## Contents

Notes on Contributors ................................................................. vii
Preface ...................................................................................... xi
Acknowledgments ...................................................................... xiii

### PART ONE: Criticism

TOM GUNNING

Between Melodrama and Realism: *Under the Skin of the City* (2001) ............................... 8
LAURA MULVEY

Internalising the Musical: *The Band Wagon* (1953) ................................................................. 11
ANDREW KLEVAN

The Visitor’s Discarded Clothes in *Theorem* (1968) ................................................................. 15
STELLA BRUZZI

JAMES WALTERS

ADRIAN MARTIN

The Properties of Images: *Lust for Life* (1956) .......................................................... 27
STEVE NEALE

Two Views over Water: Action and Absorption in Ingmar Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* (1957) ................................................................. 30
EDWARD GALLAFENT

Making an Entrance: Bette Davis’s First Appearance in *Jezebel* (1938) ...................... 34
MARTIN SHINGLER

A Narrative Parenthesis in *Life Is Beautiful* (1997) ......................................................... 38
DEBORAH THOMAS

The End of Summer: *Conte d’été* (1996) ............................................................................ 41
JACOB LEIGH

Enter Lisa: *Rear Window* (1954) ....................................................................................... 45
DOUGLAS PYE

Opening up *The Secret Garden* (1993) .................................................................................. 49
SUSAN SMITH

A Magnified Meeting in *Written on the Wind* (1956) ......................................................... 53
STEVEN PEACOCK

JOHN GIBBS

The Ending of 8½ (1963) ....................................................................................... 61
RICHARD DYER

### PART TWO: History

Haptic Vision and Consumerism: A Moment from Fritz Lang’s *Siegfried* (1924) .............. 70
THOMAS ELSAESSER
Visions of Sound in City Lights (1931) .......................................................... 74
CHARLES BARR

‘Entertainment and dystopia’: Maurice Chevalier Performs Avec le sourire (1936) ......................................................... 78
TOM BROWN

Music, Crime and the Gaze: La Bête humaine (1938) ........................................... 85
GINETTE VINCENDEAU

Thunder and Lightning: Gone with the Wind (1939) and the Logic of Synchronisation .................................................. 90
RICK ALTMAN

Hearing, Fearing: The Sonic Design of Suspense in Cat People (1942) ................................................................. 94
HELEN HANSON

‘I’ve seen him take his knife …’: The Searchers (1956) ........................................ 98
R. J. ELLIS

Another Story: Myth and History in Bonnie and Clyde (1967) ...................................................... 102
PAM COOK

A Sculptural Moment: The Epilogue to Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent (1971) .......................................................... 106
MARK BROUGHTON

Star Wars (1977): Back and Forth in Time and Space ........................................... 111
JONATHAN BIGNELL

CLAUDIA GORBMAN

PART THREE: Theory
Performance, with Strings Attached: Team America’s (2004) Snub to the Actor .............................................. 127
ALEX CLAYTON

ALISON BUTLER

Contested Endings: Interpreting The Piano’s (1993) Final Scenes ................................................................. 135
BARBARA KLINGER

Mourning, Loss and Trauma, and the Ambiguities of Proper and Improper Desire in Exotica (1994) .................. 140
ELIZABETH COWIE

Stepping out of Blockbuster Mode: The Lighting of the Beacons in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) ................................................................. 144
KRISTIN THOMPSON

Dorothy’s Dream: Mindscreen in The Wizard of Oz (1939) ........................................... 149
BRUCE F. KAWIN

Looking On and Looking the Other Way: Hotel Rwanda (2004) and the Racialised Ethics of Spectatorship ............... 152
MICHELE AARON

LISA PURSE

‘I wasn’t expecting that!’: Cognition and Shock in Alien’s (1979) Chestburster Scene .................................................. 162
JONATHAN FROME

The Inflection of a Dream in Scarlet Street (1945) ....................................................... 166
GEORGE M. WILSON

Judy’s Plan: A Reading of the ‘Flashback’ Sequence in Vertigo (1958) ................................................................. 170
WILLIAM ROTHMAN

Index .............................................................................................................. 173
PART ONE: Criticism

‘What is this film?’ The question at once seems a crude and inadequate summary of critical enquiry faced with the breadth of film moments, and the range of approaches to them found in the first part of this book. However, in comparison with the historical and theoretical approaches discussed in Parts Two and Three, which are more dependent (to varying degrees) on frameworks external to the film, the essays below are markedly more focused on the internal qualities of films and their moments. ‘Qualities’ can of course mean, fairly neutrally, observable characteristics: the arrangement of the mise en scène, the details of performance, systems of editing, the tone and timbre of a musical score, for example. However, ‘qualities’ can also imply judgments about value and, in particular, the value inherent in the film’s ability to shape and control those observable characteristics. Essentially, then, the issue of value is crucial to the critical analysis of films.

This theme is picked up in a series of accounts founded upon a sustained attention on the film moment. When prefacing his persuasive account of one such key moment from Vincente Minnelli’s The Band Wagon (1953), Stanley Cavell offers an explanation for his selection and its possible ramifications. He suggests that: ‘The judgement I make in discussing the sequence here expresses my pleasure and sense of value in it and awaits your agreement upon this.’1 This concentration upon and joining together of ‘pleasure’ and ‘sense of value’ strikes to the heart of film criticism, alluding potently to the ways in which personal feeling can form a strong foundation for film analysis. Cavell’s honesty regarding the role personal engagement takes in his critical work is matched by the candour of Robin Wood in describing his own approach and attitude to film criticism:

Here I am. I am writing this [italics in original]. I am not infallible. I am just a human being like yourself. What I have to say and the way in which I say it was determined by my own background, my own experience, my own understanding (or lack thereof). I make no pretence to Absolute Truth.  

The ‘fallibility’ that Wood describes is an underlying concern for any critic of the arts, connected as it is to the task of taking responsibility for personal interpretation and judgment. This sense of responsibility can understandably become a source of considerable anxiety for students encountering the study of film for the first time. Some, for example, may object to the film lecturer suggesting a particular reading. Here, more so than with the study of literature, in which interpretation and close reading have perhaps a more established cultural standing, it seems that the analysis of film is for some fraught with the worry of ‘reading too much into it’. These concerns can in fact become effective catalysts in the course of analysis and debate conducted in the classroom, providing an impetus for critical conversation. No approach can be sacrosanct. In this same spirit, to suggest a single reading or interpretation is not to resist the possibility of others; but the admission of a multitude of possible meanings is not the same as saying all interpretations are of equal value. Interpretations require careful reasoning, argument and demonstration in close proximity to the observable detail of a film (and, indeed, a film’s moments). As part of an arresting argument for the value of interpretation, John Gibbs and Douglas Pye suggest:

… processes of argument and of persuasion are involved, rather than merely the demonstration of a position: that what I have found in the film is not simply my view but represents an understanding capable of being shared or challenged and, in the process, enhanced reworked or replaced …. A central advantage of rooting interpretation in the detail of the film … is that it provides a material and verifiable basis for discussion.3

As Gibbs and Pye make clear, the conclusions of one’s analysis are always open to contention and challenge. This is, of course, a founding principle of critical debate. Nevertheless, there is a profound responsibility on the part of the critic to ensure that the evidence presented for such claims is precise, accurate and substantiated. How to select sufficient data from the film to support one’s argument...
then becomes a key concern. How much is enough detail? How much is too much? The pressure, experienced to varying degrees by different critics, is to avoid an account that is too generalised to hold firm, its indistinctness risking irrelevance. The most reduced example of this might be found in a newspaper column rating films simply by means of a system of stars ranging from one to five. One would have to trust the individual compiling such a system with absolute confidence, given that no discernible evidence is provided for their judgments. Here, Cavell’s earlier ‘sense of value’ would be articulated in only the shallowest terms, bereft of his stated impulse to discuss and invite agreement based on his judgments.

It is not only the brevity of a star-rating system that risks advancing broad or unsubstantiated judgments, however. Writing in 1962, Ian Cameron defines the journal Movie’s attitude towards contending with sequences from films in close detail by comparing that approach to the available alternatives:

For talking about one small section of a film in great detail, whether in an interview or in an article, we have been accused of fascination with technical trouvailles [meaning roughly ‘surprise discoveries’] at the expense of meaning. The alternative which we find elsewhere is a gestalt approach which tries to present an overall picture of the film without going into ‘unnecessary’ detail, and usually results in giving almost no impression of what the film was actually like for the spectator.

Cameron’s contentions place at stake the issue of how one arrives at an expression of meaning in film and, in doing so, he proposes that the value of a film as a whole might profitably be articulated through the concentration upon a small section. Here, we can return to Cavell’s statement and speculate that, in laying out some of the achievements he believes to be found in a sequence from The Band Wagon, he is offering a judgment upon the value of the film as a whole, its ability to produce moments of excellence. In the context of this collection’s aims, we might read Cameron’s remarks as presenting a justification for centring evaluation upon moments from films as a means of measuring the work in exacting terms rather than giving only an ‘impression’ of its merits. The relating of this position to the film spectator is instructive. Cameron outlines Movie’s attempt at the time to return criticism of films to the immediacy inherent in the experience of watching: acknowledging the moment-by-moment process that forms patterns, structures and meanings in our minds. Thus, by staying with moments from films and discussing them in detail, the interpretative critic returns to the process by which we initially form an understanding of a film’s significance and meaning: moment by moment.

Following on from these suggestions, it is also the case that a detailed critical concentration upon a moment can reveal the level of complexity at which a film is shaping its themes, patterns and dramatic relationships. We might recognise this strategy in V. F. Perkins’s account of Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho (1960) from his 1972 book Film as Film. Perkins’s understanding of the film is dependent upon his judgment of Hitchcock as a great artist. Although there had been a number of attempts to ‘take Hitchcock seriously’ (the most sustained being Robin Wood’s 1965 book on the director), at the time of Film as Film’s publication, the case for Hitchcock’s greatness still had to be made with a degree of forcefulness and, certainly, with careful precision. Perkins’s articulation of Hitchcock’s achievement centres upon the director’s ability to fluently, and seamlessly, establish profound stylistic resonances between moments within Psycho and, in doing so, create especially rich layers of meaning and significance. This understanding of the director’s technique is a hallmark of what Perkins terms the ‘synthetic’ in movies. He explains (in a section of the book contesting the presiding assumptions of montage theory) that:

Basic to the synthetic approach to movies which I believe most productive is the claim that significance, emotional or intellectual, arises rather from the creation of significant relationships than from the presentation of things significant in themselves ... the more dense the network of meanings contained within each moment of film, the more richly these moments will combine and interact.

In the case of Psycho, Perkins takes as his central focus the scene of Marion Crane’s (Janet Leigh) murder in the Bates’ Motel room shower, offering an especially close appreciation of the success of Hitchcock’s technique. But he then expands this precise critical description by relating the scene’s crucial actions to moments found elsewhere in the film. The knife is shown to relate to the beaks of the stuffed birds in Norman Bates’s (Anthony Perkins) office, its relentless downward motion echoing the sweep of Marion’s windscreen wipers from an earlier scene. The rush of water in the shower – a notionally purifying element that becomes ‘the means by which her life is “drained away”’ – is prefigured in the sudden, persistent rain that falls across Marion’s windscreen in that earlier scene, the hiss of liquid meeting surface pre-echoing the noise of the water in the shower. The shot of Marion’s still, dead eye at the shower scene’s conclusion is related to Norman’s numb stare as his personality is finally consumed by a fantasy of his dead mother. And the motif of descent, inherent in features such as the water falling, the knife plunging, Marion’s blood draining and her finally falling to the ground, dead, is shown to encapsulate the film’s overarching descent into
‘an abyss of darkness, madness, futility and despair’, only to be reversed when Marion’s car is hauled up and out of the swamp in the film’s final image.

The depth and dexterity of Perkins’s account cannot adequately be conveyed in such a brief description of the synthetic relationships he observes and articulates. However, it should go some way to conveying the extent to which his understanding of the film’s complexity and richness is founded upon the matrix of significant relationships found within and across moments from Hitchcock’s masterpiece. That such resonances between moments should occur without heavy assertion or an emphasis that would drag the film out of shape is an indication of the director’s skill. As John Gibbs explains:

> It is a measure of the greatness of Psycho, and of Hitchcock at his finest, that the achievement of precise and densely interrelated imagery should seem to involve so little effort. Revealing moments accumulate without subjecting the drama to any apparent strain. It is only by thinking oneself into Hitchcock’s position after the experience that one realises what intensity of artistic effort must have been required.\(^9\)

This final point is illuminating and leads us into a different area of interest regarding the study of moments in cinema. If Cameron earlier suggested that concentrating on small sections of a film can, in certain respects, help to bring the critic closer to the audience’s experience, then it is also true that such an approach goes some way to aligning critical appreciation with the film-maker’s experience of their craft. The director is charged with the task of composing an entire work from a whole array of fragmented moments that have been recorded, most often out of order, during the filming period. As with the case of Hitchcock, we can see how an accomplished director retains a firm sense of the film’s overall structure and coherence. However, it remains the case that the film-maker is concerned with one sequence at a time, often one small moment at a time, as they progress through the making of a complete picture in pre-production, production and post-production. As John Gibbs explains:

> Making a film involves a myriad of choices. Every frame, every cut, every element of performance and every note on the soundtrack results from pursuing one option and refusing many others. When investigating a film, a valuable approach is to identify a decision, or a group of decisions, and ask ‘What is gained by doing it this way?’ Of all the thousands of ways of opening the film, say, what are the consequences of the particular approach employed? To think in such terms is to consider the crux of the artistic process: the relationship between decisions taken and a work’s meaning.\(^10\)

By exploring in detail the effects of those decisions taken – focusing on a small sequence or moment from a film for example – the critic moves closer to appreciating the level of detail at which the film-maker operates, as illustrated in Gibbs’s account. This kind of careful attention rewards the director’s equal show of care and attention, and a concentration upon ‘technical trouvailles’, to use Cameron’s earlier term, goes some way to matching the film-maker’s own handling of the technical requirements of their art. According to these terms, film criticism founded upon the appraisal of moments is fundamentally suited to an art form itself composed and constructed from moments.

Just as the interpretative critic might focus upon a specific moment, sequence or scene to convey in precise terms a film’s achievement, so it could follow that moments could be selected from a film regarded as poor for the opposite intention: to illustrate in detail the extent to which its poorness operates. This is an endeavour that, for understandable reasons, has not been taken up by any of the contributors to this collection, but an interesting – and possibly illuminating – counter to the somewhat celebratory tone of the entries would be to subject a film regarded as ‘bad’ to the same level of rigour and scrutiny afforded in these pages. Such a contribution would perhaps need to engage with debates regarding the politics of taste and value (issues touched upon in the ‘theory’ section to this book), but it is nevertheless the case that a moment can serve to emphasise a film’s shortcomings or at least undermine its aims and ambitions. Returning to Perkins’s work, we can see an example of this latter point in his account of John Huston’s Moulin Rouge (1952):

In Moulin Rouge John Huston established (and exploited with, for the most part, enthralling results) a system of colour based on the palettes of the Impressionists and therefore owing nothing to naturalism. Yet he had not created a world whose reality could tolerate a room that changed colour in sympathy with its occupant’s moods. When the director characterised his hero’s jealousy by flooding the set with, in the film’s own terms, inexplicable green light, he broke down the essential structure of his picture’s relationships and thus destroyed the world within which his hero existed. A minor, momentary relationship between the hero’s temperament and a literary convention of colour (‘green with envy’) was surely not worth achieving – or, more strictly speaking, capable of being achieved – at the sacrifice of the fundamental pattern.\(^11\)

The issues Perkins raises here are part of a much wider argument within Film as Film that is built upon the requirement for films to maintain their inner consistency and credibility at a fundamental level. In this instance, however, he uses this framework to evaluate Huston’s skill in handling the elements assembled to create significance.
and meaning within his film. Even if we decide that such an aberration isn’t substantial enough for us to reject entirely the director’s work or, indeed, label the film an outright failure, Perkins’s attention to the sequence described illustrates the pressure faced by the film-maker in organising every moment of their film in order to achieve the expressive significance they strive for but not at the expense of the style, tone and coherence they have equally sought to establish within the work as a whole. The momentary loss of control and discipline that Perkins identifies in Moulin Rouge threatens to unbalance the picture, compromising the extent to which we can talk about the film’s effectiveness and Huston’s accomplishment as a director. Every moment risks failure and, for a critic whose interest lies in focusing upon such moments in detail, an awareness of that danger becomes acute.

A short introduction to the relationship between criticism and film moments can never hope to be comprehensive and, by concentrating on a few examples, any number of omissions from the history of film criticism present themselves. Nonetheless, we can begin to appreciate, in these few short examples, the ways in which an understanding of film can be profoundly shaped by an understanding of the moment and, furthermore, the extent to which a critic may use their understanding of film as a moment-by-moment medium to structure their understanding of the ways that film can challenge, inspire and move us to thought. The essays in this book demonstrate this very clearly.

While the equivalent introductions to theory and history will be structured around the chapters contained in each part, this discussion has contrastingly elected to rely exclusively upon works not included in this collection in order to pursue the relationship between criticism and the moment. It is intended that this approach should present a strong foundation on which the following chapters are able to build. Finally, it is significant that, in outlining critical approaches to moments in film, this introduction has repeatedly returned to the work of V. F. Perkins. The bias is not without purpose. If film criticism is based upon fundamental claims for value and excellence, so it should follow that criteria of value and excellence should be placed upon works of film criticism. The work of V. F. Perkins is the best place to start for students, scholars and teachers wishing to know more about how to think about films closely and critically. It follows, therefore, that this meticulous body of work should provide a critical foundation for a collection claiming an interest in film moments.

NOTES
7. Ibid., p. 112.
8. Ibid., p. 111.
9. Ibid., p. 113.
11. Perkins, Film as Film, pp. 122–3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Movies are made up of moments, which both accumulate to an end and, in a sense, scatter across our memories. If we think of a movie as something which moves continuously, following the actions of characters and the trajectory of a story, then moments might seem to mark the points along the way. But if we dwell on the sense of a moment in its singularity, it seems less to evoke the momentum of a plot than something that falls outside the story and its pace.

A movie moment is generally a moment recalled, and seems to invoke the process of remembering a film as much as following it. In other words, we remember a story in its process of development and resolution, but a moment, although it remains embedded in a story and may well even supply a pivotal moment in the drama, also seems to stand out. Perhaps the tableau, the nineteenth-century stage practice which survives in a few of the earliest films (and is reflected, I think, in much of cinema), provides an emblem for such moments. In the stage tableau (or ‘picture’, as it was also called), when the action has reached a significant point, it freezes for a moment and the actors hold their positions to form a picture. Paradoxically, the device conveys the intensity of an action by stilling it, as if lifting it out of time. Roland Barthes has related the tableau to fetishism, cutting out a moment or element from a continuity and investing it with deep, erotic, emotional or even magical significance.1 Thus a collection of moments of cinema would be perhaps the secret museum of the film fetishist.

Initially, I thought about writing about one of the most profound moments in American cinema, the moment towards the end of John Ford’s The Searchers (1956) when Ethan (John Wayne) lifts up Debbie (Natalie Wood) and recalls her as a little child (rather than the victim of his racist fantasy), a moment which marks Ethan’s pivotal conversion. But I decided instead to deal with images more lifted out from the narrative, more archetypal and even confessional, among the most obscene and most innocent film moments I have seen. The images come from one of the least typical films ever made in Hollywood, which nonetheless has become a film constantly referred to by contemporary directors and frequently revived, despite its initial financial failure: Charles Laughton’s The Night of the Hunter from 1955, starring Robert Mitchum and Lillian Gish.

Laughton’s film juxtaposes extreme differences in visual and acting styles: from tense suspense to outright farce, from location shooting to the most stylised sets ever seen in a mainstream film that is not a fantasy. Its sources are varied. The sharp highlights and shadows of cinematographer Stanley Cortez’s lighting recall film noir and even German Expressionism; Laughton and scriptwriter James Agee intended Gish and the film’s metaphorical editing to evoke the silent films of D. W. Griffith; and the abrupt breaking of realist conventions in favour of an overt theatricality certainly reflects the time Laughton spent with Bertolt Brecht translating and starring in a production of Galileo in Hollywood in 1947 (before the House Un-American Activities Committee drove Brecht out of the country).

