisme de Menem, l'explosion de la dette extérieure causée entre autres par la parité peso-dollars en 1992, la dépossession des biens de l'État à travers une privatisation massive des entreprises publiques ainsi que la corruption politico-financière en connivence avec plusieurs ministres et gouverneurs de l'État. La crise toucha principalement la classe moyenne qui protesta contre cette politique économique à travers plusieurs grèves de travail et manifestations violentes. Entre 1998 et 2002, sept présidents se succédèrent, le taux de chômage atteignit des statistiques record de 20 % et 14 des 37 millions d'Argentins firent face à des revenus s'abaissant sous le seuil de la pauvreté<sup>12</sup>. On peut sans aucun doute affirmer que cette période fut l'une des plus traumatisques de l'Argentine et que, tout comme la dictature militaire, elle influença l'imaginaire collectif et, par le fait même, la production cinématographique. D'ailleurs, comme l'écrit l'historien Gonzalo Aguilar, cette crise se répercuta sur les thématiques et l'esthétique mises de l'avant par les cinéastes durant cette période :

[...] the new cinema has distanced itself most radically from earlier film: in its relationship to the spectator. Open endings; the absence of emphasis and of allegories; more ambiguous characters; the rejection of thesis films; a rather erratic trajectory in the story; zombie characters immersed in what happens to them; the omission of national, contextualizing information; the rejection of the identitarian and political imperatives - all those decisions that, to a greater or lesser extent, can be detected in these films account for the opacity of their stories<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> On emploie l'année 2001, puisque c'est au mois de décembre de cette année que l'on attribut le point culminant de la crise (soit lorsque le ministre de l'Économie imposa la limite des retraits bancaires à 250 pesos par semaine et interdit les envois de capitaux à l'extérieur du pays). Cette débandade sociale et économique avait déjà pris forme durant les années 1990 avec la réforme de Menem.

<sup>12</sup> Statistiques recueillies dans « Crise totale en Argentine » paru dans *Le Monde diplomatique* par Carlos Gabetta dans l'édition de janvier 2002.

<sup>13</sup> AGUILAR, Gonzalo. *Other Worlds: New Argentine Cinema*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. p.20.

Le contexte de production ainsi que la *Ley de cine* protégerent l'industrie cinématographique de coupures malgré la crise économique sévissant. Il est vrai que l'on peut comprendre et interpréter les fins ambiguës et le manque flagrant de positionnement politique face à la situation (pas de protagoniste ni d'antagoniste distinct comme on en retrouvait dans les films de Bemberg, Solanas et Puenzo dans les années 80) comme symptomatique du fait que les cinéastes étaient, au moment de l'écriture et du tournage, eux-mêmes plongés dans l'incertitude face à l'issue de cette crise économique. Par contre, il faut souligner l'inscription du *Nuevo cine argentino* dans la grande tradition du *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* qui avait déjà, depuis les années 80, délaissé l'engagement et l'action politique du cinéma pour un virage vers « l'intériorité intimiste ».

La section suivante offre un survol de la tradition cinématographique du *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* et des fondements institutionnels et esthétiques qui permettra une contextualisation du *Nuevo cine argentino* dans le plus grand éventail cinématographique qu'est ce mouvement continental.

**Nouveau cinéma latino-américain : Évolution entre l'extériorité militante et l'intériorité intimiste.** Le *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* prend forme entre les années 1950 et 1960, majoritairement en Argentine, au Brésil et à Cuba, en réponse à la dépendance économique et culturelle du continent. On valorise l'autonomie du continent afin de contrer le sous-développement. C'est durant ces années que l'on voit apparaître la tradition esthétique d'un « hunger cinema » revendiquant la subversion de l'hégémonie hollywoodienne et européenne du cinéma. On assiste alors à la création de documentaires engagés et à la publication de plusieurs manifestes tels que *Hacia un tercer cine (Towards a Third Cinema)* (1969) d'Octavio Getino et Fernando Solanas et *Por un cine imperfecto (For an Imperfect Cinema)* (1969) de Julio García Espinosa. Le *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* est un mouvement très particulier et bien différent des autres « nouveaux cinémas » qui apparurent après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Contrairement à la *Nouvelle Vague* française ou au *Nouveau cinéma allemand*, l'objectif du *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* ne s'arrête pas à exprimer un collectif national ou à s'opposer à la machine hollywoodienne commerciale, il possède également un fort ancrage dans le politique. Ana M. López explique cette tradition cinématographique :

[...] the New Latin American Cinema is a political cinema committed to praxis and to the socio-political investigation and transformation of the underdevelopment that characterizes Latin America. It is thus one that cannot be properly understood in isolation from political, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic forces<sup>14</sup>.

En soulignant l'important lien d'interdépendance entre le cinéma latino-américain et les sphères sociales et politiques, López rappelle la centralité de l'adaptation de ce mouvement face aux changements sociaux et politiques de ces pays. L'écrivaine décrit ce cinéma comme un déterminant, une réponse, voire même un catalyseur dans la définition de l'identité collective et de la construction d'une identité nationale. Les années 1980 furent une décennie déterminante pour plusieurs pays latino-américains, que ce soit au Brésil avec la chute de la dictature militaire qui régnait depuis 1964 et qui pris fin en 1985, en Uruguay où après 12 ans de dictature le pays retrouve sa démocratie en 1985 ou encore la chute du dictateur Augusto Pinochet en 1988. B. Ruby Rich observe l'impact de cette ère de changements en Amérique latine sur le mouvement du *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* :

Just as the earlier development of the movement had its roots in the political climates of the distinct nation-states that pass for a single entity under the misleading term of Latin America, and which do nevertheless have a common unity in spite of their different cultures and histories, so too do the films of the 1980s reflect the political circumstances of the continent at the time of their making. The early 1980s were a time of sweeping change for a number of Latin American countries. [...] Even so, the 1980s were indisputably different from the 1960s, and

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<sup>14</sup>LÓPEZ, Ana M. « An «other» history: The new Latin American cinema» dans *New Latin American Cinema, Volume One: Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, sous la direction de Michael T. Martin, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1997. p.137.

filmmakers—even those veterans who continued to work and produce films throughout this brief history of the New Latin American Cinema—demonstrated in their narrative strategies that they knew the difference<sup>15</sup>.