In spite of its recurrent puncturing of illusion, The Night of the Hunter remains a terrifying film in which the Biblical (and peculiarly American) fantasy of children threatened by a vengeful father figure (recalling Nick Ray’s Bigger than Life (1956) or Griffith’s Broken Blossoms (1919) – or even The Searchers) is allowed to rise from our collective nightmares. However, the moment I want to dwell on not only contrasts with the film’s suspenseful action, but pivots into another realm entirely.

In a terrifying sequence, Reverend Powell (Mitchum) chases the children John (Billy Chapin) and Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce) from the cellar where they have been hiding out into a dark Expressionist night. When John finds the adult world can offer him no aid, he turns and addresses the camera, more or less directly, saying, ‘There’s still the river.’ Pursued by their vengeful stepfather through the riverside underbrush and mud, the children push off in a rowboat, as the film executes an amazing stylistic shift
from dramatic pursuit to a dreamlike deliverance. Powell realises that the children's boat has been picked up by the current and moved just beyond his reach; he gives an almost comical moan of frustration, which the soundtrack picks up and echoes eerily. The next shot shows the boat from a high angle, emphasising the distance between the children and danger. John puts down the oar and settles as if to sleep and the tempo of the film transforms radically (the lassitude of John's gestures almost look like slow motion). As the boat seems cradled in the slow maternal pace of the river and moves through ever-more artificial and theatrical sets, Pearl begins to sing a haunting lullaby, and John sleeps. The boat slips through a series of highly stylised tableaux, encasing the voyage in images of nature (spiders' webs, bullfrogs, cat's tail reeds, and, later, a huge turtle, a pair of bunnies, an owl and a herd of sheep). Although these images have an uncanny quality, the overwhelming calm of the escape and the song marks them as protective totems rather than anything threatening.

The children's trip downriver apparently takes some days. After John sees sheep grazing, he declares to Pearl, 'We're going to spend the night on land.' As the boat edges into shore, a highly artificial set of farmhouse and barn appears against a diorama of fading sky. Another lullaby comes on the soundtrack, this time sung by a woman's voice, as John and Pearl climb from their boat. The farmhouse they approach seems little more than a backlit silhouette, a rooftop with chimneys and porch attached and a bright square of light indicating a window with the shade drawn. The camera cuts closer as John and Pearl stand before this light-filled aperture and listen to the motherly voice. A semicircular shadow fills the lower part of the window, while in the upper part the shadow of a bird in a cage projects onto the shade. The camera cuts even closer, showing the shadow bird hopping in her shadow cage as the voice sings, 'Birds will sing in yonder willow, hush, my little ones, hush.' In a reverse angle, Pearl asks John if they are going home. He shushes her and takes her hand, leading her to the barn.

Inside the barn, the lullaby continues at the same volume, making its diegetic or non-diegetic status ambiguous. In the earlier shots it seemed to be the voice of an unseen mother (the source of the circular shadow, perhaps) singing to her unseen baby, sheltered inside the home, in contrast to the dirty, tired and hungry children huddled outside the window. But heard over their entrance to the barn, the lullaby seems intended for them (can one steal a lullaby?). The framing of the dairy cows in the interior of the barn brings the theme of the protecting animals to a climax. The low-placed camera shoots from just above floor level, framing the children through the cows' legs. But unlike the earlier totem animals, only the lower parts of the cows are visible; framing and lighting juxtapose the children with the cows' hanging udders. The camera tracks in this low position (something only Ozu or Shimizu might do) past a succession of cow udders as the children move to the ladder to the hayloft. The tracking shot comes to rest as the children begin to climb up, and a drop of white milk falls from the udder. The lullaby intones: 'Rest, dearest one, rest, here on my breast.'

Maya Deren, the great avant-garde film-maker, presented a theory of poetry and film a couple of years before Laughton made The Night of the Hunter. She outlined different ways of organising a film, one in terms of drama and plot, which she called 'horizontal', and another, associated with poetry, which she called 'vertical'. Although such a dichotomy could be reductive, I believe it clarifies the impact of moments such as this one. Deren suggests that certain films, such as her own Meshes of the Afternoon (1943), are primarily vertical, presenting images that explore the feeling of a moment rather than advancing action. However, there are also films that, like a Shakespeare play, move between modes and intersperse action and dialogue with poetic soliloquies. Clearly the sequence I am describing of John and Pearl going ashore to spend the night on land marks a sort of pause in the narrative of their escape and pursuit. Much of the trip down
the river has a dreamlike, highly metaphorical quality, with the magnified animals and stylised river sets evoking childhood fantasy. This is not to claim that the narrative in which they are embedded carries no weight in these scenes. But the quality of the images is allowed to distract us from the suspense to create an alternative space of dreams and protection.

Laughton/Agee/Cortez create images that display the concrete materialism and the abstraction possible in the cinematic image. These overt, highly symbolic images embed the Oedipally driven narrative of the murderous father and John's ascension to being 'man of the household' into a more ancient infantile fantasy space composed of the river's flow, the lullaby's harmony, the totem animals and the nourishing breast. The shadow play which marks the mother's presence/absence nearly presents an image of nothing, at least nothing we can grasp. An embodied nursing mother might carry all the problems of literalism that Sergei Eisenstein objected to in the naked woman at the end of Dovzhenko's Earth/Zemlya (1930). Laughton not only keeps the woman off screen, he embodies her only in her voice, creating an expansive maternal space that has nothing to do with naturalism. This shadow image enacts a drama of confinement: the window frames the screen as the cage contains the bird, and the shade itself marks the barrier between the inside as home and the outside as the place of cold and hunger. From this abstraction of two dimensions, the film moves to overt embodiment, as the nourishment that the voice promises the dearest one resting at her breast becomes almost obscenely (and yet, as I have said, innocently) visible in the dripping udder. Nature protects her children, and the image fulfils the fantasy.

And, as poignant as these images and sounds are, we are not allowed simply to lull in them. The reappearance of Preacher Powell as a distant silhouette framed in the barn window and singing a very different song offers the nightmare inversion of John and Pearl's private movie of love and protection projected on the window shade. This harbinger of murderous pursuit proves the impossibility of their idyll. If the animals seem like protective totems, they also have another potential. The spider's web evokes the stepfather's traps that they have just escaped. Nature is not shown to be entirely benevolent and the animal imagery introduced in this sequence will also be completed by the shot of the owl that seizes the rabbit later (illustrating Miss Cooper's (Lillian Gish) comment, 'It's a hard world for little things'). The fox in a tree that watches the next stage of their trip downriver threatens, rather than guards, their progress. And even this secure and gentle scene on the window shade is imaged not simply as a haven, but as exclusion. The baby within has a mother and protection; John and Pearl receive a hayloft and no real food; all the window view offers is shadow, not substance. Shadows are ambivalent in this film: Powell initially appeared to John as a shadow on his bedroom wall and is seen recurrently as a silhouette. The film evokes fantasies of childhood comfort against a very real political awareness of the realities of the Great Depression, when children run the roads without parents or protection.

Thinking of films in terms of moments, rather than a continuity composed of action, delays and resolution, highlights the transitions in mode and tone that occur even within a short sequence of shots. Laughton interbraids suspense and idyll and moves from shadow to overt embodiment, guiding us through a succession of contrasting moments and images, rather than simply careening towards a story's end.

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Eisenstein, Sergei, 'Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today', in Eisenstein, Film Form, pp. 241–2.
Between Melodrama and Realism: Under the Skin of the City (2001)

LAURA MULVEY

The moment that I have chosen to discuss takes place in a film that brings together two cinematic stylistic traditions, social realism and melodrama. In her film, Under the Skin of the City/Zir-e poost-e shahr (2001), Rakhshan Bani Etemad uses both to tell a story about crises rooted in class and gender inequality in contemporary Iran. This film encapsulates the way that realism and melodrama are, in different ways, stylistically important for dramas of social oppression and injustice. Realism records the state of things, without stylistic intrusion into a representation of the norms of everyday life and its fragile survival strategies. These are conditions that lack buffer zones or safety-valves; misfortune or error can quickly mutate into disaster leaving their victims struggling to comprehend, unable to articulate clearly their suffering or the strain that leaves relationships fissured. It is here that melodrama serves its purpose and the cinema takes on an expressive function that responds to both the intensity of the crisis and its protagonists’ desperation. There is, of course, an implicit chronology in this dual style: in the order of the narrative, the melodrama takes over from realism’s depiction of a day-to-day state of things. Bani Etemad’s perspective is deeply political and it is this that gives the combined use of realism and of melodrama a ‘social’ perspective.

Under the Skin of the City is about a working-class family in Tehran, primarily revolving around the figure of the mother, Tuba (Golab Adineh), and her beloved eldest son, Abbas (Mohammed Reza Forutan). Their intense affection introduces another element intrinsic to the melodrama: a crisis affecting family life, particularly, the mother. Early on, the space of the family home is established: the small house with its courtyard surrounded by high walls evokes the topography of domesticity associated with the genre of melodrama, before the film comes to make use of a more marked melodramatic style. For Tuba, the house stands for her motherhood, her love for her children and their love for each other. The house next door, on the other hand, while identical in layout, is tyrannised by a brutal and conservative eldest son so that the high walls are more resonant of a prison than of maternal comfort. In contrast to the enclosed space of the family home, Abbas moves around the city on his motor scooter, across wide shots of cityscape, motorways and surrounding urban development. For him, this should be a success story, an escape from the constraints imposed by class, lack of education and the destiny that seems to hold the family in poverty and impotence. He sees migration to Japan as the almost magical means to establish control over his own story, to rescue his mother from her debilitating job in a textiles factory, to ensure a university education for his younger brother, Ali (Ebrahin Sheibani), and sister, Mahboubeh (Baran Kosari). And on his successful return, he will marry the young woman he longs for from afar, now way beyond his social reach.

While melodramatic style tends to draw attention to itself, realism is associated rather with transparency. Under the Skin of the City, however, is ‘book-ended’ by two remarkable scenes of film-making, as a documentary crew interview Tuba and her fellow women workers about the coming parliamentary elections. These scenes not only draw attention to the constructed nature of the film-making process as such, but also reveal the lack of communication between the crew and the women. The presence of the cinema as process thus flows over, onto and into the first section of the film and its relatively transparent style. But various events precipitate a crisis that takes the film out of its early equilibrium. In his struggle to raise money for his visa, Abbas sells the family house to a developer. The story collapses around him and with it the fragile security of everyday life that Tuba struggles to maintain. The ‘documentary’ scenes are also a reminder that the family appeared briefly in Bani Etemad’s 1998 film The May Lady/Banoo-ye Ordibehešt. The protagonist, Forough, is a middle-class documentary director who has been commissioned to make a film about motherhood during which she encounters Tuba, one of many working-class mothers whose tragic stories she tries to tell. By this time, Abbas is in jail and it is possible to piece together the terrible aftermath of the 2001
film (making Under the Skin of the City something like a 'prequel'). Increasingly aware of the gap between her filmmaking process and the reality of the women’s lives, Forough finally abandons the commission.

It could be that Bani Etemad turned towards a more melodramatic style in order to attempt to express the gap between the medium and its aspiration to capture reality. As Under the Skin of the City shifts away from transparency, the narrative begins to fragment into emotionally charged tableaux, sounds (repeated and exaggerated) lose their natural place in space and time, and the camera’s angles and framings become tinged with strangeness, a dislocation that reflects the characters’ disorientation and pain. This shift is quite slight rather than heavily marked, so that the film’s use of a more melodramatic style demands attention and interpretation. As dramatic situations arise, as characters are caught in impasses that cannot be transcended, the film summons up formal means of marking emotional crisis and the collapse of everyday normality. In this sense, the film is not following generic rules, but responding visually to the characters’ emotional distress, recognising the gap that Forough had encountered in The May Lady. Furthermore, the emotional crisis is caused by the discordant aspirations of mother and son, one centred on maintaining the family home, the other sacrificing it in the hope of escaping from its class-bound world, one represented visually by the domestic space, the other vested in narrative desire.

Tuba is an ordinary working-class woman, a mother of five children, whose husband cannot work. Her job in the textiles factory is undermining her health and, on all sides, life presents difficulties that she deals with as best she can. However, both Bani Etemad’s direction and Golab Adineh’s performance subtly bring out her resilience, her humanity and an implicit intelligence. The film constantly returns to and represents the physical and ideological oppression of women and their helplessness. The fact that Tuba has no legal rights over her own home is at the political heart of the story, while the crisis is precipitated as the neighbour’s intolerance and brutality drives his young sister to run away from home. Mahboubeh, visiting her friend, now living destitute in a park, is caught up in a police raid and arrested. When Tuba fails to find the deeds needed to get her daughter out of jail, she realises that Abbas has finally sold the house. Her pain and bewilderment overwhelm the film, precipitating the scene that I have chosen to analyse.

The scene consists of a single static shot, but is preceded by a shot of a black screen crossed by diagonal, intermittent, flashes of light. The flat, unreadable space of the screen seems to summon up, in the first instance, the cinema itself and the essential elements of light and dark out of which, potentially, recognisable forms and meanings may emerge. This (very short) initial moment creates a visual disorientation in the spectator that evokes, but is not of course adequate to, the black hole of despair that has overwhelmed Tuba. The main shot then shows the inside of the (by-now-familiar) courtyard at night, taken from a high angle on the outside wall. The flashes of diagonal light also mutate, out of abstraction, into streaks of pouring rain. In the courtyard, in long shot, Tuba is sitting on the ground in front of a small basin in which she is washing clothes with obsessive intensity. Her automatic actions are precisely in keeping with her lifetime of caring for her family, in which hard labour is inextricably bound with deep affection. This confusion is, of course, central to the mythologies of motherhood and, in these extreme circumstances, Tuba resorts to a performance that poignantly reflects those underlying contradictions. Washing clothes literally gives her an occupation in a moment of crisis, but in the pouring rain and darkness, her habitual actions are obviously rendered grotesque and absurd. Overwhelmingly conscious of her inability to ‘do anything’, she does ‘something’ that is symptomatic of the unconscious. As the camera maintains a distance from the scene of Tuba’s clothes-washing, it draws into the shot all the constituent elements of the mise en scène: the space of the courtyard, the darkness and the rain. It also shows, without any sentimentality, Tuba’s crippled husband who briefly remonstrates with her (‘This is no time for doing the laundry’) and wraps his jacket around her shoulders before slowly and painfully retreating back into the house. His gesture is personal, affectionate and in character, but marks, at this

![Image](image-url)
Finally, to my mind, that single shot of the courtyard, its melodramatic mise en scène and the intensity invested in Tuba’s action within it, ultimately leads beyond the drama of Under the Skin of the City to the difficulty of representing the problems of motherhood. By and large, the mother is easily transformed into over-visible cliché or disappears into a miasma of ideological or psychic confusion. Rakhshan Bani Etemad, as a woman director, has confronted these contradictions: in Under the Skin of the City she refuses to idealise her main protagonist or extract her from the everyday into the heroic. In this film, it becomes possible to understand the way a woman director can register the contradiction between the image and the reality of motherhood. At the very end, the film suddenly mutates and something beyond either melodrama or social realism takes over the screen. The film’s final scene returns to the documentary film crew recording ordinary people’s responses to the coming election. As Tuba makes an impassioned statement to camera, the technicians ask her to repeat what she has just said on the grounds that there is a technical fault. She looks at the (diegetic) camera and says: ‘Why can’t you film what’s in my heart?’ Then, looking straight past the camera, she addresses the audience, saying, ‘Who sees these films anyway?’ Tuba’s statement directly challenges the adequacy of realistic representation; that is, her heart can’t be shown and the camera crew can’t hear her words. However, the courtyard scene (analysed above) not only poignantly represents the suffering and contradictions of an individual, but materialises, on film and with film, a complex interweaving of signification, reaching into the unconscious and out into the intractable reality of the everyday.
Internalising the Musical: The Band Wagon (1953)

ANDREW KLEVAN

In his collection of essays examining the intersection of philosophy and criticism, Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow, Stanley Cavell analyses the opening musical number of The Band Wagon (Minnelli, 1953), entitled 'By Myself'. Tony Hunter, played by Fred Astaire, is a song-and-dance man whose star has faded in Hollywood, and who is returning apprehensively to New York to make a comeback on Broadway. The short number consists of him walking down a train platform and into the main concourse of the station. According to Cavell, this is as 'uneventful as a photographed song can be' and he finds it therefore to have significance that may be 'missable'.1 He writes that the dramatisation of the sequence and the form of the song establish a sense of 'emotional hovering, not so much a feeling of suspense as one of being in suspension'.2 He then discusses the matter of Astaire walking:

Recall to begin with its jauntiness, the slight but distinct exaggeration of his body swinging from side to side as he paces along the platform. Narratively, he is hoping to cheer himself, letting his body, as William James once suggested, tell him what his emotion is … it is the walk of a man who is known to move into dance exactly like no other man. It is a walk from which, at any step, this man may break into dance … . Now if his walking does turn into dancing, then isn’t what we see of his delivery revealed to have been already dancing, a sort of limiting case, or proto-state, of dancing?3

Later in the The Band Wagon, Tony and Gabrielle Gerard, played by Cyd Charisse, travel by horse and carriage to a park in the evening to ascertain whether, despite their different professional backgrounds, they are able to dance together, hence whether they are able to make love together. Before they dance there is a prelude. As they enter the frame (our first sight of the park), they are not simply walking but stepping in unison with a slight sway. Their walk is deliberate yet restrained, measured, and their position in the middle ground of the shot – their entry at first masked and then somewhat overshadowed by the carriage driver and the horse’s head drinking from the deep blue-water pool in the foreground – also reduces the appearance of embellishment. Music is playing, but it is soft, leisurely, meandering, not quite properly accompanying them. Their entry to the park is exquisite and poised but it is disguised as merely establishing and preparatory.

Before they dance with each other properly, there is a period of suspension where they appear to be in a slow, hesitant, exploratory dance with the camera. Couple and camera tentatively move towards and away from each other, trying to stay in touch, and this gives the sequence a subliminal harmony, fragile and faint, and contributes to a supernatural undercurrent. As they turn the corner, their steps drop out of time, and the camera drops down too (from a high position up by the park lamp). There appears to be no special place to consummate their partnership as a crowd of dancing couples halts them and they sidle around the periphery; the camera, reflecting their situation, backs off, a retreat that enables the dancing couples to fill the frame and further emphasises their exclusion. They drift lackadaisically among the crowd and seem gently drawn towards the patiently waiting camera. They pass close to the little orchestra, a wistful irony, so near to the music, and yet so far … and yet … as they walk on, leaving the band and the dancing couples behind them, they subtly begin to move in time with each other and the music and the slow, retreating camera. They come round the corner (on a cut), the melody has disappeared, and the soundtrack is tremulous. Has the camera guided them courteously towards a better place? They continue to walk, and it is still pulling back, serenely, but a touch quicker than they, so a space emerges in front of them. Perhaps this clearing for their dance, quiet and empty, was furtively waiting, but it appears to grow at this moment, for this moment, out of an empathetic relationship, an unspoken understanding, between the camera and the performers. Recognising the moment, Gabrielle throws a leaf, lifts her leg and spins.
The deferment of the dance creates an aura of erotic hesitation, partly because the preamble resembles an indeterminate and apprehensive wander by soon-to-be lovers. The sequence is straightforward and misleading: clearly arranged to be a prelude to a dance and subdued enough not to be clearly anything. As well as reflecting the state of the characters’ relationship, it is also a meta-musical moment in that it lays bare the anticipation, and sense of suspension, that is a common feeling while viewing musicals. Just when, exactly, will the talk become song and the walk become dance?

Unlike the ‘Dancing in the Dark’ sequence, ‘By Myself’ does not proceed to unequivocal dancing. Cavell notes that we do not see Astaire’s feet, a point particularly worth noting given how rarely his body is fragmented during his dance sequences: head, torso, arms, legs, feet, environment, partner, décor and objects are shown together within the frame. The disappearance of his feet is further emphasised, according to Cavell, when he drops a cigarette and we do not see his foot snuff it out. When he finally appears in the station we also hear him repeating or continuing the tune he has just sung to himself, not precisely by humming it but with the kind of syllabification, or proto-speech, that musicians sometimes use to remind themselves of the exact materialisation of a passage of sound, but which can occur, as here, as an unguarded expression of a state of consciousness, in its distraction, disorientation, dispossession: Da: da, da da; da, da da.4

Cavell understands Astaire’s song and proto-dance as a ‘psychic hovering, of dissociation from the body, within a state of ordinary invisibility’ (the song is partly stimulated by his feelings of isolation as the press photographers ignore him and instead gravitate towards Ava Gardner, appearing in a cameo).5 The first part of the film, at least, will be about him finding his way back to dancing, finding his feet again. This sense of hovering is present in the prelude to the ‘Dancing in the Dark’ sequence too, where the couple, as they move through the crowd, are invisible, their emotional state unknown (to each other and the crowd). In fact, although Cavell does not mention it, Tony’s ‘da da’ing starts a few moments earlier on the train and is resumed later on the platform, further suggesting something trying to emerge, but then submerged, stuttering, broken, unable to find a clear and continuous articulation, or musical elaboration.

There is another sequence in The Band Wagon, at the after-party, after the failure of the show, which illustrates that a quality of film, perhaps an under-appreciated quality, may be found in moments that are preparatory (or succeeding), passing or apparently unrealised. This might be especially worth pointing out in a genre where the major song-and-dance sequences, extraordinarily striking and declamatory in their skilfulness (and so eagerly awaited), steal the spotlight. Endeavouring to cheer themselves up, Tony and the crew sing a song about beer and someone called Louisa (entitled ‘I Love Louisa’). The song ends exuberantly, with arms aloft and joyous laughter. Then they droop, realising the sad predicament of the failed show. The camera pans over their pensive faces. What do they do now? If the prelude to the ‘Dancing in the Dark’ sequence plays on anticipation regarding when a musical sequence will begin, the explicit loss at the end of this song nods towards feelings of withdrawal and depletion at the end of numbers. Songs crescendo, joyously, and then they stop, jarringly, and suddenly a void, silence (the absent presence of applause), and then the return to mundane ordinary speech.

Indeed, if a musical is to succeed as an achieved film rather than a more or less interesting framework for song-and-dance numbers, it must solve the problem of how to strengthen its non-musical periods (without necessarily contradicting their status as interludes). Quite often second-hand plot mechanisms and generic conventions, for example those from farcical comedy and sentimental romance, anxiously kick in to take up the slack and assert intensity. This only further foregrounds the genre’s structural difficulties regarding balance and integration. As one might expect, the anticlimax after the song about Louisa becomes the spur to ambitions for a reformulated show, quickly injecting momentum into the plot, but more importantly rhythm and choreography permeate the drama and this provides body and shape. Musical forms appear as a trace so the scene avoids becoming merely a watered-down musical number, or an arch mirror of one.

Tony moves through the crew to the phone and they move round to watch him, packing together and settling on and around the bed. Ostensibly, they gather because they are eager to know the purpose of his call and the consequences of it, but they assemble as if they were awaiting a performance from him. This assembled audience is itself a performance (of viewing); they have taken their positions and are in an artful pose (and their casual clothes now appear as colourful costumes). On the phone, Tony tells Jeff (the producer of the show, played by Jack Buchanan) about how the show should go on but it must undergo radical change and free itself of pretension. He stresses the matter in his own particular way and then, having announced that it ‘will be our show’, he really swings it:

We’re going on/
we’re going to keep it on the road/
and we’re going to redo it from top to bottom./
It won’t be a modern version of Faust/
Pilgrim’s Progress/
Or the Book of Job in Swingtime/
It will be our show (pause)
[faster] the show we started out to do/
When he finally asks for a response, a foreign voice answers: 'Hello, ze's nobody here'; and the film now cuts to show Jeff's hotel room with a chambermaid listening on the end of the phone. The gag is easy, but it has the effect of focusing Tony's phone call as a monologue in blank verse, a little routine of its own, a spoken song, and, like so much of Astaire, self-contained and self-possessed – somewhat sealed off. Astaire's talking here is close to singing, but then Astaire's singing is always close to talking. The gag relies on setting up the expectation of Jeff's response, everyone waiting to see if he will accept the new arrangement, but his absence confirms that it is Tony's delivery that matters, not the narrative outcome.

Jeff is in fact in the same room as Tony, sitting secretly in an armchair behind the crowd. He accepts the new plan, but is worried about finances. In response, Tony starts pacing back and forth, closely surrounded by the crew, and, in a series of apparently unconscious movements, his arms and hands jangle and twitch uncontrollably this way and that, up and down around his body, refusing to stay on hips or in pockets. His escaping arms and hands appear like fragments of a dance, secretions, any full manifestation inhibited by the unsure situation and claustrophobic space.

In this transitional scene following the breakdown of the show, and including her break-up, Gabrielle also moves insecurely as if guided by uncertain memories of a dance. Forming a two-shot with her boyfriend, played by James Mitchell, she pushes onto him with both her hands. He is stiff and closed; he does not know how to move with her (ironically, he is her choreographer in the movie, but he turns out, unsurprisingly, to be the wrong type). She falls away from him but carefully, softly sitting down upon the bed (her calm retreat poignantly absorbing the melodrama of the break-up). Her torso is upright, pointing towards him; she looks up to him, remnants of affection (and adulation). She is hoping that he might stay, but she is also tightening, reining herself in, after all she is hoping that he won't. She turns slowly, as if yearning to be part of the group, but he snaps her out of it with 'I don't want you to do it.' A few moments later, she turns again, but towards him as he departs. On both occasions, she moves her arms from her lap to by her side and this enables her upper body securely to rotate, and reach out. It also keeps her steady, holds her to the bed, and expresses her desire to stay put. This is the sketch of a dance, reaching out and holding back, playing with release and restraint, her body opening and closing, but with the music removed, and the gestures minimal, undemonstrative and discrete, and in prosaic register.

The performers infuse their gestures with the spirit of the musical without lapsing into affected or accentuated mannerisms that would upset the ‘realism’ of the dramatic continuity. However, as so often when judging the credibility or integrity of incident or behaviour in artworks, this is not simply a matter of measuring against a fixed body of conventions. The film (including the performers) is partly responsible for establishing the possibilities and parameters of its ‘realism’, and determining whether an aspect will integrate or protrude. Just after Gabrielle gets up from the bed and turns towards the crew (who are eagerly hanging on Tony's every word and laughing) is a moment that straddles the musical and non-musical worlds, spotlighted and discreet. As she gets nearer the group, she turns her body once again to face the door, and then, still facing out, she drops down beside Tony. Looking away from the group nevertheless positions her ideally to (go) back into it.

Her legs, hidden behind the long white dress, need to manoeuvre her carefully into this seating position: she must remain composed, keeping her posture, upper body and head, upright as she slips in, and cause no disturbance. Here, for once, Charisse’s celebrated legs are withheld; they are not part of a spectacle, flaunted and gleaming, or visibly hard at work. We may appreciate her skill in using them free from the satisfactions and distractions of viewing them.
And as she is turning and dropping, Tony places his arm around her shoulder, increasing the sense of her nestling in, and presses her gently into position (as if she was the last to enter into a group photo, her place ready and waiting for her). There is an automatic quality to Tony’s gesture that suggests inevitability and obliviousness to the emotional upheaval that has just taken place. Indeed, this rather eventful moment, one that cements Gabrielle’s new relationship with Tony as the old boyfriend leaves, is free of dramatic elaboration. Extended attention would be unworthy and disingenuous, and her succinct and graceful movement allows the film to hurry through the predictable narrative and generic adjustment while avoiding the callousness that is a danger of necessary elision. It faithfully condenses different emotions so that the abbreviation is tactful and reflective. Her body neatly completes the composition, expressing willing acceptance and inescapable absorption, but the outward force of her gaze strains its harmony. While Tony talks about the future, giving his roll-call of cities to perform in, she settles back into this vision and looks out towards her past. Feelings of fitting in are in balance with those of dropping down (and the quiet deflation of her dress).

The shot remains for some time after she comes to rest, like the final pose of a dance routine, the ensemble all gathered and still in tableau, waiting for applause, the incongruous silence interrupting continuity. It ruefully mocks that customary plea by gesturing towards the lack of (live) acknowledgment that is the condition of the filmed musical (and poignantly frames Gabrielle’s insufficiently recognised moment). Charisse’s movement encapsulates the possibilities for containment: the internalisation of musical forms in a genre more commonly celebrated for its outward, exuberant show of song and dance.

NOTES
2. Ibid., p. 22.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 25.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Pasolini’s *Theorem* (*Teorema*), made in 1968, is notorious for many things, but not often noted for its costumes, despite the fact that it exhibits many of the traits of the ‘clothes movie’. The 1960s Italian couturier Roberto Capucci (in what proved to be his one foray into cinema) provided the clothes for Silvana Mangano as the mother Lucia, while Marcella de Marchis – Roberto Rossellini’s former wife, confidante and collaborator – designed the remainder of the costumes for Terence Stamp (as the stranger) and others. *Theorem* centres on the arrival of an unnamed visitor to a wealthy house in Milan’s affluent San Siro suburb who, when he arrives, proceeds to have sex with all five members of the household in turn (Emilia the maid [Laura Betti], Pietro the son [Andrés José Cruz Soublette], Lucia the mother, Paolo the father [Massimo Girotti] and Odetta the daughter [Anna Wiazemsky]). The effect of these sexual encounters on the family members is traumatic: Emilia, for example, returns home, refuses to eat and is found levitating by her neighbours, Odetta becomes catatonic, while Lucia, hitherto an impeccable bourgeois housewife, goes cruising. The controversy surrounding *Theorem* is the result of the similarities between the Visitor and Christ: that the name of the post-man who brings news of his arrival and departure is Angelino (Ninetto Davoli), that the effects of the sexual encounters themselves are extraordinary and catastrophic, and that inserted into most of the seduction scenes are sporadic images of the bleak slopes of Mount Etna, which for most critics recall the Biblical wilderness into which prophets and others went for spiritual contemplation.

Within this elliptical framework, clothes feature prominently, used at various times to convey and not merely reflect meaning. In a film so lacking in the conventional narrative traits of character development, dialogue, logical exposition and cogent plot development, additional signifiers such as costume are granted elevated importance. For example, being a study of sexual and spiritual awakening, undressing features prominently in *Theorem*: the Visitor and Pietro, compelled to share a bedroom when other visitors descend, undress awkwardly in front of each other; in the scene I am about to discuss, Lucia undresses while waiting for the Visitor to return from running with the dog; and, most notably, right at the end, the father Paolo divests himself of all his clothes (his conventionality, his heterosexuality, perhaps even his ‘mortal coil’) on the concourse at Milan station before running naked and screaming into the wilderness, an image with which *Theorem* concludes. Lacking certain conventionalised modes of exposition, piecing together meaning in *Theorem* is much like compiling a patchwork – moments and gestures in isolation appear opaque and even irrelevant, but make sense viewed in tandem with each other. The undressing scenes are three such moments. The first two function relatively straightforwardly as preludes to sex with the Visitor, and although the third does not literally lead to a sexual encounter, if the Visitor is likened to Christ, then the naked and screaming Paolo’s flight into the wilderness – in conjunction with the cumulative connotations of undressing – could be read as an empathetic flight towards both spiritual and sexual enlightenment. There are several such clothes moments to choose from, but I will, in a moment, focus on one scene in which the specific conjunction between desire, sexuality and Terence Stamp’s quintessential cool 60s look is made central. Coolness is indeed key to *Theorem* because, despite the prominence afforded sex and desire in its plot, the sexual act remains repressed, mimicked by the repressive implications of many of the costumes. Stamp dons the 1960s capsule wardrobe for the casually dressed young man of slacks, shirts and pullovers in subtle and unremarkable shades. His unremarkable appearance, however, is ironic considering the remarkable effect he has on the household; it also complements his character: he is promiscuous and bisexual but also emotionally detached. As if reconfirming this, *Theorem* dwells on the build-up to and the traumatic effects of desire rather than on the sexual encounters themselves. And within the film’s mannered, precise but ultimately cold style, the coolly unsensuous costumes start not to reflect the characters but rather to create barriers to them.
My moment is an extended prelude to the Visitor’s seduction of Lucia, when Lucia comes across a set of clothes the Visitor, out running with a dog, has left on one of the sofas in a summer/holiday house in the Po Valley. The sequence (about eighteen minutes into Theorem) opens with a static wide shot of the exterior of a luxurious, contemporary house whose modernity is at odds with the unkempt, woody landscape in which it sits. A sombre, regular church bell tolls and continues to do so for over a minute. The Visitor’s presence in the house is signalled by a close-up of his copy of Rimbaud’s Complete Works left on the floor. In his first full scene, immediately following the party to welcome him, the Visitor sits in the garden of the Milan villa reading first a law textbook and then this same edition of Rimbaud’s Complete Works. The casual but repeated interest in Arthur Rimbaud, the restless, peripatetic lover of fellow poet Paul Verlaine, suggests the Visitor’s own promiscuous bisexuality. Mangano picks up the book and places it on a footstool before looking across the room towards a sofa, on which lie the Visitor’s casually discarded clothes. The parallels between the dynamics of this earlier encounter with Rimbaud and the scene in the Po Valley are significant, for on both occasions the Visitor’s inferred interest in homosexuality is witnessed by a woman (in the first instance Emilia, in the second Lucia) who then finds herself irresistibly and obsessively drawn to him. The sequence in the garden culminates in the Visitor’s casual but neat little pocket, the freshly ironed crease inching down the back of Stamp’s thigh all serve to kill the eroticism of the moment, the final deadly flourish being the post-dubbed sound of mixed fibres brushing up against each other. This earlier indication of the complex erotic importance of Terence Stamp’s trousers is the veiled force that informs the later scene.

What sets the Visitor’s clothes apart in the Po Valley scene is that they do not adorn a body; they have become objects rather than adornments, spectacular in their own right, but also sculptural and inert. Roland Barthes articulated the eeriness of clothes detached from the body thus: ‘It is not possible to conceive a garment without the body ... the empty garment, without head or limbs (a schizophrenic fantasy), is death, not the body’s neutral absence, but the body decapitated, mutilated.’

The first item of clothing is a pristine white shirt which, lit from the left, acquires the quality of coldly sensuous alabaster (an apt substitute for the Visitor) as its folds, collar and buttonholes are picked out and accentuated by the directional light, their sculptural whiteness luminously pale against the muddy green of the sofa behind. The second is a salmon-pink pair of trousers, the third a flecked beige light wool slacks and the sexual promise they cocoon in its folds and the last a pair of decidedly grubby briefs. Particular emphasis is placed on Terence Stamp’s vacated trousers, garments which feature prominently in several of Theorem’s seductions. The opening shot of the garden scene when we first see the Visitor reading Rimbaud (and the first time we see the Visitor in close-up) is a low-angle view of Stamp’s crotch as he sits back in a low chair. Stamp is fond of recalling how Pasolini’s minimal direction included the command (conveyed in English through Pasolini’s close friend Laura Betti who played Emilia) to keep his legs open and get an erection. Although the actor failed to oblige, the eroticism generated by the juxtaposition here between the disconcertingly bland beige light wool slacks and the sexual promise they cocoon is an adequately tumescent substitute. The irony is that all this promise of arousal is never matched by the perfunctory and cold sexual gestures that ensue. The garden sequence, for example, concludes with a close-up of Stamp’s buttocks, sheathed in the unerotic banality of his trousers, shifting mechanically around on top of Emilia, a familiar motion heralding an act of perfunctory lovemaking. The slight sheen of the trouser fabric, their taut 60s cut revealing the lines of underwear lurking beneath, their neat little pocket, the freshly ironed crease inching down the back of Stamp’s thigh all serve to kill the eroticism of the moment, the final deadly flourish being the post-dubbed sound of mixed fibres brushing up against each other. This earlier indication of the complex erotic importance of Terence Stamp’s trousers is the veiled force that informs the later scene.

The men’s clothes on the sofa are laid out with not entirely dishevelled abandon and Lucia feels compelled to go over to them, just as Emilia felt compelled in the garden scene to rush over and brush away the cigarette ash that moves towards the clothes, a rougher handheld camera style takes over from the slow low-angle pan that had followed her across the room. The agitation implied by the rougher visual style conveys – within a film so pointedly reluctant to use dialogue for this purpose – the urgency and encroaching passion of Lucia’s thoughts as she surveys the shirt, trousers, jumper and underpants strewn before her.
Barthes’s nihilistic notion of unattached clothes as death is just one theorisation of the detachment between clothes and the body. There is also the idea, grounded in Freud, of unattached clothes as fetishistic sexual substitutes for the veiled genitalia or sexual object. Both of these arguments find their way into the moment when Lucia contemplates the Visitor’s abandoned clothes, which come to function as eroticised substitutes for the absent body but also as signals that such a dislocation between body and clothes will prove traumatic.

Stamp never regards his seduced victims warmly; instead, he looks through or away from them even as he gets close, and the actor has referred in interview to his mannered performance style emanating from his intention to remain ‘not in the moment’ but divorced from it. This detachment is also signalled through the distancing of costume and body. In the most often cited scene in Paul Schrader’s 1980 film American Gigolo (in which, like Theorem, the prioritisation of the male protagonist’s costume signals both his desirability and his ability to remain emotionally detached from those whom he attracts), Richard Gere, the eponymous gigolo, chooses his clothes for a date by laying a selection of Giorgio Armani ensembles on his bed. The gesture of looking at the clothes, scrutinising them, indicates that he is about to assume a role. These are costumes, not extensions of the self. Likewise, in Theorem, the Visitor’s clothes, so frequently set apart from his body, are not part of him. The clothes wear the man.

This disassociation is brought sharply into focus by what we see of the Visitor before he returns to the villa. In one of Theorem’s rare energetic and spontaneous asides, we understand that Stamp has abandoned his clothes to frolic in the woods with a dog, dressed only in trainers and a pair of grubby grey shorts. This juxtaposition is heavily ironic. First, there is the fact that this dog, the one partner with whom he does not have sex, is also the one partner with whom the Visitor appears to have fun; second, his carefree running reminds us that the prim but provocative clothes lying on the sofa should not be mistaken for him but are rather impoverished, empty and even fraudulent fetish objects.

Lucia’s contemplation of her guest’s clothes is thereby infused with lack: lack of passion, lack of corporeality, lack of fulfilling consummation. The object of her desire is not merely ‘not in the moment’ but away enjoying himself, his body unshackled from his clothes. This absence is most keenly felt when Lucia alights on his trousers. Beige-salmon in colour, they offer a classic example of late 1960s styling with their flat-fronted fit, visible stitching around the hems and small front pockets. Lucia finds them unzipped at the fly with one side bent back to reveal a distinctly more sensuous blue silk lining, a metonymic representation perhaps of the Visitor’s repressed passion, the vivacity he is capable of expressing when with the dog. The trousers have been (as always) neatly pressed, with a visible pleat down the front of the leg and one would not automatically mistake these slacks for the garment of a sexual predator. The trousers’ shade, though unusual, is anonymous, in keeping as it is with the soft browns and pinks that permeate the scene, from Lucia’s striped dress to the décor. The pink is also an androgynous mix of femininity and homosexuality, in conflict with the aggression of the opened fly. It is also fleshy and so recalls what is absent here but was present the first time we saw the Visitor’s crotch close up: his penis. The pornographic juxtaposition of the heavy, fleshy penis emerging from a three-piece-suit in Robert Mapplethorpe’s photograph of the heavy, fleshy penis emerging from a three-piece-suit in Robert Mapplethorpe’s photograph Man in Polyester Suit (1979) is also missing here, but alluded to via the intercutting of Lucia’s observation of the clothes with the Visitor cavorting in the woods. That the Visitor’s pinkish slacks are the site of trauma comes to the fore specifically as Lucia picks them up. The bell that has been tolling mournfully until this moment finally ceases and on Mangano’s face we see that desire has given way to panic. In this instant Theorem’s tense elusiveness, its intellectualisation of desire, its detachment and its persistent repression of feeling become focused in one moment that conveys to us more or less definitively that the members of this household are not attracted to the Visitor per se but to what their longing for him unleashes in themselves.