Les changements notables que mentionne Rich résident entre autres dans une préconisation de la chronique quotidienne plutôt que l'histoire épique à grand déploiement. L'auteure suggère que l'on peut observer une transition au sein du *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain* de l'extériorité vers l'intériorité entre les années 1960 et 1980:

The move from exteriority to interiority holds implications for our sense of individualism and collectivity. [...] The films of the New Latin American Cinema of the 1980s are engaged in the creation, in cinematic terms, of what I would term a “collective subjectivity”. They are concerned, nearly obsessed, with a new form of looking inward that offers the possibility of a radical break with the past, with an approach that can put on the screen, now for the first time, the interior world of persons whose lives first reached these same screens, in their stage of struggle, more than thirty years ago<sup>16</sup>.

Grâce à cette observation de Rich, on remarque que le cinéma argentin, contrairement aux autres cinémas nationaux latino-américains, n'a pris ce tournant vers l'intériorité qu'au milieu des années 1990, plutôt que durant les années 1980. Une des raisons pouvant expliquer ce décalage par rapport aux autres cinématographies nationales latino-américaines est sans doute le fait que la dictature militaire proscrit tout avancement/développement artistique entre 1976 et 1983 et qu'au retour à la démocratie, Alfonsin et Antín encouragèrent les cinéastes à promouvoir des idées sociales et politiques de façon explicite. Par contre, nous pouvons affirmer que le cinéma post-dictatorial, bien que prenant place entre 1984 et 1989, faisait bel et bien partie de la tradition d'extériorité à laquelle fait référence Rich, lorsqu'elle discute du cinéma politique, ouvertement engagé, des années

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<sup>15</sup>RICH, B. Ruby. « An/Other View of New Latin American Cinema » dans *New Latin American Cinema, Volume One: Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, sous la direction de Michael T. Martin, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1997.p. 281-282

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. p. 281.

1960 et 1970. Bien que les années choisies par Rich ne se transposent pas exactement sur l'histoire du cinéma national argentin, il est tout de même essentiel de tenir compte des similitudes entre la cinématographie argentine et le *Nouveau cinéma latino-américain*.

**Conclusion.** Durant les années 1980, la relation que le cinéma argentin entretient avec la société est homogène et unidirectionnelle. Après de longues années de censure qui ne permettaient que les œuvres propageant l'idéologie de la dictature militaire, les cinéastes profitent au maximum de leur liberté et du pouvoir dénonciateur que leur offre dorénavant le cinéma. Rappelons que le retour de la démocratie, aux yeux du peuple argentin, ne signifiait pas seulement un retour à la liberté d'expression après sept années de dictature, mais constituait également une toute nouvelle institutionnalisation de la culture. En effet, la censure pratiquée par la dictature militaire n'était pas un phénomène nouveau au vingtième siècle pour l'Argentine; pensons aux violentes interventions militaires au cours des années 30 perpétrées par le dictateur José Félix Uriburu, mais aussi à Perón qui, entre 1946 et 1955, avait mainmise sur les secteurs culturels et sur l'accès à l'information par la censure de la presse. Par contre, au milieu des années 1990, les jeunes cinéastes ne se reconnaissent plus dans ce cinéma ni dans son approche face à la politique, ils délaisSENT le militantisme pour un cinéma davantage personnel se penchant sur des histoires plus intimes.

À travers notre étude, nous avons démontré que dans certains cas il est encore pertinent voire primordial de regrouper des œuvres cinématographiques selon leur provenance et donc d'avoir recours au concept de « cinéma national ». Le cinéma latino-américain, et plus particulièrement le cinéma argentin, démontre l'impact direct que la politique peut avoir sur les œuvres cinématographiques et l'évolution globale d'une industrie financée par des fonds publics.

Parler de l'identité d'une cinématographie nationale à travers l'histoire des politiques culturelles et sociales c'est aussi traiter de la place du cinéma dans une culture. Notre étude a mesuré l'impact de ces politiques à l'échelle de la production cinématographique, mais qu'en est-il de la distribution? Pouvons-nous également

observer un changement dans les modes de consommation ou encore dans la popularité du « cinéma national » qui pourrait coïncider avec les transformations politiques, économiques ou culturelles qu'a connues l'industrie cinématographique argentine?

Le cinéma argentin est un cas fort particulier : il s'inscrit dans une cinématographie continentale (le cinéma latino-américain) où le lien entre le cinéma, le discours politique et l'identité nationale est l'un des plus forts et où l'on peut observer l'une des plus riches traditions de cinéma socialement engagé. Il est également important de souligner que nous n'aurions pas pu faire une telle étude sur un cinéma national dont l'industrie est financée par des entreprises privées comme le cinéma états-unien ou hongkongais. Ceci nous amène à nous poser une question d'ordre plus global : pouvons-nous étudier les cinémas nationaux dont l'industrie est financée par des entreprises privées à travers les mêmes clés théoriques et outils méthodologiques avec lesquels nous approchons un cinéma national financé majoritairement par des fonds publics? La tâche est certes colossale, mais ô combien pertinente à l'étude d'un des arts, qui malgré les avancements technologiques, demeure l'un des plus coûteux et qui, par le fait même, se voit fortement influencé par les politiques culturelles nationales.