The provocatively opened trousers serve paradoxically to figuratively re-emphasise the Visitor’s body, but his actual absence makes it possible for the essentially passive Lucia to access her own hitherto repressed carnality, the expression of which is the moment when she discards her clothes and sits naked on the terrace of the house waiting for the Visitor to return. The erotic potential of clothes to function as substitutes for the body is evident throughout Theorem: eroticism is there even if the erotic object is jogging through the rustic woods. Theorem’s final, triumphant perversity is that, while it remains Pier Paolo Pasolini’s most explicitly homosexual film, it also remains resolutely inexplicit and coldly, intellectually dispassionate. Its costumes are similarly ambivalent: precise and inherently unsensuous, yet overloaded with erotic promise.
NOTES
1. Capucci was an ardent admirer of Mangano, referring to her as a woman ‘of such refinement, beauty and elegance … she wasn’t an ordinary woman, an ordinary actress’ (‘Di una raffinatezza, di una bellezza, di un’eleganza … . Non faceva parte delle donne normali, delle attrici del cinema’). Capucci quoted in <www.modaemodi.org/rivista>.
2. Just prior to undressing, Paolo had made eye contact with a younger man at Milan Station whom he seemed to be going to follow into the gents’ lavatories. Instead, he undresses himself and runs off, arguably preparing himself for the Visitor, in whom are combined the twin attractions of religion and homosexuality.
3. This moment is used on the BFI’s DVD of Theorem (2007) as the backdrop for the menu, so it appears on a continuous loop until you press ‘Play’.
4. In the interview on the DVD of Theorem, Terence Stamp recalls how Betti came up to him just before shooting and said: ‘He just wants you to keep your legs open. Keep your legs open … . He wants you to get erection in this take. Can you get erection? He wants you to have erection …’. Stamp says: ‘So I dreaded Laura Betti coming towards me.’
6. See interview on DVD of Theorem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
British Film Institute (BFI), Theorem, DVD, 2007.
Style and Sincerity in Quentin Tarantino’s

JAMES WALTERS

BORROWING STYLES
In a collection pursuing the relationship between the moment and the wider patterns of a film, how are we to account for Quentin Tarantino’s Kill Bill movies (2003, 2004), which present a succession of sequences whose divergent styles might render them thematically distinct from one another? M. Keith Booker’s description of the films as ‘largely lessons in how to borrow styles gracefully’ offers one potential direction.1 In one sense, Booker provides a judgment of value: his use of the word ‘gracefully’ proposes that there might be ways of borrowing styles that are less than graceful, or even disgraceful. This favourable account of the films is compromised, however, by the words ‘largely lessons’, as Booker here raises the notion that the films are best understood as works that borrow styles gracefully: that this is perhaps their key attribute or attraction. This view of the films has pertinence, to an extent, in that they might well prove in some fashion instructional to film audiences or film-makers on the merits and possibilities available in drawing upon existing movie styles and tropes. Furthermore, it would be difficult to dispute that an immediate pleasure of the Kill Bill films is their aptitude for amalgamating styles of film-making from various periods and national cinemas.

However, one danger of placing the weight of emphasis too heavily on such ‘lessons in borrowing’ is that we risk characterising each movie as only an exercise in pastiche or self-conscious reference and assess their merits primarily against those criteria. Although there is fun in recognising such references, as a way of understanding the films’ shape and significance, this represents a limited enterprise. Booker’s assessment sounds persuasive at a surface level, but his initial emphasis on ‘lessons’ suggests an almost clinical detachment that the films themselves don’t consistently exhibit. His second emphasis on the borrowing of styles courts the misleading notion that the films do not possess a discernible style of their own, and instead comprise a patchwork of other styles adopted, albeit carefully, from elsewhere. In this appraisal of the films, sincerity is a compromised notion, and the implication is that the films are in some way ‘hollow’.

We might address these two points together by suggesting that Tarantino understands and makes use of the ways in which style can bring us close to human beings in cinema, promoting an intimate engagement with the facets of their characters and the facts of the fictional world they inhabit. This position is distinct from an understanding of the films as mainly exercises in stylistic pastiche or parody. Instead, my contention is that the Kill Bill films mark a sincere stylistic investment in their fictional world as a reality, replete with emotionally and intellectually complex characters experiencing that world as a tangible reality. A danger of seeing the films as only exercises or lessons is that we might take characters to be only representations of people manoeuvred from set piece to set piece in order to facilitate new instances of cinematic self-reference. In departing from this position, I focus on a moment that places a weight of emphasis upon characters within their fictional world.

‘REVENGE IS NEVER A STRAIGHT LINE’
It is certainly the case that unique challenges exist in evaluating fully the nature and form of the fictional world in the Kill Bill films. Some of these challenges derive from choices made by Tarantino regarding the ordering and portrayal of the events that take place there. Time and vision are made unstable in the films as events are reordered and a range of audiovisual styles are used, such as ostentatious lighting and editing, split-screen and switches from black and white to colour. These breaks in form and progression are in fact alluded to by a character, the sword-maker Hattori Hanzō (Sonny Chiba), towards the end of Vol. 1 when, in voiceover, he describes the nature of revenge: ‘Revenge is never a straight line. It’s a forest. And like a forest it’s easy to lose your way … to get lost … to forget where you came in.’ By the time this voiceover occurs, we may be sharing at least a sense of this disconcertion as the film’s storyworld has, indeed, come to resemble something
like a dense forest. Tarantino has effectively disrupted the 'linear' progression of the film's events up to that point, a feature that Edward Gallafent analyses fully in his account of the Kill Bill series. Likewise, the director has moved through a range of representational strategies in his account of the fictional world, thus creating further potential rupture.

Hanzō's words take on extra resonance, therefore, as they describe not only his interpretation of the processes of revenge that take place in his fictional world, but also some of the ways in which that fictional world may appear to us in Tarantino's account of it. We are reminded that a series of representational choices have been made by a director willing to adopt attitudes towards and perspectives on events and characters, profoundly affecting the manner in which they are shown to us. So, for example, when he drains the screen of colour, or places events out of sequence, it graphically reinforces our awareness that this world is being displayed for us, by Tarantino, rather than its events simply being relayed to us without choice or prejudice.

Hanzō's words are of further interest, however, in that he establishes a strong relationship between revenge and disorientation. In the film, this relates potently to the character of Beatrix Kiddo (Uma Thurman). As Hanzō delivers his line on revenge, we see Beatrix preparing for her revenge mission on a plane back from visiting him and receiving a sword. She writes and numbers the names of five people whom she intends to kill in acts of revenge, with Bill at number five. In the context of Hanzō's voiceover, we understand her writing to be a strategy for retaining some sense of order amid the passion of the revenge impulse. And yet, as Hanzō's words draw connections between Beatrix's desire for revenge and the films' collage style of representation, we come to appreciate – or at least to speculate – that the films' dramatic order has been shaped to resemble precisely the fragmentation associated with the emotional drive of revenge, as described to us by Hattori Hanzō. In this way, the films' style is aligned with the psychological perspective of its central character, Beatrix, as she carries out her mission of revenge against each member of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad – the five names contained in her list.

Tarantino connects the films' style of representation with Beatrix's impulses, structuring the manner of their progression in harmony with her revenge drive. Tarantino's style therefore brings us close to a character's emotional perspective, to share in her despair, joy and rage through a series of representational choices that might otherwise be seen as an interesting but essentially hollow patchwork of incongruous aesthetic vignettes. The potential coldness of such a strategy is avoided, a fact mirrored in Beatrix's own experience of revenge and its demands. A famous quotation is displayed at the beginning of Vol. 1, which reads: 'Revenge is a dish best served cold'; and this line is defined for us as 'an old Klingon proverb'. The joke reference to the second Star Trek film, The Wrath of Khan (Meyer, 1982), might prompt us to consider further how sincerely we should read this quotation in the context of the acts of revenge performed by Beatrix in the Kill Bill films. Indeed, if we follow this line of enquiry, it becomes striking that revenge for Beatrix is not a cold act, and in fact involves an intense emotional and physical engagement consistently throughout the films. In these films, revenge brings with it an emotional burden brought about by a close and intense engagement between adversaries. Thurman's performance of Beatrix conveys this fact with clarity, throughout the film, she allows a series of tensions and strains to contort her features while in combat. She furthermore punctuates movement with an array of sighs, screams, bellows and cries that contribute to her portrait of a human experiencing immediate and forceful emotions within the act of revenge.

**THE FIVE-POINT PALM EXPLODING-HEART TECHNIQUE**

The close linking of style to Beatrix's emotional perspective continues and culminates with her final act of revenge: the killing of Bill (David Carradine) through her use of the five-point palm exploding-heart technique. Beatrix's reason for revenge is that Bill arranged on the day of her wedding rehearsal to have her bridegroom and everyone in attendance killed, courtesy of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad. Bill himself put the apparently fatal bullet through Beatrix's skull, but she survived. Until the climax of Vol. 2, Beatrix had also understood that her unborn child was also killed that day, an assumption that turns out to be false.

It is evident that the sequence in which Beatrix finally kills Bill involves reference to major existing genres: the music and impossible physical choreography of martial arts cinema as the two engage in brief swordplay while seated at a table, and the music and iconography of the Western as Bill walks to his death. Here, styles are borrowed from two genres simultaneously but it is also the case that this moment between these characters is defined by a contemplative tone, and is especially settled in the context of this highly kinetic film (the moment of seated combat a matter of mere seconds). It is as though the characters are able to exist temporarily apart from the world of violent motion that they have been immersed in up to this point; they are uniquely allowed the time and space to meditate upon events that have passed between them.

Once Beatrix has delivered her decisive strike, the soundtrack shifts to a pared-down, acoustic arrangement and the editing rhythm settles into a steady sequence of reverse close-ups. Within this aesthetic arrangement, Beatrix and Bill's conversation is guided by an impulse for
honest exchange, removed from the self-conscious, smart and witty show of language that has almost defined communication in the films. In this sense, Beatrix's fatal blow returns the effect of the serum dart that Bill shot into her in a preceding scene, injecting fresh honesty into their exchange. They are themselves. Once death is a certainty for Bill, the need for performance and posturing is perhaps ended. The couple look unflinchingly into each other's eyes now, in calm acceptance rather than hostile intimidation. They are wilfully exposed. On his asking why she never told him that Pai Mei (Gordon Liu), their shared martial arts mentor, taught her the five-point exploding-heart technique, Beatrix replies simply, 'I don't know.' While in another context this might be read as self-consciously evasive, in this moment we come to understand it as her admission that her decisions and instincts can be mysterious to her as well: that she can be guided by them almost against her conscious will. Her subsequent description of herself as a 'bad person' is countered by Bill's tenderly worded reassurance: 'You're not a bad person. You're a terrific person. You're my favourite person.' The words bring tears to Beatrix's eyes and she closes them momentarily, moved by his sentiment and sensitivity.

He goes on to make a joke about her being a 'real cunt' once in a while, confirming that humour can also still exist between them, and crucially that they can still share a sense of humour. The choice of the word 'cunt' is striking in that it is still a jarring term (not part of anyone else's vocabulary in either films) and given further impact here as the final word of Bill's sentence. The minor shock of its use recalls something of the violence that has existed between these characters, now diminished and reduced only to a verbal jolt in an otherwise gentle moment of humorous teasing. It is as though that world of violence, revenge and brutality is diminished: its traits can no longer impose themselves on these characters.

Then it is Beatrix's turn for reassurance as Bill wipes the blood from his mouth and face and asks her, 'How do I look?' She pauses, apparently on the verge of breaking down, touches his hand and replies softly, 'You look ready.' This can be read in terms of generic reference, of Bill being ready to enact a climax befitting a Western movie, but it also brings to mind an exchange that might occur in a domestic conversation between partners, lending an air of everyday security to this event that takes the sting out of one person telling another that they are ready to die. The effect is furthered as Bill fastens one button and straightens his jacket before walking purposefully away from Beatrix, his actions resembling the routine of a husband preparing to leave the marital home.

The domesticity inherent in the moment reinforces the familial unity that exists briefly between these characters now, at the end: the extent to which they know and trust one another absolutely for only these few moments before death. A reversal occurs, then, as the quest for revenge ends not in one character finding decisive satisfaction in killing the other, but in them both finding comfort in one another, albeit an impossible mutuality that cannot be sustained. Where we might have anticipated a defining culmination of four years' worth of hate, we instead find that these two killers modestly express their profound affection for one another.

We might conclude that this moment is out of step with the tone and mood of the rest of the Kill Bill series, to the extent that it becomes an unconvincing climax to what has, in any case, been a somewhat unevenly structured narrative. This is not dissimilar to the view adopted by a number of critics, with Philip French, for example, seeing it
as an incongruously sentimental ending to a ‘hollow’ pair of films.\textsuperscript{3} From there it is no leap to start thinking about the films as exercises or lessons in borrowing styles. But, in avoiding that assessment, I want to suggest that the film complements sincerely the emotional perspective of its heroine in this moment, just as much as the earlier more energetically styled sequences in the films corresponded with her frantic search for revenge. As the film apparently suspends the world for this moment of intimacy between the two characters, so an alignment is created with Beatrix’s profound need for pause and reflection. If we take this as a surprising, or a surprisingly sentimental, occurrence, it is also the case that Beatrix herself is caught out by the strong sentimentality she feels towards Bill when the moment of her revenge is exacted. This is certainly the effect Thurman creates in her acting of the scene, as she struggles to reconcile herself with the reticence and reflection inherent in their moment together. Throughout the films, the style of representation has kept pace with its central character’s emotions, creating a fragmented aesthetic that altered with her changes in perspective and intensity. In this climactic moment, then, the film rewards Beatrix’s contrasting desire for quietness, stillness and resignation. Crucially, this shifting of style and tone succeeds in bringing us closer to the fact of this character as a human being within a discernible fictional world. As she sits, Beatrix too reflects upon the conditions of the world she inhabits, the nature of the decisions she has taken within it and her ultimate relationship to the man who has shaped her identity within that world. Here the film reminds us of the reality of its fictional world, and avoids portraying Beatrix as a representation or pastiche of a type borrowed from cinematic codes found elsewhere. She is a woman facing the consequences of a world alone.

The moment might offer a kind of happiness, but we shouldn’t be too quick to assume that the characters have been shuffled awkwardly towards a happy conclusion. Likewise, we might resist suggestions that the individuals have been slotted into scenarios whose chief effect is the replication of certain genres and styles of film-making. In raising the notion that synthesis exists between character and style in the \textit{Kill Bill} films, and that this represents an achievement, I am suggesting that understanding a film’s fiction relies upon understanding the manner in which a fictional world is presented to us. The film-maker stands between their audience and the world they wish to portray, with any number of potentials available to them. Tarantino proves himself to be an agile compiler of genres and styles in his films, composing collage works of shifting tones and moods. His skill in the moment described lies in his ability to suspend those techniques to create a contrasting mood of stillness and calm, complementing fundamentally the emotional perspective of Beatrix Kiddo.

\textbf{NOTES}


\textbf{BIBLIOGRAPHY}


ADRIAN MARTIN

A life is ethical not when it simply submits to moral laws but when it accepts putting itself into play in its gestures, irrevocably and without reserve – even at the risk that its happiness or its disgrace will be decided once and for all.

Giorgio Agamben

Looking back at Tout va bien (1972), the film he co-directed with Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin remarked in 1987: ‘It’s not a great movie, but it does have moves – and you can’t say that about every film.’ A film that makes moves: what could this mean? In my view, the concept does not refer to the literal, physical movements of either the performers or the camera (although it can include these elements). It does not necessarily involve powerfully dramatic (or comic) large-scale alterations in plot. It does not have to entail any grand-slam subversion of social, ideological or cultural conventions. But something, in a filmic move, will indeed have to shift, perhaps gently, but tellingly so.

A cinematic move is something like the category of the gesture in the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. He gives a splendid example from Dostoevsky’s 1869 novel The Idiot, when Nastasya, in the midst of a tense domestic power game, impulsively decides to hurl a bag of 100,000 rubles into the fire. The character, according to Agamben, is not guided by ‘anything like a rational decision or a moral principle’, by anything that is predetermined by will or reflection, but rather appears to be ‘gripped by a delirium’. This moment of decisive but blind action, fantastic and unexpected, henceforth changes everything in the lives of the characters, as well as in Dostoevsky’s narrative itself. We could also think of this gesture as a moment of turbulence, arising mysteriously but with absolute rightness amid the flow of fictional life. Screenwriter-theorist Yvette Bíró uses these terms – a moment prompted by the interplay of complex subterranean forces, and immediately compelling radical change or transformation. Shigehiko Hasumi makes a similar point in relation to the surprisingly crucial role played by seemingly banal, endlessly repeated observations about the sunny weather in Yasujiro Ozu’s films:

Such references are not at all theatrical; they bring about a narrative transformation, play a role similar to a punctuation mark by shifting an episode to the next scene … . We might say that, with these exchanges as opportunities, the film moves.

To make a move: it means (in cinema as in life) to scramble the bases, rearrange the given elements of a scene or situation. For a film, it especially means imaginatively exploiting, from moment to moment, all the resources of surprise – from sly wit to outright shock – on all available levels of cinematic form and content (characterisation, performance, narrative, mise en scène, rhythm, montage, sound, plastic treatment of the image). There are those film-makers who prepare their comparatively few moves very slowly and gradually (Ozu, Erice, Dreyer), and there are those who merrily multiply the surprising, table-turning strategies (Lubitsch, Godard, Boris Barnet). Making a move implies, on its creator’s part, a willingness (so rare in cinema) to consider any fragment as not fixed or given in advance (in the scenario, say, or in the iron-clad logic of the fiction’s world) – but open, at every second, to potential revision, to a redrawing. The challenge for us, as viewers, is to grasp the stirring of moves in the smallest, most material levels of cinema – not simply in the sudden, extravagant gesture of a character or a carefully prepared narrative turning point.

A rich example of micro-moves, one atop the other, is provided by the Portuguese director Pedro Costa in his low-budget, black-and-white, début feature, Blood/O Sangue (1989). This is a highly charged but enigmatic film about family life, and the fraught rite of passage for children once they are freed from the ‘symbolic order’ of their home. The passage on which I will concentrate comprises a mere eight shots, running less than a minute in total. It occurs twenty-one minutes into the film (coinciding with the beginning of chapter 4 on the Second Run DVD edition); the pieces of narrative leading up to it have been deliberately elliptical, wandering and mysterious. The centre of the plot, to this point, would appear to be the difficult relationship between a father (Canto e Castro) and
his two sons, Vicente (Pedro Hestnes) and Nino (Nuno Ferreira); just before the scene under discussion, the father has passed away, a fact that Vicente is determined to hide from public knowledge. According to Yvette Bíró, a key way that a film finds and reaches its deepest thread is by appearing to meander, to lose itself in detours. Blood proceeds in exactly this way. By the time we reach the scene in question, the film has already deftly lost what appeared to be its main thread by following the lure of diversions: the scene of a teacher, Clara (Inês de Medeiros), with the small children in her care; a search for two runaway kids near a river. Stealthily – as we shall see – the ground is being prepared for a major moment of intensity, a turning point that is dramatic but beyond any strict (or even loose) cause-and-effect logic of linear narrative connections.

What now takes place is a true anthology piece, a condensed moment of pure cinema – executed with modest, minimal production resources (two main actors, a few kids and props, a real street, a passing cyclist). It resonates deeply in its context, but works almost as well upon members of an audience who experience it detached, suspended outside its wider narrative frame. In Costa's loose, treatment-like script, the action might have read like this, simply and briefly. A man (Vicente) follows, at a distance, a woman (Clara) along the street. Some time passes. Finally, he catches up with her and poses a grave question. One could imagine many ways of staging and filming this scene – some rather banal, or merely functional. One can also imagine the action being covered in either very few shots (perhaps only one, with a dissolve to mark the necessary temporal ellipse), or analytically dissected into many shots in a Hitchcockian style.

Something odd and intense about this scene should be noted at the outset. Clara and Vicente are not strangers to each other; we have already seen them search together for the runaway children. And yet Vicente’s action casts him (generically speaking) in the role of a stalker, spying and trailing Clara from a distance. However, Blood is not a mystery-thriller. Clearly, Vicente is holding back, preparing himself and building up the courage to pose his proposition (whose content we do not know until he utters it – and even then only elliptically) to Clara. Such moments of waiting, in which something unsaid or not yet said is stirring and brewing, are crucial in the form of international, contemplative cinema in which Costa has come to be a figure-head in the years since Blood.

In the first shot of this passage we see Clara accompanying three small children who gather about her – kids from the kindergarten where she works. Sparse natural sound from the street occupies the soundtrack; there is no music. Costa's camera tracks this action from behind, keeping the figures in the centre of the frame. This distance (neither a conventional close shot nor a conventional long shot) maintains a good deal of space, and registers much detail of the street, in the image. Planned or not, a small bit of business dynamises this opening shot: while the camera, Clara and two children keep moving, a boy in the company has to stop for a moment, fix his shoelace, and then catch up with his companions.

The change to shot 2 marks the first move. The camera is tracking in front of Vicente, as he intently watches and briskly paces. It is a mid-shot, with a more focused concentration on the human figure – location detail (such as a background bridge) occupies only the bottom quarter of the frame, while Vicente’s head looms in the sky’s whiteness. This shot change carries a slight shock effect which is akin to Martin Scorsese’s frequent surprise tactics: suddenly we read, retroactively, the preceding shot not as Costa’s camera following or recording the action, but as Vicente’s subjective point of view; the distance between camera and figures is instantly recoded as the distance between Vicente and Clara.