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# CONVERSATIONS



**Fantasia International Film Festival  
Montreal, Quebec  
July 19 - August 9, 2012**

by Dru Jeffries

2012 marked the sixteenth year for the Fantasia International Film Festival, a highlight of the filmgoing year for many of Montreal's most enthusiastic cinephiles and film journalists from around the world. Fantasia promises twenty-two days of blood, gore, oddities, and all-things Asian, and delivers in abundance. At more than twice the length of most other film festivals, though, Fantasia represents something of a double-edged sword: with only two main screening locations (both conveniently located for students at the downtown Concordia campus, plus supplemental screenings at the Cinémathèque québécoise) offering wall-to-wall screenings from noon to midnight, festivalgoers have the opportunity to see more of the films they want to see than at festivals that spread their programme across more locations in fewer days; but twenty-two days of Fantasia is simply exhausting (especially for those of us who have difficulty moderating our filmgoing!). After twenty-two days and thirty-six films, I felt that the good films were far outnumbered by the mediocre-to-terrible set, and I only saw one film that I found transcendent. I find myself wishing (especially come August 10, nursing a Fantasia hangover) that the programmers would do a better job separating the genre wheat from the chaff and pare their selections down to fit within a more manageable ten day frame.

Of the most buzzed about films offered at Fantasia in 2012, the ones that I caught all landed with thuds. One of the opening night films, Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* follow-up *The Tall Man* is one of these movies whose plot is complicated solely for

the sake of confusing and destabilizing the viewer. (There's a bit of voiceover that elucidates the situation in the last 30 seconds or so.) The film is about a small Washington town in which child abduction is incredibly common, and children routinely disappear without a trace; residents have invented a bogeyman figure, the titular "Tall Man," to explain the phenomenon. I predicted the closing twist a little less than halfway through the film, but was then caught off guard by a twist at the halfway point. Another big event this year was the premiere of *Sushi Girl*, which was exacerbated by the presence of most of the cast at the screening (including genre deities Tony "Candyman" Todd and Mark "Skywalker" Hamill). Essentially an extended riff on the infamous ear-cutting scene in *Reservoir Dogs*, *Sushi Girl* is almost entirely a one-room film in which a group of criminals re-assemble six years after a diamond heist to interrogate (read: torture) one of their own in order to finally recover their loot. The movie tries to coast on the charisma of its actors (though it successfully wastes Michael Biehn, Jeff Fahey, and Danny Trejo in bit parts), but it's not enough. A final twist is contrived and easy-to-predict, and the film ultimately fails to satisfy as anything more than a minor exercise in style. Speaking of actors, *Beverly Hills 90210* star AnnaLynne McCord received a special notice from the Fantasia jury for her performance in *Excision*. It's a button-pushing high school film that takes adolescent angst into bloodier territory than even *Carrie* (which is saying something -- let's just say that *Carrie* didn't enjoy her bloodbath nearly as much as McCord's Pauline does in *Excision*). The crowd ate it up, but I found the central character inconsistently sketched, which particularly bothered me in the film's shocking (but rather empty) finale. Lots of fun cameos, though, from the likes of Malcolm McDowell and John Waters (the latter as a priest!).

As usual, Japanese films were in good supply at Fantasia. Like last year, prolific filmmaker Takashi Miike brought two films to Montreal in 2012, but neither was particularly good. *For Love's Sake*, the opening night film in the larger Hall screening room, is a musical for people who hate musicals, a love story seemingly for people incapable of the feeling. After a brief and crudely animated prologue

(which confuses more effectively than it explains), the film opens with a garishly lit musical/fight scene that lays all of its cards out on the table: the film's songs will be deliberately bad, the dances deliberately stiff, and the violence deliberately ultra. The whole thing is played for laughs, except for a few moments of violence so jarring that they disrupt the film's light tone irrevocably. (You can always rely on a Fantasia audience to react to violence with unrestrained glee, however; I may have been alone in finding the film slightly distasteful at times.) The musical conceit is dropped about halfway through the film's two-hour-plus running time, only to return near the end in a particularly unnecessary song sung by a minor character. I found myself humming the film's final song on the way home from the theatre, but this is a minor compliment. Miike's other film, an adaptation of the Nintendo DS game *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*, was an improvement, but not a major one. The film's style is erratic: the characters have the wacky hairstyles from the video game, but they act more or less normally, as opposed to a live-action manga adaptation like *Detroit Metal City* that adapts the crazy acting style along with the crazy character designs; there are moments of video game inspired flourishes that recall something like Scott Pilgrim vs. the World, but Miike doesn't use them nearly as consistently as Edgar Wright, nor as effectively or originally. *The Warped Forest*, a sequel to 2005's *Funky Forest*, is one of those films that thinks being weird is the same thing as being provocative, but it's quite mistaken. There are moments of beauty here, but the whole exercise feels like it's trying too hard and as a result, it's quite a draining experience overall.

The Japanese comedies, however, were in fine form this year. *Wildman* director Noburo Iguchi, like Miike, brought two films to this year's festival (and like Miike, brought two last year as well); both were enjoyable, slight, and crude entertainments. The titles alone -- *Zombie Ass: Toilet of the Dead* and *Dead Sushi* -- should give you a sense of what you're in for with these. If you're interested in perverted feces-covered zombies, go with *Zombie Ass*, but if sentient killer sushi is more your speed, you're not going to do much better than *Dead Sushi*. While I make it a rule to leave before the Q&A starts at Fantasia (and most festival)

screenings -- I just find them intolerable -- I make an exception for Iguchi (who showed up to one of his screenings in a traditional sumo mawashi). *Love Strikes!* is a comedy that I also found deeply affecting. This is not a film that's trying to be particularly insightful, but it's harshly critical of a certain kind of fanatic devotion to love objects, and specifically of the kind of person who turns his or her crushes into love objects, which dehumanizes them in some way. It's similar thematically to *(500) Days of Summer*, but is a much better movie. No one gets off the hook here; everyone is held accountable for their bad behaviour, and I appreciated that. Two of my favourite films at Fantasia were also Japanese comedies: *Robo-G* and *A Boy and His Samurai*. The former is a comedy of errors about a group of incompetent robotic engineers (don't you need qualifications to get that kind of job?) who, in order to meet a tough deadline, fake a robot by putting an old man in a suit. It had me in stitches throughout. The latter is a film that I suspect we'll be hearing about for years to come. The story of *Samurai* is charming -- a single mother and her young boy stumble across a samurai from the Edo period who has accidentally travelled forward in time to present-day Tokyo -- and results in much fish-out-of-water fun. But where the film really shines is in its heart. I absolutely fell in love with all of the central characters, all of whom are incredibly likeable (even the kid, who could have easily come off as twee or grating). It's basically *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* with a samurai instead of an alien, but I'm going to say it: director Yoshihiro Nakamura (whose *Golden Slumbers* was my favourite film of Fantasia 2010) has handily outdone Spielberg's film (which, to be fair, was never a childhood favourite of mine). This is a future family classic, and easily my favourite film of Fantasia 2012.