This would be a common enough device in any decent thriller. But the switch to shot 3 takes us from Hitchcock territory to the Bressonian legacy which is so powerful in Costa’s work. A disquieting ellipse occurs. It is another shot of Vicente, but the light on him has changed, he is now slightly off centre in the frame, he is completely surrounded by the walls of dwellings, and his pace has slowed; only his gaze on the ‘target’ remains fixed as before. This superb cut is simultaneously concrete and abstract in its effect: it signifies (as in a screenplay indication) ‘later’, but the exact interval (minutes? hours?) is indeterminate. Note, here, the strict, lean economy of stylistic means: where so many other film-makers would have been tempted to continue the alternation between the mobile set-ups in shots 1 and 2 – to ‘double-cut’, in the
astute terminology of John Cassavetes – Costa pares away such (to him) redundant repetitions.

So far: three shots, two moves. Now the tempo quickens, the action becomes ‘thicker’, and many micro-moves enter this intimist fray. (It is frequently useful to gauge the modulation and articulation of elements in any well-realised film scene in terms of a thickening and thinning.]

We see Clara again, much closer in now, entering the frame from its left side. She is walking at a different, brisker pace than we saw previously, and the children have departed, disappeared. Something in the order of an event then occurs in this fourth shot: a boy on a bicycle blocks Clara’s path, its bell providing the first really distinct, individual sound effect of the scene, above the murmur of the street and the audible trace of footsteps. Clara stops, but the camera does not cease its quick movement towards her (the energy of this motion again recalls Scorsese, or Samuel Fuller). She turns her head and smiles at the presence off screen whom she recognises.

But then – with the camera still travelling in – there is another surprise move, both in the literal and figurative senses: Vicente’s arm shoots into frame from the right, as he places his hand on Clara’s arm. This move would not be out of place in a Brian De Palma or P. T. Anderson film: what at first appears to be a subjective POV shot is transformed into an objective view, when the ‘looker’ enters what seems to be the field of his own gaze. Clara stops, but the camera does not cease its quick movement towards her (the energy of this motion again recalls Scorsese, or Samuel Fuller). She turns her head and smiles at the presence off screen whom she recognises.

After this very packed shot, a fast flurry. Shot 5, a low angle on Vicente, is brief, and creates an instant rhyming of body movements: where she went down, he at first rises slightly (as if in hesitation, or fear) and then lowers himself. And yet this short shot has a particular emotional tenor: it creates a split-second pause on Vicente and a soulful complicity with him, as he readies (as we will soon discover) to at last speak his (presumably long-imagined or rehearsed) entreaty. Shot 6, then, marks a key moment of their interaction: in a very Bressonian play of bodily extremities (framed against the spilt books on the ground), she grasps his bandaged hand (which he has wounded in a previous scene) and turns it over, revealing the blood seeping from his palm. Shot 7 returns to the same set-up as shot 5, but – in this transformation of repetition into difference that is constitutive of Costa’s style – instantly introduces the first spoken words of the scene: ‘Salva-me... Só confio em ti’ (English subtitles: ‘Save me! You’re the only one I trust’). This sublimely grave, even melodramatic, utterance itself constitutes a move: here indeed, as per Agamben, in this verbal gesture, a life ‘puts itself into play’.

The end of the scene (shot 8) has already arrived. The angle on Clara is very similar to where we left her at the end of shot 4. It could be the same set-up or a different take of it, but variation is provided by the fact that the camera is now even closer to her face. At first – again, as if hesitating, as Vicente did only moments ago – she keeps her head down, but then lifts it up, staring off screen into his eyes. Wind blows hair across her face and the lighting is noticeably different from all previous shots: an effect of overexposure, of bleached-out saturation that is familiar from cinematographer Martin Schäfer’s work with Wim Wenders on Kings of the Road (1976). Clara returns Vicente’s gaze and appears set to respond to the force of his life-or-death question; but no spoken answer comes.

Instead, Costa stretches out the open moment of her contemplation. Music intrudes for the first time in the scene: sampled notes from an orchestral piece by Stravinsky, suspended phrases separated by dramatic silences. Then the light on Clara’s face softens as an overlapping dissolve begins: the beginning of the following scene, Vicente driving his motorbike in the dark veil of night that is punctuated by a string of bright city lights. Costa deliberately holds the overlay of both images – Clara’s face and the darkness – for longer than might be expected. Plus something truly miraculous, and not a little nostalgic, happens within the materiality of the image work: as in an old Hollywood film, this ‘special effect’ of the dissolve comes with added slow motion. After blinking several times in this slowed-down pose, Clara tilts her head back to the ground, and there is a fast fade-out. The music continues, and the transition to the next scene is now complete.

Let us note the principle – no doubt derived by Costa from several ‘minimalist’ masters – of strategic stylistic withholding for maximal cinematic effect: one by one,
during the fifty or so seconds I have considered, we are present at the ‘birth’ of sound effects, of dialogue, of music, of inventive and expressive camera framings or movements ... . Even more centrally, where this scene began is, forcibly, not where it ends: it started with Vicente’s subjective point of view (albeit with the signalling of this delayed for ten seconds), and it concludes with Clara’s inner experience, conveyed not in a POV gaze but on other, multiple levels: framing, editing decision, musical ‘sting’, slow motion, dissolve. A remarkable journey, and a complete switch-around, in under a minute: these are the moves. Something has truly happened in this scene, and we feel it – even if, at this point of the unfolding of Blood, we cannot yet fully say what it is.

And for us, as viewers, it is not so much a matter of ‘reading’ these moves – of interpreting them – as of simply but carefully and sensitively following them: staying alert to the shocks, surprises, fluctuations, tremblings, intensities. Moves are on, and of, the cinematic surface; they are the palpable, visible, audible articulations of the filmic material. Depth happens elsewhere: at the level of what I have called the ‘inner life’ of a film by Costa, its dense web or lattice-work of patterned interrelations between moves, its overall atomic cell of particles ceaselessly rearranging themselves.7 ‘All the rest is psychology,’ comments Agamben, ‘and nowhere in psychology do we encounter anything like an ethical subject, a form of life.’8

NOTES
2. Spoken on the stage of the Melbourne International Film Festival, Australia 1987.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The Properties of Images: Lust for Life (1956)

STEVE NEALE

Lust for Life is a biopic about the Dutch-born artist, Vincent Van Gogh. It was produced by John Houseman, scripted by Norman Corwin from Irving Stone's novel, and directed by Vincente Minnelli for MGM. Starring Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh and Anthony Quinn as Gauguin, it also featured James Donald as Vincent's brother Theo, Pamela Brown as Christine, and Jeanette Sterke as Vincent's cousin Kay. The film was photographed in CinemaScope and Metrocolor (the MGM brand name for Ansco Color) by Russell Harlan at the MGM Studios in Los Angeles and by F. A. (Freddie) Young on location in Belgium, Holland and France. It premiered in the USA on 17 September 1956. By this time, the aspect ratio for CinemaScope films had become standardised at 2.35:1. (The ratio had been 2.66:1 for Scope films released in 1953 and 2.55:1 for Scope films released in 1954 and 1955.) It remains unclear as to whether the version of Ansco Color used in the filming of Lust for Life was a new or an old one. Either way, along with properties of the moving image, the capacity of the camera to frame and reframe still and moving images, and the ability of filmmakers to select and edit in sequence a number of different views of any setting, staging or subject, the properties of Ansco Color, and the proportions of CinemaScope in particular, played key roles in Lust for Life's aesthetic concerns.

Lust for Life begins in Belgium. Having been interviewed, appointed, then dismissed as a Christian minister, Vincent returns home to his family in Holland. He spends a lot of time drawing. He also falls in love with Kay. Kay rejects his offer of marriage and Vincent is in despair. However, he meets Christine and moves in with her and her baby. He is happy and productive. The apartment they live in is strewn with his maquettes and pictures. Vincent is shown drawing a picture of Christine and the baby. A little later on, he is shown attempting to paint a full-length portrait of Christine on a nearby beach. This scene is the focus of this essay, though reference will be made to other shots, scenes and moments too.

The scene on the beach consists of three shots. The first begins with a dissolve from a view through the window of Christine and Vincent’s apartment (with Vincent and the baby playing on the left on Vincent’s desk) to a view of the wind-tossed sea. The camera tracks back to reveal fishermen gathering nets on a boat on the beach. The second shows Vincent from behind in three-quarter profile. He is just in front of the portrait, which is now nearly finished but still incomplete, and which is fully visible in the centre of the widescreen frame. Christine herself is slightly further away from the camera, posing on the left. Her clothes are blowing in the wind. Behind her, stretching across the width of the frame, are the sea, the shoreline and, on the right-hand side, two boats and a number of fishermen.

The fishermen, five in all, become fully visible when Vincent bends down to replenish his brush. He is struggling to complete the picture and Christine is getting tired. She tells him that she is going to feed the baby and walks away into the foreground.

A 180-degree, reverse-angle cut precedes the third and final shot. Christine is now shown from behind on the right-hand side of the frame as she continues to walk away. Vincent and his canvas are on the left, and the reverse-angle view means that the image on the canvas is no longer visible.
(As in the second shot, the extent to which visibility is dependent on viewpoint as well as on the nature and proportion of frames is here brought to the fore.) Trying to persuade her to stay, Vincent crosses the frame from left to right towards the figure of Christine. As he does so, a gust of wind blows the canvas off its easel and out of frame left. He begins to follow the canvas, turns back to plead further with Christine, then runs out of frame left in pursuit of the picture as Christine walks away from the camera and into the middle distance on the right. The scene ends at this point, with a dissolve to an interior view through the window of the apartment some time later. Christine pulls a curtain across the window, thus blocking out the view through the window’s frame. The camera tracks back to frame Christine and Vincent in medium long shot as the next scene continues.

The scene on the beach is one of a number of scenes in which Vincent is shown as struggling, and often failing, to realise his aims, to control his life and his environment, and to engage successfully with those he loves, admires or depends on. The subsequent scene in the apartment, in which he and Christine argue about money, is another. So, too, is an earlier scene in which he tries to persuade Kay to marry him; the later scene in which he fails to persuade Gauguin to remain with him in Provence; and the scenes in which, as in the beach scene, he tries but fails to represent the world around him in his paintings and drawings. (A later example is the scene in which he and Gauguin attempt to paint the landscape in Provence in the midst of a mistral.) There are several forms of failure in the beach scene itself. Vincent fails to finish the portrait because his canvas is blown away, because he fails to control the physical conditions in which he is working. He also fails because he fails to persuade Christine to stay, because he is so impractical, so demanding and so single-minded that he alienates the person on whose love and co-operation he here depends. These failures in turn mean that he does not succeed in painting Christine’s portrait as he set out to do.

These failures all entail, or are marked by, movement and time. Christine walks away. The canvas is blown away by the wind. Both events involve motion and duration, and both occur before Vincent has had time to finish his portrait. A finished portrait consists of a definitive configuration of visual ingredients. The configuration of ingredients in a portrait-in-process may be altered prior to completion or else left incomplete. But in all Vincent’s failures the ingredients themselves are always immobile. Thus, while there is always an element of contrast between a finished and an unfinished picture, an element of contrast dependent on time, there is also an element of similarity, an element marked by the absence of motion. The other elements of contrast in the beach scene are those between the immobile image on Vincent’s canvas and the mobility of the canvas itself, those between the immobile figure in Vincent’s painting and the wind-blown figure who walks away, and those between the immobile configurations in any kind of painting or drawing and the ever-changing ones that mark both the world we see around us and the world as represented in a time-based, moving-image medium such as film.

Contrasts of this kind occur throughout Lust for Life. They are apparent in nearly every scene in which Vincent is shown engaged in drawing or painting. But they are apparent in other kinds of scenes as well. At one point Lust for Life reconstructs the 1889 painting, ‘Vincent’s Bedroom in Arles’, which we have been shown in the previous shot. Initially the reconstruction is still, just like the painting. But after a few moments, Vincent’s coat flies across the frame and the room from right to left, followed by the figure of Vincent himself. Vincent’s movements, those of the coat and those of a towel on a peg on the wall on the left-hand side, which is blown gently by a breeze coming through the window, all alter the previously fixed configuration of the shot, thus marking its temporal dimensions and drawing attention to one of the major differences between a filmed and a painted image. Earlier on, in the sequence in Paris, Vincent is shown engaged in discussion while standing in front of ‘A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte’, one of Seurat’s paintings. At one point, he pauses in profile. Looking just like one of the statuesque figures in ‘La Grande Jatte’, he momentarily becomes part of a still composition that includes both himself and Seurat’s painting. But he is soon shown in motion again in a manner that not only contrasts with the figures in the painting but that paintings themselves cannot depict.

Sometimes contrasts such as these depend on the respective proportional properties of the CinemaScope frame and Vincent’s paintings and drawings. In these instances, the width of the frame is often used to display the views Vincent depicts alongside the depictions themselves. Thus, in shot two of the beach scene, we are shown Christine on the left-hand side of the frame and Vincent’s portrait-in-progress in the centre. In addition, we are shown a number of things that are not in Vincent’s portrait, notably the fishing boats and fishermen on the right-hand side of the frame (who, as already noted, can only be seen when Vincent bends down, when his movement changes the configuration of the image and what is visible within it from the camera’s position). In shot 1, we can see the sea in close-up, but only one of the boats and three of the fishermen. In shot 3 we are unable to see any of these things. But we are able to see a number of things we have been unable to see before: the back of Vincent’s canvas, the sand dunes in the rear and the small wooden hut on the right.

In all these ways, the sequential as well as the simultaneous juxtapositions of still and moving images in the
beach scene are used to highlight the ways in which framings, mobile or fixed, narrow or wide, close or distant or somewhere in between, determine not only what we see, but also what we do not see, not only what framings include, but also what they exclude. A particularly marked example can be found later in the scene in which Vincent visits Theo and his family prior to moving on to Auvers.

This scene consists of a single three-minute take. It begins with Theo’s wife, Johanna (Toni Gerry), framed by the living-room window in medium long shot. She waves at Vincent and Theo on their way to the apartment, who she can see in the street through the window but who we are unable to see from the camera’s viewpoint. The camera tracks with her as she crosses the room from right to left to greet them, pausing to check her hair in an oval mirror. The camera resumes its movement as she continues to cross the room, then pauses once again as she walks through an open inner doorway toward the outer door. Framed through the inner doorway, Johanna opens the outer door. Vincent and Theo enter the camera’s field of vision as they rush up the stairs to greet her. As they all enter the room through the inner doorway, the camera resumes its movements, tracking and panning from left to right. It pauses again as they themselves pause and Vincent asks to see his new baby nephew. At this point they are all standing in front of the mirror but, with the exception of a brief glimpse of Theo as he rushes out of frame, their reflections cannot be seen. This changes, though, when Johanna and Vincent follow Theo out of frame right as they all cross the room to see the baby. Instead of panning or tracking with them, the camera tracks forward towards the mirror. As it does so, the moving reflections of all three characters (though not that of the baby) appear in its frame.

This scene continues for another two minutes. During this time Vincent draws attention to the number of his paintings that are mounted on the apartment wall behind him. But by then it is already clear that one of the purposes of the scene and the way it is shot is to investigate the respective properties and possibilities not just of framings and frames (including those formed by doorways and windows), nor just of still and moving pictures, nor just of drawn or painted or filmed or mirrored images, but of images as such. These are modernist concerns. But Lust for Life is not a modernist film. It does not flaunt the nature of its aesthetic interests in the manner of an avant-garde or art film. Indeed, its interests are so subtly integrated into the telling of its story that they appear not to have been noticed before.

NOTE
1. In his commentary on the Lust for Life DVD (Warner Home Video, 2006), Drew Casper claims that the version used was new. In his autobiography, I Remember It Well (London: Angus & Robertson, 1975), p. 289, Minnelli himself claimed that he used the last remaining batch of an old one. Minnelli’s account is probably correct, as Ansco ceased production of its colour stock for professional productions shortly thereafter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The moment that I wish to reflect on occurs during the last two minutes of Wild Strawberries/Smultronstället (1957). It is an image seen from the point of view of the film’s protagonist, an old, much-honoured professor (Isak Borg, played by Victor Sjöström). He is looking across a calm sound or inlet to a spit of land on the other side. Near the centre of the image is Isak’s father, his fishing rod making a long diagonal which is continued downwards in the line made by the edge of the reflections of trees in the water, so that the line bisects the figure of the father and his reflection. A few feet away sits Isak’s mother, and just to her left is a parasol, canted at an angle parallel to the line of the fishing rod.

Two insights have been offered by several of Bergman’s critics regarding this image. The first is that it resembles a tableau or a painting.1 The elements of the composition are clearly intended to confront us with the presence of careful design, to make the resemblance unavoidable. But why?

Less attention has been given to the meaning of this acknowledgment, or invocation, of the painterly. If this is like a painting, what kind of canvas are we thinking of?

The second critical point is that the image represents a reconciliation between Isak and his parents, and this is a moment of great positive value.2 But again this is a little puzzling. Isak’s mother has been treated at length earlier in the film – it is not self-evident that she needs to recur at its close – and his father has been out of the way for all of the narrative up to this moment. Is the meaning of introducing them here so obvious?

My argument is that, while the nature of the image has been broadly correctly identified, its significance has perhaps been too briskly assumed, taken to serve as part of a positive conclusion to the film, but not read for the significance of its local context and the specific kind of painterly image that is invoked.

To pursue this train of thought we will need to retrace our steps a little. I want to go back, to rewind the film about five minutes in time, so to speak. I take it that Wild Strawberries is too well known to need its plot summarising; we have arrived at the point at which Isak, having accepted the jubilee doctorate conferred by his old university in Lund, has returned to his son’s house, where he will retire to bed while the younger generations engage in their amusements of the evening.

We see a trio of encounters that are also departures, as if characters are leaving a stage. The first of these is Isak’s long-standing housekeeper, Miss Agda (Jullan Kindahl), appropriately enough in that this relation was one of the strands which began the film. Bergman cuts directly from the degree ceremony to the bedroom in which Isak will sleep. The scene introduces the idea of old age as invoking, or recovering, a kind of childhood: Isak is already in pyjamas and dressing gown while Miss Agda still wears her handsome dress. Isak must retire to bed some time before the surrounding adults, even before this grandmotherly
figure: shortly she will ask him if he has cleaned his teeth. The encounter begins with some sparring, as Isak apologises for his behaviour earlier in the day, and is treated sharply – ‘Are you ill, professor?’ – as if apology must be a kind of malady in such a man. He goes on to suggest that now, as the two of them have known each other ‘for a lifetime’, they might drop the formal titles in addressing each other. I take this to be not so much a genuine question as a kind of gift, a presentation of an opportunity. Miss Agda will of course refuse and thus offer Isak the opening to feed her a line, one about her doing what is right, and give her the satisfaction of replying ‘almost always’, a nice moment of pride and reservation. The sequence ends on a note of the nurture that she provides: a listening ear in the watches of the night.

The next to depart is Sara, the girl who, accompanied by a couple of young men, has hitched a lift with Isak to Lund. She is also (by virtue of having the same name and being played by the same actress, Bibi Andersson) a kind of a ghost, that of the cousin Isak might have, or could have, or should have, married: a figure who has appeared earlier in the film. Here the trio have been marking their farewell by serenading Isak. Sara’s final call to Isak – ‘Know that it’s you that I love, today, tomorrow and forever’ – allows for a happy coincidence, between the exuberance of a young girl who is conscious of being the object of ideas, or hopes, of love and what Isak might now feel about his memory of his cousin Sara, that she represented the eternal stirring of those feelings rather than their finding any mooring in the literal world. It is as if by some fabulous piece of luck the words strike exactly the right chord, and she departs, forever lost to Isak and forever preserved by him.

The final scene addresses the present reality of relations in the Borg family, between Isak and Evald (Gunnar Björnstrand) and Marianne (Ingrid Thulin), his son and daughter-in-law. Isak is now in bed, and the note that he is allowing himself to occupy the place of a child in this household is strongly sounded, as the adults return briefly to the house. This is the result of a trivial accident – Marianne has to change her shoes – and she peeks in on Isak: ‘I think he’s asleep.’ Isak now calls out to Evald. The subject of their conversation is the state of Evald’s marriage, but the dialogue plays much as if an anxious child is reassuring himself about his parents’ situation, rather than working only, or primarily, on the level of a father enquiring about his son’s marital position. The final confirmation of this scenario is the appearance of Marianne, unmistakably in the role of the glamorous mother figure, who arrives to show off her dancing shoes to this child for a moment, to exchange endearments and to bestow a night-time kiss. It is part of the force of this moment that we know Marianne to be pregnant; we might say that it is a shadow of another night that may come to pass if this marriage survives, and, being such a portent, perhaps implies that it might do so. Marianne and Evald depart, leaving Isak to his slumbers.