Fantasia can always be counted on for some top-notch animation, but this year I didn't see too many, for whatever reason. Of the two Japanese animations I screened, *Children who Chase Lost Voices from Deep Below* is as contemplative and beautiful as its title suggests. The watercolour backgrounds are splendid throughout, enabled by the rich natural settings of rural Japan and a surprisingly sunny underworld called Agartha. The narrative of the film deliberately recalls the

Orpheus myth, with a man venturing into the underworld to reclaim his passed wife for the land of the living. That's really the B-plot though, with the A-plot devoted to a neglected young girl, who travels to Agartha alongside the widowed man in search of something ineffable that would give her life meaning. My favourite element of the film was probably the creature designs, featuring an MVP performance by various Queztal Coatls, who wouldn't be at all out of place in a Miyazaki film like *Princess Mononoke* or *Spirited Away*. On the other end of the Japanese anime spectrum is GYO: *Tokyo Fish Attack*, which is about as ridiculous and full of gilled carnage as its title suggests. *Wrinkles*, based on the graphic novel by Paco Roca, is a kind of animated *Away from Her*. Narratives about Alzheimer's seem at home in the cinema, since it is a medium continuously in the present tense. It's a familiar enough story -- an old man gets placed in a care facility when he becomes too much for his family to handle on their own, where his mind slowly deteriorates -- but it's the warmth of the characters' interactions and the genuine humour and affection that render such harrowing subject matter not just tolerable, but even enjoyable. There is one set of minor characters who get a flashback that fills in a key bit of their backstory that gives the film its greatest emotional sucker-punch. It made me wish we got to see more of the lead characters' lives before the present; it's important to know what they had in order to appreciate how much they've lost or stand to lose.

Other festival highlights tended to err on the lighter side. *Black Pond*, a British mockudrama about a family's involvement with a local eccentric (and -- spoiler alert -- his death). A scene involving whether or not bananas, or rather "ba-nah-nahs!?!?", are an appropriate night-time snack was particularly hilarious. *Turn Me On, Goddammit!* is a charming and humane Norwegian coming-of-age comedy about a young girl struggling with her awakening sexual desire. *Mon Ami* is a pitch black Canadian comedy about two bumbling best friends who endeavour to kidnap their boss's hot daughter in order to... well, their endgame doesn't really make a whole lot of sense, but it's rather fun (the kind of fun that you find yourself feeling bad for

having) to watch their plan, such as it is, fall apart bit by bit until a climactic confrontation that is almost as bloody as last year's *Cold Fish*.

Still I have only discussed fewer than half of the films I screened at Fantasia, which is itself a fraction of the 160+ films on the programme. Based on numbers alone, the Fantasia programmers clearly have a voracious appetite for these kinds of films, but I would encourage them to raise their standards a bit. When co-director of international programming Mitch Davis takes the stage before a movie (a not uncommon occurrence), prepare yourself for some high, hyperbolic praise. His enthusiasm can be contagious, but most of the time I just find myself wondering if we saw different movies entirely.



## Telluride Film Festival August 31 – September 3 2012

by Lindsey Campbell

With hiking, parasailing, fishing, and outdoor adventures aplenty, each year the most devoted cinephiles make their ascent to Telluride, Colorado in order to sit in dark rooms, staring at the moving pictures on the wall for four consecutive days. For 39 years, the small town (pop. 2400) has been home to one of the world's most prestigious film festivals, the Telluride Film Festival. Films selected by the Telluride Film Festival garner a certain level of esteem, as the festival itself is closely affiliated with Criterion Collection, UC Berkeley's Pacific Film Archive, and the National Film Preservation Foundation. Bill and Stella Pence, founders of Janus Films (predecessor to the illustrious Criterion Collection), co-founded the festival with Tom Luddy in 1974. The Pences retired from the festival in 2007, leaving it in the capable hands of Gary Meyer and Julie Huntsinger along with Luddy. Since 2007, the festival has maintained the level of quality that its founders intended.

Telluride Film Festival is unique in that one does not get to preselect what to see nor when. The festival uses a multi-coloured pass system, with each colour representing a certain level of access to screenings and events. Festivalgoers are thus not required to buy tickets or make reservations for specific screenings or programs, and the official program remains a closely guarded secret until noon of the opening day. This tradition ensures a festival with no media blitz and paparazzo, allowing audiences to experience a selection of films without any preconceptions. Attendees must be truly open to whatever the program has to offer. The Telluride Film Festival remains smaller and shorter than most, fostering a community experience, while its mountain setting creates a casual, low-key

atmosphere. Because it is impossible to pre-plan film screening choices, word of mouth, timing, and pass type help make one's festival experience.

In tune with the laid-back atmosphere, the festival weekend kicks off with a street party on Main Street called the Opening Night Feed after which festivalgoers head directly to the first round of screenings. There are only three permanent screening venues in Telluride, and so, the festival borrows the town's notable venues and in the weeks leading up to the festival, the production team meticulously designs each of the additional six theaters, thereby transforming Telluride from a small mountain town to a dedicated festival space. As per the Telluride Film Festival's one-word motto, SHOW, showmanship is of utmost priority and the 39<sup>th</sup> edition once again delivered an outstanding selection of 25 feature length films, 29 shorts, and a few select revivals.

Though films are required to have never been screened in the North America, newly-restored prints are screened as part of retrospective programming. This year, the spotlight fell on director Jack Garfein with screenings of his, *Something Wild* (U.S., 1961) and *The Strange One* (U.S., 1957). This year, the festival also included a Looney Tunes retrospective to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Chuck Jones, a beloved friend of the festival who twice drew the festival poster and was first honoured with a retrospective at Telluride in 1976. Additionally, each year the festival invites a Guest Director who has the honour of selecting a handful of films, including revivals. The esteemed Geoff Dyer was this year's Guest Director. An eminent scholar on *Stalker*, Dyer brought a pristine 35mm print — unavailable on this continent — as part of his film selection which included *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, France, 1999), *Together* (Lukas Moodysson, Sweden, 2000) and two Werner Herzog films; *Lessons of Darkness* (France-U.K.-Germany, 1992) and *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (Germany, 1974).

Besides the premieres, revivals, and restorations, each year there are a number of other programs including the presentation of silent films with a live orchestra —a

truly unique experience. This year, Clarence Badger's *Hands Up!* (U.S., 1926) was screened with accompaniment by pianist Donald Sosin, and The Mont Alto Motion Picture orchestra accompanied a screening of *The Marvelous Life of Joan of Arc* (Marco de Gastyne, France, 1929). Serge Bromberg delights, year after year, with both his storytelling and celebration of cinema and for its 20<sup>th</sup> year Bromberg's *Retour de Flamme* program included a screening of the newly restored Chaplin short *The Immigrant* (U.S., 1917) and the forgotten Disney film *Hungry Hobos* — a film not screened since 1928! For those who desire to go beyond seeing films, the *Talking Heads* midday panel discussions are a great way to spend the lunch hour outdoors, while the Q&A *Conversations* in the courthouse are more intimate with a smaller audience. Discussions are moderated by actors, directors, and invited guests. Finally, the festival winds down with a closing noon panel in Town Park during the Labor Day picnic.

Though films at the Telluride Film Festival are not awarded prizes, each year there are three guests of honour who are presented the Silver Medallion for their significant contribution to cinema, of which past tributees have included Meryl Streep, Gerard Depardieu, Viggo Mortensen, Chuck Jones, Walter Murch, and Agnes Varda. One such medallion was awarded to legendary B-Movie director Roger Corman who is himself the subject of a new documentary film, *Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood of a Hollywood Rebel* (Alex Stapleton, U.S., 2011), also screened at the festival. Corman's films *The Masque of Red Death* (U.S., 1964) starring Vincent Price, *The Intruders* (U.S., 1961) featuring a young William Shatner, along with *Rock'n'Roll High School* (1979) were all screened at the Abel Gance outdoor theater. French actress Marion Cotillard received a medallion and was in attendance with Jacques Audiard's new film *Rust & Bone* (France, 2012), an astounding film about a young woman in the aftermath of losing her legs in a freak accident. The film's success at Telluride caused many to predict that *Rust & Bone* would garner Cotillard another Oscar nomination. The third medallion went to Danish actor and Bond villain Mads Mikkelsen, who was representing not one but two films; Thomas Vinterberg's stirring piece about mob-mentality, *The Hunt*

(Denmark, 2012) and *A Royal Affair* (Nikolaj Arcel, Denmark, 2012), a beautifully shot historical epic about Denmark's famed "mad" King Christian VII, his unfaithful wife and the king's doctor. *A Royal Affair* has since been selected as Denmark's official entry for the 85<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards.

*Hyde Park on Hudson* (Roger Michell, U.S., 2012) had its world premiere on Friday night at the Abel Gance in Elks Park, located in the town's center. The film centers on FDR, his cousin, and the King and Queen of England's visit to upstate New York in 1939. Festival and town regular Laura Linney was in attendance, along with co-star Bill Murray for the film's premiere. Ben Affleck, with family in tow, was also in town for a sneak preview of *Argo* (U.S., 2012), his new political thriller about the Iran hostage crisis.

Salman Rushdie, also a Guest Director alumnus, accompanied director Deepa Mehta for the highly anticipated adaptation of Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (Canada, 2012). Festival regular Michael Haneke was in attendance with his newest film about an elderly couple, *Amour* (Germany, 2012). Ken Burns returned with *The Central Park Five* (U.S., 2012), a film he made with his daughter Sarah, which investigates the case of the five Black and Latino teenagers, convicted of raping a white woman in Central Park in 1989.

Noah Baumbach returned to Telluride, presenting *Frances Ha* (U.S., 2012) a film he co-wrote and co-directed with his newest muse, indie darling Greta Gerwig. Though quirky and fun, *Frances Ha* plays out like a 90-minute episode of Lena Dunham's *Girls* (U.S., 2012), complete with *Girls* star Adam Driver. Unfortunately, Frances' neuroses do not play out in the same self-deprecating way that makes Lena Dunham's *Girls* all the more compelling. Ultimately, the film tries too hard to make Frances' awkward low self-esteem hip, though it does manage to balance being both capricious and shallow, while otherwise looking great and delivering some comedic respite.

Michael Winterbottom's slow moving and quiet *Everyday* (UK, 2012) is a fascinating study of the daily tedium in the life of a young family getting by while the father is in prison. Actress Shirley Henderson is utterly compelling as the young mother, and what makes *Everyday* all the more interesting is that it was shot a few weeks at a time over the course of five years, so that the children grow in front of your eyes over the course of the film. Winterbottom, Henderson, and all five children were in attendance.

The low-key mobster/assassin biopic *The Iceman* (Ariel Vromen, US, 2012) premiered, starring the incomparable Michael Shannon as notorious contract killer Richard Kuklinski. Actor Ray Liotta and director Vromen presented the film. *The Iceman* resists letting the audience into Kuklinski's head, which prevents any real insight into the main character. With little else to hold onto, *The Iceman* skims over what seem to be important narrative points and could have easily been 30-40 minutes longer to add "meat" onto what felt like a skeleton of a film.