All is happily, almost idealistically, concluded. We could say the passage that will follow it is unnecessary in terms of the preceding narrative. The body of the film has mainly addressed Isak’s relations to a number of women and one man (Evald), and, as we have seen, Bergman has employed the sequences leading up to this point to bring those relations to a series of conclusions. With a few words in voiceover, the mode in which it opened, the film could now end as Isak drifts into sleep. But Bergman wants to show us something else.

Lying in bed, Isak makes a declaration to us: ‘If I have been feeling worried or sad during the day I have a habit of recalling scenes from childhood to calm me.’ What follows is not exactly a recollection but something we take to be a scene created out of the materials of childhood. I will sketch some elements of it:

1. We dissolve to a familiar image, a shot of the family summer-house which featured in earlier parts of the film. It is still evidently the same long-ago summer, but now the wind is blowing, and there are ‘no more wild strawberries’. Isak appears: as earlier, his body is that of the old man of the film’s present time.
2. From a distance, Isak watches his family at a quayside boarding a small yacht. One of the older children is pushed into the choppy water; a lifebelt is thrown to accompanying shouts and laughter.
3. Isak and his companion (the Sara of that past time) exchange smiles and leave this group to their fun. Announcing that she will help him find his father and mother, Sara takes his hand and leads him through wood and field. They arrive at a vantage point, and she gestures with her free hand.
4 The shot that follows is from their point of view, and is the image with which I began this discussion (p. 30). The couple respond to Isak and Sara’s presence; the mother waves and the father briefly looks in their direction.

5 We cut to a medium shot of Isak watching, scarcely aware that Sara is departing. Bergman sustains the shot until the last trace of her disappears, leaving Isak alone.

6 We cut back to the parents; the framing is exactly the same as in (4). They have resumed their occupations and pay no further attention to the observing figure.

7 We cut to Isak and the camera moves in slowly on his smiling face as he contemplates his parents’ image.

8 There is a dissolve to Isak in bed, and the film ends.

To read this sequence we need first to observe that a shift has taken place in Isak’s relation to the figures in his past. In his earliest visions he was invisible to that world, unable to do more than watch and listen as it unfolded. Later he was present to these figures, say in his nightmare of the medical examination or the scene in which Sara showed him his aged face in a mirror, but their relation to him was partly or wholly negative. Here for the first time he is both present (to Sara) and welcomed by her. This is to say, for the first time, his experience is not a matter of the isolation of an elderly man in a world dominated by the young.

The key to the sequence lies in the contrast between two worlds, that of the family on the quayside and the father and mother on the spit. The former (2) refers back to what was established much earlier (in the sequence of a birthday meal), the haphazard energy and brio of a large family. It is a world of action, one in which there is little or no time or inclination for contemplation, where each act is an urgent call on the attention of others: incessantly and inevitably social.

The latter (4) and (6) is an invocation of a type of painting of which the main feature is what Michael Fried has called the quality of absorption. In such works, figures are typically depicted reading, or thinking, or playing a game, or in a state of reverie induced by single-minded attention. Here, fishing (the father) and sewing (the mother) exactly fit this model. The couple are absorbed in their activities, detach themselves sufficiently to acknowledge the spectators on the other shore, and immediately return to their former state.

The importance of this quality of absorption is the relationship that it imposes between the world viewed and the viewer. The world containing the parents’ image is one that does not require Isak’s presence. The function of the water is precisely to make the space impassable. He can contemplate the scene but he cannot insert himself into it, any more than he could insert himself into a painting or an image on a cinema screen. It also seems to be a world without sound; we see Sara speaking but no sound reaches us.

Yet this is not a negative quality. We would expect the recovered child that is Isak to desire to bring to his sleep the best version of finding father and mother that his recalling will allow. Separating the parents from himself, making them figures in this kind of painting, is what he most desires of them, or possibly what he can most happily bear of them. Looking at Isak’s face in (7), we see that this affects him not as a form of estrangement but as an ideal relation. Creating the image, he also creates the relation to it, one of ecstatic contemplation.

The contrast between the world of the extended but non-parental family (1)–(3) and that of the mother and father (4) and (6) is reproduced in the two images that I have taken from the film. In the second image, the wooden jetty ascends vertically in the frame until cut off by the boat and its half-furled sail, to be continued in the mast which completes the vertical bisection of the image. These elements of the composition take the eye forward directly to the knot of activity at the centre, causing us to feel its depth: the movement, also emphasised by the density of the group of figures, between foreground and background. In the first image the diagonal lines of shores and rod lead the eye across the frame. The openness of the view has the effect of flattening the composition, as does the positioning of the two figures so that they appear in the same plane, neither one significantly nearer to the viewer. It is a world of balance, exemplified by the cloudy sky and the calm water beneath that reflects it.

We see in Isak’s extended family a world both of friendship and of eros, of compliments accepted and turned off, and of gestures that can be both a gift and a form of touch, like a kiss. Above all it is an existence lived in the company of other men and women. It is characterised by physical contact – a shove into the water, a hand held – and by awareness of the age of one’s body, that is to say, of mortality. One of the most poignant details here is an assertion of age and youth; as Isak and Sara walk hand in hand across the field to the vantage point, he almost stumbles, and her hand prevents this.

The invoked world of the parents is characterised by none of these things, but by a different relation between spectator and image. The only form of contact possible is that of seeing, but this is experienced, at least for a brief moment, as ideal.

Wild Strawberries has commonly been discussed in terms of loneliness. In addition to thinking of it as a subject diffused throughout the film, we can detect here a more specific project, to do with what Isak needs to learn, or to understand. Once the social business with those other physical bodies – Agda, Sara, Evald, Marianne – is happily concluded, we are taken to a world in which you
can be content to be solitary, in the presence of a vision which satisfies you. In these last moments Bergman finds a way of expressing the thought that Isak has learned to accept being alone.

NOTES
2. A surprising (to me) number of writers on the film take this moment to be one of relatively unambiguous reconciliation between Isak and his parents. For example, see A. Richard and S. J. Blake in Stuart Kaminsky (ed.), Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 165; Seldon Bach, in Kaminsky, Ingmar Bergman, p. 200; Jesse Kalin, The Films of Ingmar Bergman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 72. The helpful and scholarly account given by Laura Hubner places the moment in the context of Bergman’s ‘visionary endings’ and reminds us of the connection between this ending and that of Strindberg’s The Ghost Sonata (1908). There the final vision is literally one of a canvas, albeit an intriguing and gloomy one, Arnold Böcklin’s painting ‘Island of the Dead’. See Laura Hubner, The Films of Ingmar Bergman: Illusions of Light and Darkness (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 52, 151.
3. The dialogue used in the film differs in some respects from that in the published screenplay. I have taken my English words from the subtitles on a widely circulated DVD version (Tartan Video, 2002).
4. The positioning of Isak as a child is reinforced by the fact that this scene is so familiar from other films. Lisa kissing her infant son goodnight in Letter from an Unknown Woman (Ophuls, 1949) is one of many examples of it.
5. My understanding of this term is heavily indebted to Michael Fried’s comprehensive establishment of it in his Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Fried, Michael, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
Making an Entrance: Bette Davis’s First Appearance in Jezebel (1938)

MARTIN SHINGLER

Bette Davis storms into her 1938 film Jezebel on a wild colt, sporting a riding outfit of leather boots, tailored jacket and a cavalier-style hat. Having leapt from the horse, she hooks up her long skirt with a riding crop to maximise her freedom of movement. Davis’s Julie Marsden, a young woman of independent means, proceeds to shock her assembled guests by striding into their midst attired in her ‘horse clothes’, ignoring the etiquette of 1852 as observed by the New Orleans social elite. Sipping sherry, the older ladies look upon her with astonishment and disapproval as Julie further flouts convention by drinking the whisky toddies reserved for the gentlemen, making a toast to a financial institution. Thus Davis’s difference is established. Davis is different because she is the star of the film and the ‘Jezebel’ of its title but also because she is more masculine than the other women. This is highlighted in the images of her taming the horse, horse-breaking being more typically the preserve of men in her world. As she proceeds, entering the party unsuitably attired and drinking whisky, Julie’s unconventional character is confirmed. However, Davis’s first appearance in Jezebel does more than simply establish her as masculine. The fact that she rides her horse side-saddle, that her hat is adorned by a large decorative feather and that the tightness of her waist reveals her curvaceous figure emphasises her femininity. Thus, she presents an ambiguous and androgynous persona. It was partly this kind of persona that fascinated audiences in the late 1930s and early 40s, particularly wartime female audiences, making Bette Davis the most profitable adult female star in America from 1939 to 1941.¹

For Thomas Schatz, ‘Jezebel marked a watershed in Davis’s career.’² After six years as a contract player at Warner Bros., appearing in twenty-eight of their films, she was given a star vehicle commensurate with her talent as an actor. Davis had previously caught the attention of film critics with sensational performances in Of Human Bondage (1934) and Dangerous (1935), gaining an Oscar for the latter. In 1937, Variety declared that Bette Davis was ‘among the Hollywood few who can submerge themselves in a role to the point where they become the character they are playing’.³ This, along with her Oscar for Best Actress of 1935, gave her some distinction among her peers, persuading Jack Warner to reward her with a lavish prestige picture.⁴

Jezebel was an expensive historical costume drama, adapted from a Broadway play by Owen Davis Sr. Director William Wyler was commissioned to showcase and refine Davis’s acting talents, while Irving Rapper was appointed dialogue director to help her rehearse her lines and develop her characterisation. Moreover, Wyler and his...
assistent, John Huston, refashioned Clements Ripley and Abem Finkel’s screenplay to exploit her persona more fully. Consequently, as Schatz writes, ‘the studio finally had a fix on Davis’s screen persona and began tailoring projects to suit her’.5

Bette Davis’s first scene in Jezebel reveals some of the ways in which Wyler’s direction showcased the star to best advantage. Her character enters from the right on horseback in an establishing shot outside the gates of her home. On reaching the centre of the shot, the horse executes a full anti-clockwise spin before exiting to the left, the camera panning left to reveal the gateway. Matching on action, there follows a cut to a high-angled long shot, taken from the top of the steps outside the front door of the house. A black boy in livery is waiting to receive the horse in the lower centre of the frame. Played up to this point by a stunt-woman, Julie keeps her head turned down as she dismounts from the horse. The first image of Bette Davis now appears in a medium shot as she dismounts from the horse. While Davis and the horse occupy the left side of the frame, a black manservant enters from the lower right, raising his hat in a greeting to ‘Miss Julie’. She turns towards him smiling, holding out her arms as a signal that she’s about to leap from the horse. The servant reaches out towards her and she falls into his arms. He takes her weight as she descends and she thanks him just as her feet (below the lower edge of the frame) reach the ground, instantly turning away as he respectfully doffs his hat. Directing her riding crop at the boy at the left edge of the screen, Julie instructs him to take the horse round to the back of the house. She then exits to the left, breaking into a run, the camera panning to the right to reveal the horse dragging the boy towards the gate.

Davis’s first shot establishes some crucial aspects of her characterisation. When first seen, she occupies the upper left side of the frame, sitting on the horse, her lofty position suggesting her status as an heiress of wealth and property who commands respect. However, the descent from the horse is emblematic of her fall from grace, which results from her defiance of the custom of unmarried ladies wearing virginal white to the Olympus Ball in favour of a shocking red gown. Thereafter, Julie is ostracised by polite society and rejected by her fiancé. It is, therefore, not insignificant that Bette Davis’s first action in the film is to fall. However, something more is established here, namely Julie’s empathy for her black slaves. Davis shows no hesitation when throwing herself into the arms of her manservant, nor does she register any sign of restraint when he takes her in his arms and pulls her closely towards his body. This establishes her liberal attitude, which she maintains throughout the film. Although proud among her white peers, Julie is most at ease with her black slaves.

A series of reverse shots follows, cutting between Julie on the front steps and her point of view of the boy being dragged by the horse. This begins with a medium shot of Julie’s back as she reaches her house, tapping lightly on the door with her riding crop while twisting round to look at the boy behind her. An eyeline match motivates the cut to Julie’s first point-of-view shot, followed quickly by a reverse shot of Julie in front of the door, facing the camera. Here she flares up, directing her whip at the camera as she instructs the boy (off screen) to be more commanding with the horse, delivering her first significant line of dialogue: ‘Now Ti Bat, don’t stand there with your eyes bulging’, laying the stress on the word bulging, ‘he knows you’re scared.’6 A reverse shot reveals the boy (Matthew ‘Stymie’ Beard) continuing to struggle with the horse as it drags him beyond the gates, the boy replying that he’s afraid of the horse because he bites. Returning to a long shot of Julie, she tells him to ‘just plain bite him back’ and laughs. This shot provides a good look at Julie as she stands centre stage, enabling the audience to take in the various details of her outfit: the bandanna at her neck, the large white gloves, the long skirt with a train and the tightly corseted waist accentuating her slender physique. Without pausing, Davis shakes the whip at the boy and the horse (both being off screen) and then uses it in a complicated and beautifully choreographed gesture to hook up the train of her skirt, lifting it over her shoulder and raising the hemline to reveal her boots.7 By this time, the door behind her has opened and she makes an elaborate turn, the train of the skirt swinging over her shoulder and across her back like a cloak. In this way, as Julie marches off through the doorway, briefly glancing back over her left shoulder, she looks more like a cavalier (i.e. a gallant and swaggering seventeenth-century knight) than a nineteenth-century southern belle.8

This series of reverse shots reveals several things about Davis as an actress and Julie as a character. For instance, her first notable line of dialogue is not only an instruction to the young black slave to be more masterful but also contains the key word ‘bulging’, which she stresses by increasing the volume, extending it over several beats and widening her large eyes. In this way, Julie’s first major line highlights Davis’s most idiosyncratic physical feature – her big eyes – one she shares with many people of African descent and one of their most impersonated features by blackface minstrels. At one level, therefore, Julie appears to ridicule the boy’s racial features but, at another, she seems to identify herself with him. Meanwhile, the film establishes a link between Julie and the wild colt. In the party scene that follows, Julie apologises for being late, saying, ‘So sorry! But you know when a colt gets high-headed, it’s teach him his manners right now or ruin him.’ Ironically, it turns out to be Julie’s high-headedness that leads to her downfall, along with the fact
that no one is able to make her behave as a demure debutante or rein in her wild spirit. Davis's first scene, which culminates in her swaggering gesture as she deftly swings the skirt of her riding habit over her shoulder, evokes the pride that will precede her fall. Here she lacks any trace of modesty, suggesting that her character's unrestrained behaviour will be her undoing. Having been given too much free rein, Julie will be forced to learn some painful lessons in how to deport herself and how to exercise self-control.

Throughout Jezebel, Wyler's direction remains sensitive, intelligent and nuanced. Often his scenes are highly mobile with elaborate pans and tracking shots, in and out of which Davis moves, the camera inevitably rediscovering her moments after she has eluded its frame. Wyler, as much a choreographer as a director, often makes Davis and the camera execute an elaborate dance, moving around each other, synchronised to each other's movements. Each shot is as carefully framed as Davis's performance is finely crafted, the two being intricately linked to capture the most telling images so that audiences can perceive the motivations of Julie's actions. These images provide glimpses of the forces that drive her, impulses propelling her towards her downfall. Though Julie may be imperious and impulsive, Bette Davis remains under control, her tendency to fidget held in check, without ever impeding her constant motion. Her gestures are smaller, more intricate and purposeful than in her earlier films, her energy more modulated and contained, so that Ernest Haller's camera can register these in fine detail. Indeed, Jezebel is so meticulous – both in the way it is shot and performed – that it is best appreciated with close and careful scrutiny. This is a film that rewards detailed examination. For what seems a sprawling melodrama comprises tightly wrought sequences designed to hone and harness the extraordinary power of Bette Davis in her ascendancy as a star and performer. To borrow the film's own analogy, it presents a wild colt being reined in. Wyler's direction, which consisted of many retakes without telling his actors what he wanted from them, gave his star a certain amount of free rein by enabling her to determine her own performance, assisted by dialogue director Irving Rapper. At the same time, however, it subjected her to the discipline of carefully choreographed long takes, shot repeatedly until her director was fully satisfied. The result of his painstaking direction of Davis was to take her raw and largely untutored talent, along with her fierce drive and energy, and transform them into something more polished. Wyler's tutelage on this film and their subsequent collaboration on The Letter (1940) and The Little Foxes (1941) enabled Bette Davis to produce an impressive body of work that established her claim to being one of Hollywood's greatest actors as well as one of its most unconventional stars.

NOTES

4. Jack Warner intended Jezebel to steal a march on David O. Selznick's epic Gone with the Wind (1939), which was in production at MGM in 1938.
5. Schatz, “A Triumph of Bitchery”, p. 27.
6. In the script this speech is slightly different: 'Now Ti Bat, you can't handle horses with your eyes bulging out like that (bulging her eyes). He knows you're scared.' Instead, Davis says, 'Now Ti Bat, don't stand there with your eyes bulging.' However, the important thing to note here is the instruction for her to bulge her eyes at this moment (Clements Ripley and Abem Finkel, Screenplay of Jezebel, 25 October 1937, p. 14; copy held at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston, MA).
7. Following Ti Bat's line about the horse biting, the script states that 'Julie hooks up the train of her habit with her crop and throws it over her shoulder' before announcing: 'Then you just plainly bite him back.' Not only does Davis change the word 'plainly' to 'plain' but, more important, she delays the action with the train until after she has spoken this line, preceding it with the action of shaking her whip at the camera (which is not called for by the script). See Ripley and Finkel, Screenplay of Jezebel.
8. Ed Sikov has noted that this shot took forty-eight takes before Wyler was satisfied with Davis's performance: Ed Sikov, Dark Victory: The Life of Bette Davis (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2007), p. 118.
10. Ed Sikov claims that Wyler forced Davis to subdue many of her mannerisms, recognising that many of them were 'itchily nervous and beyond her control, expressions not of a character's psychology but of her own' (Sikov, Dark Victory, p. 118).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ripley, Clements and Finkel, Abem, Screenplay of Jezebel (adapted from the play by Owen Davis Sr), 25 October 1937.
Variety, 'Review of Marked Woman', 14 April 1937.
Life Is Beautiful/La vita è bella (Benigni, 1997) openly presents itself as a fable – and not a reconstruction of the Holocaust meant to be taken literally – right from the introductory words of its off-screen narrator, Giosué, spoken many years after the events the film depicts: ‘This is a simple story, but not an easy one to tell. Like a fable, there is sorrow; and, like a fable, it is full of wonder and happiness.’ Alternative ways of reading the world – and ambiguities among them – are thus self-consciously in play throughout, with representations of actual historic events openly transformed through processes of subjective and figurative reconstruction. For example, the present moment of remembrance by the narrator further reworks a past in which experiences were already filtered both through his childhood perspective and through the stories his father Guido (Roberto Benigni) recounted to him at the time. Thus, the adult Giosué who narrates the film is trying to recapture a past he never quite experienced first-hand (and never experienced at all, in the case of the parts before his birth). For the audience too, past events are mediated, in our case by the film’s insistence on its fictional devices and by our access to hindsight, offering the film’s viewers a very different understanding from that of the characters immersed in the narrative world and the historical past alike.

An early instance of the co-presence of different dimensions of meaning – and the film’s frank acknowledgment of this – is provided by the opening sequence when Guido and his friend Ferruccio (Sergio Bini Bustric) are driving towards Arezzo and the brakes fail. Guido tries to clear a path for the runaway car by frantically waving his extended arm from side to side to get the expectant crowds awaiting the arrival of the king to disperse. Mistaking Guido for the royal visitor, the crowds enthusiastically return what they take to be a fascist salute. The culmination of the joke is that the king himself, when his car pulls up, is completely ignored, as well as being visually overshadowed by his much larger wife. This is the first of many instances where the dignity of those in authority (especially where they are explicitly coded as fascist) is punctured. There is a further doubling, not only of the symbolic and the mundanely functional (the same gesture capable of being read in either way), but also of the comedic and the more melodramatic. The danger of one being in a car speeding out of control is here outweighed by the ‘Keystone Kops’ feel to the runaway car, which reassures us that Guido and Ferruccio will survive intact.