Christian Petzold's *Barbara* (Germany, 2012), about a doctor who is banished to a small town in Germany during the 1980s, got rave reviews from the few that were able to actually get into one of the small theaters where it screened. The droll sexual tourist piece *Paradise: Love* (Ulrich Seidl, Austria, 2012) was hit or miss with the viewers. Its unflinching look at the middle-aged women who flock to Kenya to be serviced by "beach boys" caused a few walkouts, though most were compelled by this semi-improvised, meditative piece. The Kafkaesque *Superstar* (Xavier Gannioli, France, 2012) centering on an ordinary man who wakes up one morning to find out that he is a celebrity, without knowing why or how split audiences, while the psychological thriller *The Attack* (Ziad Doueir, Lebanon-France, 2012), about a man who discovers only too late that his wife is a suicide bomber, surprised audiences generating a lot of positive commentary.

Sarah Polley's incredible *Stories We Tell* (Canada, 2012) respectfully won over its audience early in the weekend. Produced by the NFB/ONF, *Stories We Tell* is an

intimate portrait of Polley's family that delightfully plays with documentary form and questions how we make sense of memory and truth. *Stories We Tell* quickly became the talk of the festival, playing to packed houses for throughout the week.

Haifaa Al Mansour's *Wadjda* (Saudi Arabia, 2012) has the honor of being both the first film to be entirely shot in Saudi Arabia and the first film directed by a Saudi woman. *Wadjda* is a delightful film about a young girl who wants to have her own bicycle. It is a must see! Al Mansour was in attendance and was able to describe the difficulties filming *Wadjda*, explaining how she had to direct the actors from inside a van, using walkie-talkies and a monitor, due to the laws prohibiting women and men from sharing public spaces.

For the festival weekend, the library turns one of its conference rooms into the small Backlot Theater which runs free programming throughout the weekend and is also home to smaller documentary films. This year the Backlot hosted 12 films, among them Concordia professor Marielle Nitoslawska's *Breaking The Frame* (Canada, 2012) about the groundbreaking filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist Carolee Schneemann; Katrine Boorman's *Me and Dad* (U.K., 2012) about her famous father John; David Bradbury's *On Borrowed Time* (Australia, 2012) recounting Australian director Paul Cox's battle with cancer and *Final Cut: Ladies and Gentlemen* (György Pálfi, Hungary, 2012), an original piece described as a nostalgic "meta-love story" made from hundreds of famous movie clips. Never shy of pushing the envelope, particularly in terms of documentary cinema, Telluride also featured Joshua Oppenheimer's much-discussed brutal documentary *The Act of Killing* (Denmark, 2012). In this film, Oppenheimer invites former Indonesian death squad leaders to reenact their mass killings in the cinematic genre or style of their choice.

The festival also chooses some nine or ten short films to play before features, along with three short film programs. This year, filmmaker (and long-time film festival employee) Barry Jenkins was entrusted with putting together the shorts

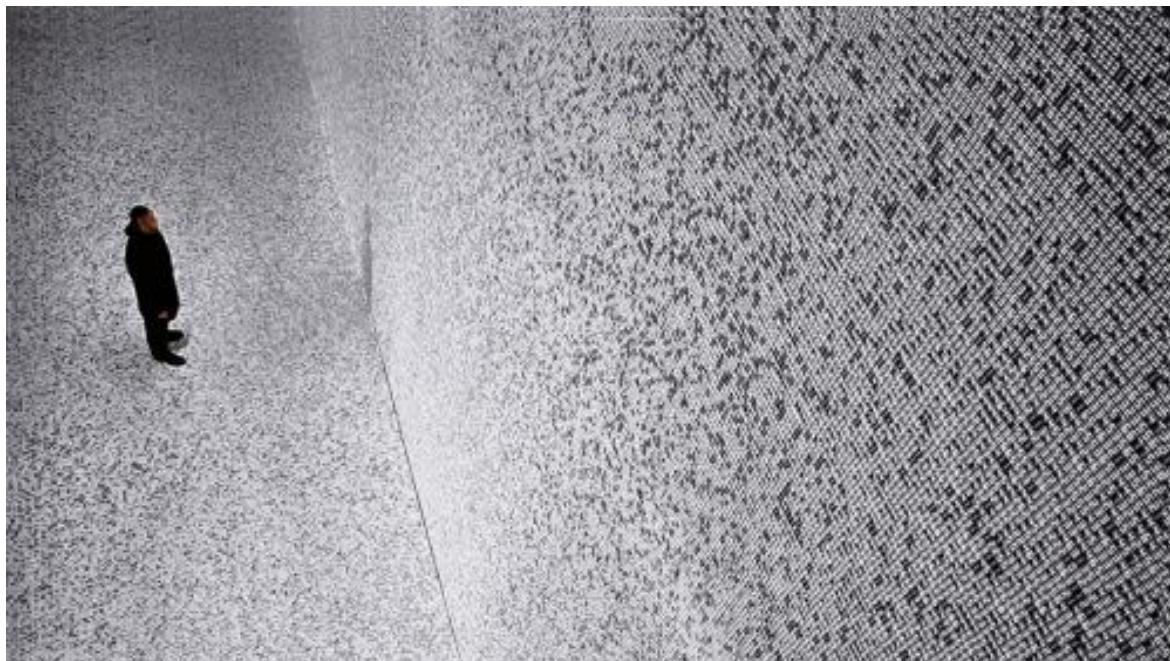
programs, and he rose to the occasion with a very strong selection. The *Filmmakers of Tomorrow* programs, short films by student and emerging filmmakers were outstanding. Gerard Barrett's *Pilgrim Hill* (Ireland, 2012), a quiet little film about the daily life of an Irish bachelor farmer, was featured as part of the shorts program *Great Expectations* and won my heart in its brief 78 minutes, making it one of my festival favorites this year. Not unlike *Stories We Tell*, *Pilgrim Hill* skillfully plays with documentary form. Esmail Monsef's delightful *Under the Colours* (Iran, 2012), a short about young soldiers who find a red skirt, preceded *Pilgrim Hill* along with Caleb Slain's *It Ain't Over* (U.S., 2012).

Certainly, it is impossible to take in over thirty films and programs over the weekend. Next year the festival will inaugurate a new large capacity theater and will be adding a fifth full day in order to celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> rendition. The festival directors have promised to keep the amount of programming the same, giving festivalgoers that extra day to catch more of its diverse offerings. The 40<sup>th</sup> Telluride Film Festival will be held August 29 to September 2, 2013.



**Ryoji Ikeda: l'image inaltérée**  
**DHC/ART, MONTRÉAL**  
**DU 14 JU AU 18 NOV 2012**

par Zarah Ross



Ryoji Ikeda *data.tron* 2007

C'est une impression bien unique que produit l'exposition de Ryoji Ikeda à Montréal, situant le spectateur à mi-chemin entre la salle d'archive et le vaisseau futuriste. Présentée à la Fondation DHC/ART, l'installation est organisée dans le cadre de la première Biennale Internationale d'art numérique (BIAN 2012). La galerie abrite un amalgame d'œuvres statiques, d'installations numériques et d'un complexe projet de lumières et de sons qui imprègne l'espace épuré du DHC. Ikeda, compositeur japonais de musique électronique et d'arts visuels, est internationalement reconnu pour la force de ses images numériques, abstraites et poétiques, qui sont à la fois scientifiques, mathématiques et minimalistes. Ses installations, immersives, complexes et envoutantes sont

accompagnées par des arrangements sonores qui, rythmé minutieusement, s'apparentent cliquetis émis par les technologies contemporaines. Dans le cadre de cette première exposition monographique nord-américaine d'Ikeda, se ressent un thème essentiel entre les œuvres et entre les pièces du DHC, celui du rapport complexe entre médias et réalité.

Depuis tout récemment, le spectateur pénétrant l'antre du DHC à la possibilité de suivre la visite avec l'aide d'un guide audio qui se télécharge sur iPhone via le site internet du DHC. L'application permet d'entendre des entrevues et une description image par image de l'exposition faite par le commissaire de la Fondation, John Zeppetelli. La visite de l'exposition se fait en deux étapes interreliées, bien que géographiquement séparées, la rubrique Systematics et l'espace Satellite.

Il y a d'abord la rubrique Systematics qui rassemble des sculptures, des puces électroniques magnifiées, de la pellicule et des œuvres encadrées. Comme le souligne le commissaire Zeppetelli, cette section se présente comme une archéologie de la connaissance codée. Les objets sont présentés pour leur beauté formelle, pour l'attrait que produit la lumière lorsqu'elle s'infiltra au travers des puces électroniques. En exposant ainsi la source tangible des données, Ikeda offre au spectateur l'idée d'une possibilité de sens qui demeure somme toute inaccessible, présentée à nos yeux pour sa matérialité la plus brute. En se promenant dans cette première rubrique de l'exposition, il semble que l'espace du DHC se soit transformé, le temps d'une exposition, en véritable lieu d'archives. À quelques reprises sont posées sur les longues tables lumineuses des loupes magnifiantes, sur lesquelles les spectateurs se penchent pour inspecter les œuvres, à la manière d'un archéologue.

Ensuite, le spectateur se déplace vers la seconde section de l'exposition, intitulée The Satellite Space. Dans cet espace interagissent différents projets audiovisuels. Dans une première pièce sont rassemblés les neuf écrans de data.scan sur lesquels défile incessamment un flux de données qui encodent des informations

sur l'astrologie et la génétique. Puis, dans l'autre pièce sont réunis les dix petits écrans de data.matrix qui sont placés de part et d'autre de l'immense écran que constitue Data.tron.

Les références au cinéma sont nombreuses dans l'exposition de Ryoji Ikeda. Que ce soit par la présence récurrente du médium filmique de la rubrique Systematics (entre autre l'œuvre *10 seconds*) ou dans les installations d'images en mouvement dans l'espace Satellite qui fait résonnance à l'ère de l'infographie. En considérant l'exposition par le spectre des études cinématographiques, il est intéressant de considérer l'ensemble des installations comme une remise en question de l'acte de spectature. Être face à l'écran, dans le cadre de l'exposition, veut aussi dire devenir conscient du caractère fabriqué des représentations du monde faites par les médias, tant sur un point de vue spatial que temporel. Par exemple, l'oeuvre intitulée *10 seconds*, constitue une bande de pellicule encadrée qui représente les dix secondes d'amorce qui précède la projection d'un film. Le temps filmique, mis à plat aux yeux du spectateur, est impossible à reproduire par le biais de la perception humaine et nécessite l'appareil filmique. C'est l'absence de l'appareil (filmique, vidéographique, informatique, etc.) dans toute la rubrique Systematics qui rend le spectateur conscient des limites de sa perception. Plus encore, dans cet espace où sont entreposées des technologies diverses à la manière d'une archive, ressurgi l'angoisse que les technologies nécessaires au décodage des données ne deviennent désuètes et disparaissent. Dans leur statisme, les technologies présentées dans la rubrique Systematics apparaissent comme les vestiges d'une ère révolue. À la manière d'hiéroglyphes ornant les murs des tombes d'Égypte, les codes informatiques deviennent des idées abstraites indiquant les limites de la connaissance.

Dans le catalogue de l'exposition est raconté que l'immense écran de Data.tron avait fait réagir le mathématicien d'Harvard Benedict Gross. Devant l'installation, Gross s'est senti comme devant un feu de l'envergure de celui qui détruit jadis la grande bibliothèque d'Alexandrie. Cette bibliothèque, fondée en 288 av J.-C.

abritait alors la plus importante source de connaissance, mais fût en partie ravagée par un incendie provoqué en -47 par les troupes de Jules César. Ryoji Ikeda, en encodant ainsi la réalité dans un disque dur, propose de reconstruire l'édifice de la culture. Par leur intangibilité, les données numériques sont à l'abri des éléments extérieurs destructeurs tels que la corrosion, l'eau, le feu, etc. Cela dit, ces données n'existent que par le biais de codes qui eux-mêmes en comportent d'autre, comme une vertigineuse mise en abîme de données qui existent dans un non-lieu qui, lorsqu'une technologie s'éteint, deviendra à son tour inaccessible aux êtres humains.