This illusion of a safe world successfully submerging a potentially more dangerous one will be more and more difficult to sustain as the film progresses. Indeed, the story Guido tells Giosué (Giorgio Cantarini) in an attempt to allay his son’s fears on the way to the camp and subsequently – by convincing him that they are willing participants in a competition to win a tank – is so flimsy that even Giosué will have recurring moments of doubt about their safety and the accuracy of Guido’s cover story.

In this first example, Guido himself is unaware of, and then bewildered by, the crowd’s mistake (being too preoccupied by the speeding car, at first, to notice, and then not hanging around for the ‘punchline’ of the joke), and his gesture involves no intention on his part to deceive. Elsewhere, in his stories to Giosué, his evident intention that events be reconstrued by his son is completely self-conscious, but his own construal of events – the extent of his knowledge about what’s really going on – is nonetheless uncertain. Guido’s ignorance of what is happening in the camps is revealed with most devastating irony when he unsuccessfully tries to persuade Giosué to take a shower with the other children, as the boy has been instructed, rather than to hide, as Giosué has chosen to do. One could say that Guido himself is too quick to believe in stories: here, the Nazi story that a shower is just a shower and nothing more.

So there are many differences between the early and later stages of the film. Most important, in the early stages, it is still just about possible for the film’s viewers (and Guido) to read a dangerous world as a safe one, despite a steady accumulation of ominous portents. Furthermore,
Guido is in on the behind-the-scenes mechanics that make possible his ‘magical’ courtship of Dora (Nicoletta Braschi), understanding the workings of the world and making use of them for his own benefit. For example, he calls to the Virgin Mary to throw down from heaven the key to Dora’s acquiescence (having earlier observed a husband, at the very spot where Guido and Dora now find themselves, shouting to his wife Maria to throw down a key from an upstairs window), and it falls from the sky on cue, to Dora’s amazement. Though Guido, despite his confident courtship, will consistently struggle to understand what goes on in the camp, the film doesn’t split easily into two halves. The changes in the film’s tone and in Guido’s knowledge of the nature of the world – that is, the parallel disillusionments of both Guido and the audience, disillusionments with the benevolent nature of the world and the comedic nature of the film respectively – are more gradual and intermixed.

The moment I have chosen to look at in detail is when Guido follows Dora into a sort of greenhouse, only to have their son Giosué emerge to his waiting parents several years later, though apparently within the same shot. It is the most dreamlike and cinematically magical transition in the film, preceded by Guido helping Dora down off the back of the horse upon which they’ve made their escape from Dora’s engagement party. The horse is covered in garish green paint which fascist thugs splashed on it earlier, including a painted skull and crossbones outlined in black against the green.

However, as we cut to Guido and Dora walking around a corner of the house and approaching the door, the animal is left behind and it remains outside the frame from this point onward. Relegated off screen, the horse’s unwholesome shade of neon green no longer clashes with the pale pink of Dora’s gown and the natural greens of the plants, nor is its painted body visible as an insistent reminder of a harsh and poisonous world besmirching its innocent victims – both animal and human – outside the present enchanted space. Yet the enchantment will necessarily be short-lived. Much later, amid the greys and browns of the concentration camp, Guido will speak of a dream he had of Dora, addressing her over a loudspeaker he finds in an unguarded office: ‘You were wearing that pink suit that I really like. You’re all I think about …’. The pale pink of the suit he remembers, a colour which is also visible in Dora’s dress throughout the first part of the greenhouse scene, is, by the time of the later scene, a colour at three removes: a mere memory of a dream of a memory.

As Guido now tries to force open the door of his uncle’s house, not having remembered to get the key from Ferruccio (and no longer able to call it down from heaven), Dora wanders into a room in the adjacent building while Guido fumbles at the door of the house with a piece of wire. She pauses to look back at him, and her stillness is in contrast to his busyness and inattentive chatter.

Turning away, Dora enters what appears to be a greenhouse or conservatory filled with plants. We then cut to Guido as he kicks open the door and realises that Dora has wandered off. This is followed by another cut to him in close-up, now silent and becalmed, looking after her retreating figure.

Finally, we cut to Guido from behind as he too steps into the greenhouse in search of her, the music intensifying and becoming louder throughout. Without a further cut, their young son Giosué comes running out, the camera pulling back before him to his parents outside, no longer in the formal clothes they were wearing earlier in the shot.2

There is something tentative and extremely affecting in the inquisitive tilt of Guido’s head as he enters the greenhouse, seen only from behind, and peers around the plants while moving slowly forward. Despite his ill-fitting clothes, he is suddenly less of a genial clown and more a man in full possession of himself. That Dora has asked him to rescue her for himself – that his deepest wish is also hers – makes all the more moving and delicately erotic the moment of his hesitation on the brink of entering the bewitching world before him. Now Dora is the agent of his captivation as he, earlier, had ‘magically’ masterminded their courtship for her benefit. The effect of Giosué’s subsequent emergence from the same space in the same shot is as if the threats of imminent catastrophe for Italian Jews like Guido and his uncle, which ran rampant throughout the engagement party scene, have been held in suspension by Guido and Dora’s marriage and Giosué’s birth and early childhood. The unseen depths of the greenhouse present a
space and time apart: they form a sort of narrative parenthesis – a shelter – which temporarily prises Guido, Dora and Giosué away from the realities of wartime Italy and offers them a private alternative reality from which viewers are discreetly held back.

In the single shot that contains the intervening years of the marriage, unseen, within its depths, but with their richness suggested by the abundant plants and blaze of colour that can be glimpsed inside, somehow the inner spaces of the room are transformed into a temporal plenitude as well, despite the short duration of the shot in cinematic terms. The moment answers Guido’s earlier evocation (in the courtship scene when Guido had stolen Dora from her fiancé after the opera) of a future from whose vantage point their courtship would be remembered as a spellbinding night in the past. In that earlier scene, in answer to Dora’s question about where they are, when their car breaks down in the rain, he tells her they’ve been there before. ‘Don’t you remember?’ he says. ‘The night it was raining …’. And he goes on to describe events that are only just happening as if they were already located in the past. The poignancy of his playfully imagining those presently occurring moments as memories inheres in the way the scene juxtaposes Guido’s wish that they grow old together and that they look back on their courtship fondly across a vista of many happy years with our own chilly premonition, as viewers armed with hindsight, that such a prospect is already doomed. Now, in the greenhouse scene, Guido has once again rescued Dora from her fascist fiancé Rodolfo (Amerigo Fontani), this time for good, but the early years of their marriage – virtually all of the marriage, as it turns out, since they will be separated forever the next day – are reduced to a mere instant off screen. As the war and its consequences increasingly come to permeate the narrative world, an uncontaminated realm of personal desire and fulfilment can no longer be convincingly represented but can only be momentarily and obliquely implied as both provisional and veiled.

In its harmony and abundance, the image of the greenhouse answers and reverses the presentation of a topsyturvy world in the immediately preceding scene of the engagement dinner when Guido, working as a waiter, discovers that Dora is set to marry someone else. Guido, a master of improvisation in the earlier scene where he hijacks Dora after the opera, is suddenly at a loss. At Rodolfo’s words, announcing his engagement to Dora in front of the assembled guests (to her evident displeasure), and with the sudden prospect of Dora being yanked out of his world, Guido loses his earlier grace and skills of enchantment as he trips over a chair and stands up in a daze. He lifts his tray aloft, oblivious to the poodle perched on top, where it had been deposited by Ferruccio when he came to Guido’s aid. The poodle on a tray presents a gently humorous image of a world gone wrong, and the whole scene functions as a preliminary version of his much more brutal and definitive separation from Dora in the camp when the repressive Nazi environment will be so much more rigid and resistant to his efforts to reconfigure it for the sake of his son. By that stage, the defining image of a world out of joint is a mountain of bodies piled on bodies rather than a misplaced poodle held aloft.

In all these ways, the greenhouse moment may be seen as the structural centre of the film, the pivot on which it turns. It marks the point when Giosué comes into existence and, thus, when the basis of his framing narration moves from hearsay alone to first-hand experience. It also offers us the narrative ‘parenthesis’ mentioned earlier when the anti-Semitic world outside the frame can be momentarily suspended, allowing for a rich burst of colour before the greyness of the camp. The poetic delicacy of the scene is intimately linked to the way the early happy years of the marriage are already shown as being out of reach (by being kept off screen, in the depths of the greenhouse, and lasting for mere seconds of cinematic time) even as they unfold.

NOTES
1. However, Giosué as narrator partly escapes these particular limitations, even if Giosué as child does not.
2. At least, there is no cut that I can spot, though the lighting on the plants perceptibly brightens to mark the change from early evening to day.
In Eric Rohmer’s *Conte d’été/A Summer’s Tale* (1996), the boundary between friendship and love is marked by four kisses between Gaspard (Melvil Poupaud) and Margot (Amanda Langlet), with each character initiating two of them.¹ When Gaspard and Margot first kiss, her preliminary joshing of him, teasing him with the grass to get his attention, gives way to her apparent surprise that he kisses her. Part of her welcomes him; nevertheless, she pulls away from him, rejecting his opportunistic advances. Their second kiss is the first of those begun by Margot and it occurs on the beach, after they fight. This time Gaspard is surprised and confused. Rohmer shows their third kiss during their last outing together. It is one of the director’s most beautiful scenes, with performers, camera, setting, dialogue and costumes connecting in a densely expressive style.

For their last walk together, they drive to a romantic spot on the coast, where lush green trees overlook wide bays and cliffs. It is a gloriously sunny day. Weather is always part of Rohmer’s palette and in *Conte d’été* he uses Brittany’s changeable summer weather to provide meaningful background. This sunny Friday, which Gaspard spends with Margot, contrasts with the cloudy following day, when he meets Solène (Gwenaëlle Simon) at the statue, the different summer weather accentuating the contrast between the warmth and eroticism of Gaspard’s walk with Margot and the cool mistiness of his confused conversation with Solène. Both the weather and the season in *Conte d’été* function metaphorically, for the film’s setting of a summer holiday relates to the time of life experienced by Gaspard and Margot.

Summer holidays sometimes provoke feelings of purposelessness. Gaspard’s passivity derives in part from his being on holiday; with no work to do while waiting for Léna (Aurelia Nolin), he responds to whatever comes along. In addition, though, Gaspard feels that he is on holiday from adult life, a life that need not begin, as he remarks, until he is thirty; like many men of his age, Gaspard defines himself by his independence from person or place. Both Margot and Gaspard have finished postgraduate studies – Poupaud was twenty-three in 1995 when the film was made, Langlet was twenty-eight – and this may be their last free summer before committing to relationships and careers. For Rohmer, Gaspard is ‘in a period “before choice”’.² The end of summer heralds the end of this period ‘before choice’; until that point, Gaspard postpones commitments and indulges his liberty, unwilling to say goodbye to youthful freedom.

Their final walk begins with a shot of them walking together downhill, away from the camera; this brief shot enables us to see their costumes and the rhythm of their movements. As usual, Gaspard wears black jeans and a black T-shirt; Margot wears a red dress. The colour of the costumes helps contrast the three women in Gaspard’s life: just as they each have their own location (Gaspard’s girl in every port), so they each have their own colour. Red is important to Amanda Langlet’s Margot, who at different times wears a red bikini, a red T-shirt, a red vest, a red sleeveless T-shirt and two red dresses. Red matches her skin tone, which is reddish brown, and the same is true of the olive-green bikini worn by the dark-haired and tanned Solène and the blue bikini worn by the pale-skinned, blue-eyed Léna. In contrast to the red, green and blue worn by the three women, Gaspard’s wardrobe is monochrome and he wears black clothes for almost the entire film. When he first arrives in Dinard, his black attire singles him out from the holiday-makers dressed in pastel-coloured shorts and T-shirts; in the middle of summer, Gaspard wears a black corduroy jacket, black jumper, black jeans and black shoes, varying this only occasionally with a grey sweatshirt and shirt or white T-shirt and jeans.

The symbolism of black as a colour for clothing is long-lasting. As Anne Hollander writes, when worn by men, from the period of literary Romanticism onwards, black is associated with ‘spiritual unrest and personal solitude’.³ Besides black having the ‘visual property of sharp contrast to other colours, or the anti-fashion function of distinguishing an individual, or the ritual quality continually associated with mourning, in the nineteenth century’, Hollander notes, ‘it represents sartorial drama, in an essentially literary spirit’.³ She describes the man in black as a
wanderer, somehow in league possibly with the devil but certainly with a kind of dark power that exempted him from the responsibilities of common feeling and experience. He was unhappy; black was his natural colour. It [black] emphasised an austere male detachment from female emotive and procreative life (expressed in colour and change).4

The red, green and blue worn by Margot, Solène and Léna connect them to the world, whereas Gaspard's black clothes typify his negative passivity: his outfits absorb light as he absorbs the attentions of the three women. Through his black attire, Gaspard expresses his unrest, solitude and youthful rebellion; he is refusing responsibility and routine, preserving his detachment from society. Gaspard's precursors are Beau Brummell and Lord Byron, although, as Hollander argues, the black worn by young men now ('Student Black' and 'Modern Bohemian Black') is ‘deliberately scruffy rather than romantically sombre’.5 Gaspard's black clothes distinguish him from Léna's bourgeois friends (who work 'in plastics') and signal his independence as a young musician, free to sail away whenever he chooses.

Margot, in contrast to Gaspard, wears a close-fitting red print dress for their last excursion. The finale of her red costumes, her dress is tight above the waist, loose in the skirt and cut above the knee; as she walks along the coastal path, the pleats of her skirt brush around her legs. Immaculate white pumps provide a faultless finish. When they stop to admire the view, they stand with their backs to us, facing out to sea, but not next to each other, as Margot stays behind Gaspard. The green foliage, the distant coastline and the patches of sky and sea focus attention on Gaspard's black outfit and Margot's red dress, the greenness of the surrounding trees providing an attractive foil to the dress. The cutaway back of her dress plunges to a wide v-shape, from the edges of her shoulders to the base of her spine, revealing the glowing ruddiness of her skin, which the design and colour of the dress, red with white flowers, heighten. This scene features intense backlighting and dense saturated colours; when Margot sits down, a close-up of her shows her backlit by the low sun, the light glorifying her beauty and highlighting her youthful vitality; close in, the colour of the dress and background trees increase the appeal of her dark brown hair and eyes. Margot looks as wonderful as she has ever looked in this moment of concentrated visual harmony, produced by the combination of her skin colour, her brown eyes and hair, her red and white dress, and the natural splendour of Brittany's Emerald Coast.

In these conditions, it is unsurprising that when they discuss his trip to Ouessant with either Léna or Solène, Gaspard insists, 'If I go, it will be with you.' She thinks that Léna might not mind because she, Margot, 'doesn't count', though she agrees that maybe Ouessant is not a good place for a ‘romantic escapade’. Initially, he sits on his own, separated from her by a tree and its shadow; Rohmer offers us a shot/reverse-shot sequence of close-ups of Margot and Gaspard as they talk. Showing self-awareness, he says, 'I'm only myself with you.' The shot/reverse-shot sequence ends when he crawls towards her on all fours, a sleek panther prowling towards its prey. Placing his arm around her, he invites her to Ouessant: 'I'd give them all up for you.' Margot's response is important:

I'd like to take a few days off, get some fresh air, get away from the restaurant, spend a few days with you, even if it's risky. But I'd just be a stopgap. And I don't want to be. We'll go later, when you've failed. Winter is the best season.

As she says this, Margot strokes his arms, leaning her face against his shoulder, her arm drawn across his.

She resists him verbally, yet approaches him physically, a contradiction that makes evident her indecision.6 While she talks to him, Gaspard either looks at her stroking fingers or glazes over, as if thinking about her actions not her words. As she is telling him that she does not want to be a stopgap, she leans her chin on his arm. Poupaud's performance ensures that we notice him perceive the pressure of her head on one arm and her light caressing of his other arm. She extends herself around him, almost wrapping him towards her. He hears her refusal of his invitation to Ouessant and he feels her body close to him; he responds by turning to kiss her. He moves first, but she lifts her lips to meet his – without surprise or displeasure. Her fingertips remain on his arm; her arm remains outstretched, holding his forearm as he turns to put his arm round her back. They kiss, but her smiling causes their lips
to separate. She looks away, hiding her eyes, as if crying. Gaspard asks: 'What's wrong? Are you crying?' We cannot see if she has tears in her eyes. Maintaining her distance from Gaspard, she tells him that she is laughing: 'Your predicament makes me laugh. You're like a tramp who wakes up a millionaire. Aren't three girls at a time too many?'

Margot’s knowledge of his activities prevents her engagement with him: his frankness with her, a result of their relaxed relationship, draws them together, but his divulgences to Margot about Léna and Solène prompt her caution. She spends time with him because she finds him attractive; she flirts with him, but she holds herself back from him, using quips to disentangle herself from his embraces. Caressing his arm encourages him to approach her; they then kiss ardently, but she uses humour to interrupt the passion, rational thought causing physical disengagement. She is indecisive about him, yet her indecision is a reaction to his indecision. In the two scenes when Gaspard kisses her, Langlet’s performance makes this visible.

Their fourth and final embrace takes place on the jetty as she sees him off. Gaspard’s last weekend in Dinard is an escalation of his entanglements with Léna and Solène, both of whom declare their willingness to visit Ouessant with him. The friend who phones to invite Gaspard to La Rochelle to buy an eight-track tape-recorder helps Gaspard sail away from romantic complications, just as Henri (Féodor Atkine) does in Rohmer’s Pauline à la plage (1983). Like the first four of Rohmer’s Comédies et proverbes (1981–7), Conte d’été ends as it began, on the jetty. Gaspard recognises that Margot ‘counted’ all along, for he says, ‘Now you and I can go to Ouessant whenever we want.’ But the moment has passed; her boyfriend has written to say that he is returning in September. She will go to the fabled island of Ouessant with him. They stand facing each other on the jetty and she says that she is in Rennes now and then. They can meet. She kisses him lightly on the cheek and he says, ‘I won’t forget our walks.’ ‘Me neither,’ she replies. She then reaches up and, with her hand on the back of his neck, pulls him towards her to kiss him passionately. She releases him and he turns to board his boat. Rohmer matches the two diminishing figures: Margot walks away from the camera and away from us; then the boat departs. The penultimate shot is of Margot turning and walking up the jetty; the last shot is of the ferry taking Gaspard away from Dinard.

Conte d’été can appear so light and insubstantial and yet it concludes movingly with an opportunity not taken, an emotion not expressed. Margot’s relationship with Gaspard has been a holiday romance that did not happen, the opposite of Marion (Arielle Dombasle) and Henri’s in Pauline à la plage. The haunting conclusion ends a film that has felt almost featherweight, drifting along as Gaspard does. His pointless milling around, indulging in reverie, preferring chimerical figures to Margot, lead to an ending touched with despair. He acts selfishly and stupidly, dishonest with himself and others; a young man in his twenties keeps his options open, until it is too late. We all daydream of a life elsewhere, particularly when we are young; with verve and originality, Rohmer’s fertile art shows how a young man’s fatalistic preference for vaporous daydream and his lack of effort in the face of difficulties end in a disturbing crisis. Confident in his youth, refusing commitment and believing that he cannot escape his fate or destiny, Gaspard envisages an unavoidable future in which, to recall de la Fontaine from Rohmer’s second Comédies et proverbes, Le beau mariage (1982), ‘The world’s riches and honours seem/Ours then, and all its lovely women at our feet.’ Rohmer shows that Gaspard’s vagaries and his daydreaming of the future are ruinous. Sabine (Beatrice Romand) and Edmond (André Dussollier) in Le Beau mariage have no opportunity to miss; she builds castles in the air. Gaspard’s fabrications are more serious because they blind him to the present. Margot’s disappointment hangs over the tragedy of their final parting and embrace. For three weeks, Margot refuses to be a substitute; although they kiss near the beginning, she pushes him away because she senses that he is seizing an opportunity not expressing genuine feeling. When she kisses him at the end of the film, she does so with the confidence that they may not meet again. At the end of Conte d’été, there is an unexpected shock that misunderstandings and meanderings have led to a chance of happiness getting lost.