Ainsi, ces salles d'archives du DHC agissent comme le rappel des limites de l'être humain, celles de son corps et de ses connaissances. Plus encore, c'est un espace qui rappelle la fragilité des systèmes humains, la possibilité de perdre accès, éventuellement, à un édifice de connaissances, à l'instar de la grande bibliothèque d'Alexandrie.

Cela dit, les informations et données qui défilent dans l'écran de Data.tron ne subiront pas, à l'instar des objets matériels qui les encodent, les traces du temps. Les chiffres et les lettres encodées demeurent à jamais prisonniers de ce hors-temps, sans que jamais ne viennent s'y poser les indices du temps qui altèrent les objets du passé, comme la larme qui tombe sur une lettre, le froissement d'une page ou la faille dans une pierre.

Finalement, le spectateur n'est-il pas, devant les écrans de Ikeda, comme hypnotisé par le caractère absolu de l'image inaltérable? Dans les deux grandes salles de l'espace Satellite du DHC, l'acte de spectature est ramené à son stade le plus brut puisque le spectateur *voit*, mais son regard reste en surface puisqu'il n'a pas la possibilité de décoder l'information devant lui. Entouré par l'image et le son, l'immersion est totale. C'est alors que l'expérience que vit le spectateur se rapproche de l'expérience vécue par le spectateur devant une peinture abstraite. Devant l'absence de repère et de sens figuré, l'esprit s'évade, hypnotisé par les

possibilités interprétatives qu'offre ce monde invisible qui demeure encodé dans l'image inaltérée d'Ikeda.



***The “Un-Happy Ending”: Reviewing  
the Cinema of Frank Capra***  
**de Vito Zagarrio**  
**Bordighera, 2011**

**Compte rendu de Andrée Lafontaine**

*The “Un-Happy Ending”: Reviewing the Cinema of Frank Capra* de Vito Zagarrio est le premier volume de la nouvelle série Saggistica à paraître chez Bordighera, maison d'édition dédiée à promouvoir la culture diasporique italienne en Amérique. En un peu moins de 200 pages, le livre condense la dissertation doctorale de l'auteur, défendue il y a plus de quinze ans sous la direction de Robert Sklar.

L'auteur poursuit ici de façon à peine couverte une longue querelle entamée il y a deux décennies avec Joseph McBride, premier biographe de Capra. C'est bien connu, les querelles ne sont jamais plus acerbes que lorsqu'elles opposent des frères d'armes. À cet effet, Zagarrio et McBride présentent tous deux un portrait psychologisant de Capra. Mais alors que le Capra de McBride était un personnage sombre, incapable d'assumer le succès auquel il avait durement travaillé, celui de Zagarrio ne laisse surgir son pessimisme qu'inconsciemment, « malgré lui ».

Zagarrio conteste ainsi l'image convenue de Capra, celle du maître incomparé de l'optimisme dont les films populistes reposent sur un sentimentalisme facile et sirupeux. Attirant l'attention du lecteur vers les premières œuvres, Zagarrio présente avec justesse une vision du monde beaucoup plus sombre et cynique. Même lorsque la fin heureuse arrive à affirmer la communion entre individu et la société, celle-ci intervient, selon Zagarrio, tel un *deus ex machina* improbable. Sous le couvert de feux d'artifices, Capra laisse ainsi entrevoir, à son corps défendant, une noirceur beaucoup plus profonde. L'ampleur des catastrophes physiques et existentielles présentées est tellement grande, affirme Zagarrio, que

le spectateur ne peut que demeurer envahit d'un vif sentiment de précarité. Dans ce contexte, la conclusion heureuse se transforme en malheur déguisé (le « *unhappy ending* ») et le rêve américain tourne au cauchemar, tel un « monstre émergeant de l'inconscient » (124).

Ce n'est pas tant le portrait en clair-obscur que nous présente Zagarrio qui dérange que sa prétention à identifier ce qui relève du conscient et de l'inconscient. Plusieurs affirmations à cet effet laissent perplexe, notamment lorsque l'auteur traite des « lapsus » (*Freudian slips*) présents dans *Flight* (1929) et *It Happened One Night* (1934), de la « critique involontaire » (70) du capitalisme dans *That Certain Thing* (1928) ou des « messages semi-conscients » (56) se cachant dans l'œuvre. Zagarrio ne fournit aucune source ou argument justifiant une telle (psych)analyse, mais il y a lieu de se demander si cela serait même possible et si l'hypothèse n'était pas minée d'avance.

L'absence évidente de réviseurs chez Bordighera résulte en un grand nombre de coquilles et d'erreurs syntaxiques, rendant la lecture inutilement laborieuse. À tire d'exemple, on retrouve ce paragraphe quasi-incompréhensible:

« Again the drama serves the comic resolution. It is a fact, though, that even in these 'green' and secondary films, Capra sometimes 'melts the make up' (as with Don's make up, melted by the rain) to America, revealing an interesting portrait of his homeland. An America to which Capra has often ruined the maquillage, the superficial covering, giving way to the deeper wrinkles, less easy to hide, the most dramatic cracks; an America to whom the fimlamaker (*sic*) has always checked the pulse, to to (*sic*) whom has given his most powerful images » (125).

Au fil des pages, Zagarrio passe aisément d'une approche méthodologique à une autre sans tenter d'imposer une grille d'analyse unique à une œuvre s'étendant sur plus de 35 ans. Ce parti pris « démocratique » lui permet en outre d'aborder plusieurs films « hors norme », films souvent négligés des commentateurs.