‘Youth’, says Rohmer, ‘it is the epoch of hopes but also of empty waiting.’ Rohmer is not the only person to tell stories about the emptiness and waiting of youth; it has
attracted dramatists, novelists and artists because so many major changes can happen during that period of life. But in Conte d’été Rohmer turns his deepest concern for the ambiguity, complexity and contradictoriness of our interior lives into a profound study of human relationships. He analyses male behaviour in a film that is as insightful and intense on this subject as Vertigo (1958), its moral value resembling that of the Hitchcock film in that it scrutinises the way men think and behave and, like Vertigo, offers a warning.10

NOTES

1. The major theme of Conte d’été, youth and its passing, is elaborated with motifs and metaphors that derive from music, sailing, summer and holidays, all things associated with the film’s location, Dinard in Brittany. In this essay, I refer to summer and holidays. In The Cinema of Eric Rohmer (Wallflower Press, forthcoming), I write about music, sailing, travelling shots and the choreography of walking and talking that dominates the film’s action.


4. Ibid., pp. 375–6.

5. Ibid., p. 386.

6. With an overriding interest in the relation between imagination or desire and reality, it is no surprise to find that Rohmer has often filmed the discrepancies between what people say and do, concentrating on pauses and silences, moments where people may be listening to someone or thinking of something else. I have written about these discrepancies and contradictions; see Leigh (2006 and 2007) in the following Bibliography.


10. I have not quoted it in the main text, but I am indebted to Adrian Martin’s review of the film. He emphasises that Conte d’été ‘does accrue, by the end, a haunting, caustic, and rather devastating emotional quality’. I agree with his conclusion that ‘the character-portrait of Gaspard is one which most thoughtful, urbane guys will find genuinely unnerving. Seeing this chap on screen is like seeing some dark secret shared among men, leaked out for the whole world to see’: Adrian Martin, ‘Some Kind of Liar: A Summer’s Tale’, Senses of Cinema no. 5, 2000. Available at <www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/5/summer.html> (accessed 5 September 2002).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Enter Lisa: Rear Window (1954)

DOUGLAS PYE

Fade in on a partial view of the courtyard at night, the apartments to the right of Jeff’s window catching the orange glow of the night sky, the rest of the space almost dark. Camera movement from right to left catches glimpses of people in their rooms; a few lights are on in the apartments (one comes on as we pass). The camera movement ends on Jeff (James Stewart), asleep in his wheelchair, his body parallel to the window, his face turned in towards the apartment. The dominant sound is of a soprano practising scales, accompanied by a piano, the sound unlocated but evidently nearby, the first chord on the piano timed to the opening of the shot and followed by three scales, then a longer final scale which ends as a shadow – cast from frame left, inside the apartment – rises over Jeff’s body and onto his face. Until the dialogue begins there is now only the faintest of ambient sound. Cut to a low angle close-up of Lisa (Grace Kelly), dimly lit, lips slightly parted, looking directly into the camera and growing larger in the frame as she moves towards us. Cut back to Jeff, still asleep, the shadow moving up to cover his face. His eyes open, he looks up and faintly smiles. Cut back to Lisa in even tighter close-up, again looking into the camera (now that Jeff is awake the shot seems to be POV) and moving down to fill the frame. Cut to a profile two-shot, very close to the faces, Jeff on the right looking diagonally up and Lisa to the left looking down and moving into a kiss, her movement apparently step-printed to produce a fractionally staggered effect. She kisses him.

Her tone is affectionate and gently teasing.

LISA: How’s your leg?
JEFF: Hurts a little.
LISA: And your stomach?
JEFF: Empty as a football.
[Lisa kisses Jeff again.]
LISA: And your love life?
[She smiles and looks into his eyes.]
JEFF: Not too active.
LISA: Anything else bothering you?
[Jeff nods slightly.]
JEFF: Uh huh. Who are you?

Lisa smiles and draws back, leaving the frame. The camera pulls away slightly and moves to the left so that we see Jeff almost full-face, looking out of frame towards Lisa.

The handling of Lisa’s first appearance, at the beginning of Rear Window’s third movement, some fifteen minutes into the film, is strikingly different from the style adopted in the rest of the film. Through most of Rear Window the rhetoric of the image is subordinated to action, the elaborate artifice deployed to create a sense of plausible incident in a workaday world. These few shots (lasting just over a minute) present Lisa’s entrance in a mode of heightened imagery and stylised action that briefly but significantly shifts the balance between what we might call the literal and poetic dimensions of the film and in doing so disturbs the predominantly light-hearted tone of the early scenes. I want to ask what might be at stake in this complex of decisions.

The significance of the lovers’ first meeting in the film has been carefully trailed, most overtly in Jeff’s complaint to his insurance nurse Stella (Thelma Ritter) in the previous scene that Lisa’s pressure towards marriage is going to cause ‘trouble’ and his perverse claim that she is ‘too perfect’. Their encounter is relaxed and playful, though it hints at underlying tensions. Lisa’s approach is loving and tender; Jeff smiles and accepts her kisses but makes no move to embrace her. Is it this that shapes Lisa’s dialogue and tone, as though play is her way of negotiating Jeff’s sexual reserve? Her lines are gently suggestive (‘How’s your leg? ’And your stomach?’ ’And your love life?’); her look and actions invite a demonstrative response that isn’t forthcoming. Jeff’s ‘Who are you?’ in reply to Lisa’s ‘Anything else bothering you?’ is a teasing continuation of her playfulness, but it simultaneously rebuffs the sexual invitation. Lisa smiles and pulls back, gracefully acknowledging that she is in effect being pushed away, and then engages in another playful performance, designed to make Jeff focus on her in a different way, by moving around the room, switching on lights as she announces her names (‘Lisa … Carol … Freemont’) and finally posing briefly for Jeff’s gaze. The interaction between them is played as comedy but beautifully dramatises the conditions that define their
relationship and the games that sustain but limit their intimacy. Jeff will repeatedly puncture the romantic situations Lisa attempts to create.

It is possible to imagine many ways of organising this action for the camera that would maintain the performance emphases and what is implied about the relationship; nothing here seems to presuppose a particular way of shooting or editing. For the third time in the film, the camera scans the courtyard before pulling back to the sleeping Jeff, reinforcing its independence from Jeff’s viewpoint as well as extending what is becoming a strange motif – the protagonist asleep.

The first two such shots occur during the film’s opening with its lively music, full daylight and flow of early-morning activity. Here, however, the atmosphere generated by the combination of the livid remaining light in the gathering dark of the courtyard and the singer’s scales, precisely timed to the camera movement, is distinctly eerie. While the action is anchored within the terms of the created world, the way in which it is presented denies the everyday. Lisa’s sudden presence – her entrance neither seen nor heard – borders on the uncanny. Her shadow precedes her, yet when we see Lisa’s face the space behind her is dark and there is only a hint of back-lit halo in her hair: available light, such as it is, comes from outside the apartment. The condition of the shadow’s visibility, its presence to us, is its impossibility within the world of the film. In a parallel decision, the optical manipulation of the kiss momentarily breaks with the normal flow of time. The stylistic register here evokes the gothic.

The cluster of imagery is at its densest in these twelve seconds or so from the introduction of the shadow, bringing into sharp association two images of Lisa – her shadow and the stunning beauty of Grace Kelly’s face in close-up – with her direct looks into the camera and the step-printing that creates a brief tremor, akin to slow motion, making the movement into the kiss slightly, almost intangibly, strange. The suppression of ambient sound after the soprano ends her scales further abstracts the whole passage of action and intensifies its poetic charge. Although the tonal disturbance that these images produce is short-lived, with the bantering dialogue quickly restoring the predominantly comedic mode of the film so far, the shift is marked and the moment has a connotative power that reverberates backwards and forwards through the film.

What should we make of these decisions? Some writers understandably evoke ideas of dream or fantasy. Jeanne Allen suggests, ‘The camera offers [Lisa] not as a mortal entering the two-room apartment, but suddenly appearing before the sleeping Jeff – a waking dream.’ 1 John Belton writes of a ‘materialization of male erotic fantasy, appearing … out of the dream of the still sleeping Jeff’. 2 Certainly the passage possesses the rich associations as well as the puzzling and paradoxical nature of dreams. It is Sleeping Beauty in reverse, the Prince awoken by Beauty’s kiss, the gender roles of the tale inverted. The shadow enveloping the sleeping Jeff evokes a familiar visual lexicon of threat, yet it emanates from the gorgeous Lisa. Nowhere else in the film are the connotations of dream and/or fantasy so difficult to avoid; in fact Hitchcock’s treatment, involving a shift of register and densely evocative imagery, seems positively to encourage them.

Backwards, the paradoxical images connect with Jeff’s anxieties about Lisa and marriage: she is both ‘perfect’ and yet threatening because he does not want to marry. At no other point does the film offer us such overtly opposed images of Lisa – the apotheosis of female beauty and desirability but simultaneously an archetype of menace, almost vampire-like in her silent approach to the unconscious Jeff. Hence, as Allen argues, this is ‘the point in the film where the simultaneity of lure and trap is most explicit’; 3 or, in Tania Modleski’s words, ‘These two shots – shadow and vibrant image – suggest the underlying threat posed by the desirable woman and recall the negative and positive images of the woman on the cover of Life.’ 4 The ‘underlying
that, without (1951) and of Uncle it is clear that Hitchcock wants the spectator to be alert to the pattern of doubling and to be able to reflect on its significance from the outset. Rear Window, by contrast, embeds its poetic dimensions in less eye-catching forms of narration. This has important consequences for how we think about the role of Lisa’s entrance in Hitchcock’s unfolding design.

To return to the critical literature, some writers make dream a pervasive concept in their readings, connecting it to the usual number of times we see the film’s protagonist sleeping (the beginning and end of the film, Lisa’s entrance and four occasions during the night of the murder) and the several sweeping shots of the courtyard that end on close-ups of Jeff asleep. For John Fawell, who usefully summarises some of the critical arguments involved, the contrast in scale between ‘huge close-ups of Stewart’s face and distant shots of miniature people across the way communicates an idea of the neighbours as various thoughts or as Jeff’s dreams – visualised, cartoon-like compartments of his brain’.7

Once such compelling ideas have been implanted they can seem inescapable, changing forever how we see the film. But in applying the retrospective clarity such insights afford we need to be cautious not to distort the film. When Fawell writes that the contrast in scale of shot between close-ups of Stewart and the other inhabitants of the courtyard ‘communicates an idea of the neighbours as various thoughts or as Jeff’s dreams’ (my italics) or Robert Stam and Roberta Pearson suggest that ‘[t]he first time we see Jefferies, significantly, he is asleep, as if everything we are about to see were in some sense his dream’,8 they alert us to interpretive frameworks that illuminate the way the film works but they imply processes of making meaning that feel too immediate and overt to be true to Hitchcock’s methods.

My argument is that the methods of the film imply not direct signalling of doubling or dream but the opposite, patterns of action and image that are gradually revealed and that take on significance through evocation and association. What is at stake, then, in the treatment of Lisa’s entrance is precisely its unique status within the film’s implied dynamic of response and interpretation. Lisa’s visit is a literal event in the film’s world, yet the condensed, overtly dreamlike imagery in which it is presented evokes Jeff’s neurotic anxieties as inseparable from the event itself. Because this is not a dream sequence and our view is not identified with Jeff’s, the effect is of his subjectivity suffusing action and place. His vision of Lisa becomes the heart of an elaborate network of relationships that connect Jeff to the world beyond the apartment. The threatening shadow links back, via the conversation with Stella, to the Thorwalds’ first appearance as the embodiment of Jeff’s view of married life, and forward to the elaborate doubling of the two couples. If, for Jeff, Lisa at first most obviously parallels the ‘nagging’ Mrs Thorwald (Irene Winston), it is startling to recognise in retrospect that, in a telling rhyme

threat’ is to ‘the male fear of impotence and lack’ that is intensified by Jeff’s ‘helplessness, passivity, and invalidism’,5 an idea that resonates both with the dual image of Lisa and the gender role-reversal (passive male/active female). In these powerful arguments the moment expresses, in its paradoxical imagery, what lies beneath Jeff’s bewildering objections to Lisa.

Yet the implications of such ideas are not straightforward. The fantasy or waking dream invoked by Belton and Allen are Jeff’s, yet this is not a ‘dream sequence’. If the imagery is dreamlike it is equally significant that the action retains its place within the flow of events in the film’s world and that although our view is strongly linked to Jeff’s (we experience Lisa’s erotic power before Jeff by occupying his position in space, and then share his look), the film’s point of view is not identified with his. It is the treatment of the action – the mise en scène – that, without embracing Jeff’s subjectivity, momentarily images the unconscious dread that underlies Jeff’s attitudes to Lisa.

Essential to thinking about these decisions – and to an overall interpretation of Rear Window – is that through most of the film the relationship between its literal and poetic dimensions is not flaunted. Unlike the overt rhetoric which introduces the doubling of Guy (Farley Granger) and Bruno (Robert Walker) in Strangers on a Train (1951) and of Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten) and young Charlie (Teresa Wright) in Shadow of a Doubt (1942), what will turn out to be the vital doubling of Jeff and Thorwald (Raymond Burr) is initiated as a low-key moment, the chance entrance of Thorwald onto the scene as Jeff talks to his editor on the phone. It is only in retrospect that we are likely to see how significantly the moment is managed, via Jeff’s vision of marriage as entrapment.

Other parallels between characters, that have been central to readings of the film since Robin Wood’s perception in his seminal chapter on the film in his 1965 book that ‘Each apartment ... can be taken as representing possibilities before Jefferies and Lisa’,6 are also discreetly managed. For instance, during the film’s opening, there is a cut from a close-up of James Stewart, asleep and perspiring, his hair slightly grey, to a thermometer on the wall, followed by a pan to Jeff’s paunchy neighbour shaving in the studio nextdoor, then angrily switching off the radio ad that blares out ‘Men, are you over forty? When you wake up in the morning do you feel tired and run down?’ before the camera moves on. The link between the two men in terms of the insecurities of middle-aged masculinity remains implicit; together with the forms of looking that will come to define the film’s structures of point of view, the parallels between characters are carefully woven into the unfolding introduction of the film’s world.

The processes of response and modes of understanding invited by these films are quite different. In Shadow of a Doubt and Strangers on a Train it is clear that Hitchcock
across the film, Lisa’s look into the camera and at Jeff is echoed when Thorwald’s more obviously threatening gaze moves from Lisa’s gesture with the wedding ring, up and across the courtyard, to meet Jeff’s eyes as he (and we) look through the telephoto lens.

The change of register at this moment bares the poetic dimension of *Rear Window* – it offers us a glimpse of the pervasive relationship between Jeff’s subjectivity and the fictional world that is at the heart of the film but that elsewhere is subsumed in its predominant style. Lisa’s entrance offers us what George M. Wilson calls ‘a rhetorical figure of narrational instruction’,9 it is a moment in which Hitchcock (briefly) reveals his hand.

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) has been admired by feminist critics on account of its ability to give expression to the psychological and imaginative needs of childhood, and girlhood in particular. The story’s ending, though, has been viewed with some disappointment as entailing a relinquishment of the power and individual creativity that the garden – in its secret state – offered the children. Their return to the adult-governed world is seen to involve a reassertion of the social structures and hierarchies of power inherent therein, as Colin’s recovery and reunion with his father (and the continuation of the male aristocratic line at Misselthwaite Manor that this signifies) is privileged at the expense of the increasing marginalisation of female protagonist Mary and Yorkshire working-class boy Dickon.1

With such a reading of the book in mind, this essay sets out to explore the very different meanings and effects arising from Agnieszka Holland’s reinterpretation of the ending in her 1993 film adaptation of Burnett’s story. In doing so, it will take as its focus of analysis the poetic epilogue (entirely new to this version) that closes the film, especially the moment of transition between the two brief shots making up this sequence. In analysing the rich interplay that occurs between voice, image and music, the chapter will consider how this epilogue offers an imaginative response to the implied dilemma facing the story at the end: namely, what happens when the children’s secret garden is no longer secret.

After the emotional drama of Colin’s (Heydon Prowse) reunion with his father and the excitement of the children’s joyful walk back to the house with Lord Craven (John Lynch), the epilogue begins, serenely, with a close-up of a water-lily pond. In the pond, a slender female hand, its wrist edged with a white lace cuff, slowly trails through the water while on the soundtrack can be heard a lyrical reprise of one of the film’s main musical motifs together with the haunting diegetic cry of a curlew overhead. In effecting this shift, the director immediately resists the ideological implications of the father and son’s walk back to the manor at the end of Burnett’s story, restoring us instead to a tranquil, private space within the secret garden that is unmistakably feminine in nature.

But whose hand is this? At first, we might be forgiven for thinking it belongs to Mary (Kate Maberly), whose voiceover we are soon to hear, but on closer inspection the mature, slender reach of its fingers and the sensuous manner in which it feels its way through the vegetation of the pond point to a more adult female presence. Another possibility that might arise on a first viewing is that perhaps this is an image of Mary, now grown up and still enjoying the delights of this special space, but the childlike status of her voiceover once it begins undermines such a reading by grounding the epilogue in the film’s present tense. Given the garden’s all-important associations with Colin’s dead mother and the film’s extension of such a link to Mary’s dead mother (transformed from distant sister-in-law to twin sister of Colin’s mother in this adaptation), and the more specific echoes in the long, white lace sleeve here of the dresses worn by these two women during Mary’s and Lord Craven’s dreams respectively, we are left to wonder whether the person relaxing by the pond is in fact none other than one of these ghostly maternal figures.

As the hand touches a water-lily flower and tenderly caresses it, Mary declares: ‘The spell was broken. My uncle learnt to laugh and I learnt to cry.’ The intimation subtly imparted by this image – namely, that Colin’s dead mother is still (perhaps now along with her twin sister?) the ongoing
presiding spirit within the secret garden – thus finds its natural complement here in the re-establishment of Mary's authority as voiceover narrator of The Secret Garden. Her restoration to that role brings with it another significant realignment of Burnett's ending, as the latter's emphasis on the father and son's reunion is replaced by a foregrounding of the harmonious situations of uncle and niece, the juxtaposition of the two clauses in that second sentence even going so far as to equate the resolution of the female child's emotional journey with that of the adult, aristocratic male.

Mary's attempt to sum up the story's happy ending in such a fairytale, clear-cut fashion is complicated, however, by the enigmatic, incomplete nature of the image itself, while her subsequent assertion that 'The secret garden is always open now. Open – and awake – and alive' (my emphasis) isn't entirely reflected in the camera's tight framing of our view in such a way as to deny a fuller, more revealing sight of the person relaxing by the pond. From Mary's point of view, this statement of hers seems clearly intended as a joyful affirmation of her uncle's fidelity to his promise (given to her during their reconciliation in the previous scene) that he 'won't shut it up again' and the continued flourishing of that special place as a result. But her assertion, while perfectly in tune with the story's happy ending, nevertheless raises the crucial question of how the more secret aspects of the garden will survive given its greater susceptibility now to intrusion from the outside world. And it is this that Holland seems intent on responding to through her composition of this image in a way that suggests the garden's resistance to yielding up its innermost mysteries. In giving us an only partial yet privileged glimpse into its private world, though, the director at the same time registers the film's receptiveness – its own openness, if you like, as a text – to the continued existence therein of other realms of female experience that lie outside conventional frameworks of perception.

This meditation on the garden’s newfound state of openness is greatly extended and enriched in the second part of the epilogue when, as Mary utters the words 'Open – and awake – and alive', the camera begins, very gradually, to lift and tilt upwards until it takes in a view of the first stone step leading from the pond. It is at this point that Mary begins her last line of narration. 'If you look the right way you can see that the whole world is a garden,' she says emphatically, while the camera continues to rise until the rest of the steps and the path beyond come into sight. It is only on Mary's completion of this sentence that the camera (still rising) manages to catch a fleeting glimpse of a young woman in a white dress (reminiscent of Colin's mother during Lord Craven's dream) as she retreats along the path. Lasting only a moment, this view of her becomes increasingly obscured by a canopy of leaves that appears in the foreground just before she finally disappears altogether behind a bush in the far right-hand corner of the frame. With this canopy of leaves now even more prominent, and with a combination of bird-song and female choral singing emerging on the soundtrack, the film dissolves to a high-level view of Dickon (Andrew Knott) riding on his white horse across the moors.

As the camera continues to crane upwards and away from him, Linda Ronstadt's rendition of the song 'Winter Light' begins:

Hearts call
Hearts fall
Swallowed in the rain

Who knows
Life grows
Hollow and so vain

Wandering in the winter light
The wicked and the sane
Bear witness to salvation
And life starts over again …

In enacting this shift from garden to moors, the epilogue takes us even further away from the upper-class, male-ordered world of Misselthwaite Manor, thereby completing its reversal of Burnett's decision to end her story by foregrounding Colin's triumphant walk back to the house with his father. But to appreciate the full significance and enriching effects of this transition we also have to consider the epilogue's roots in two earlier key incidents – namely, the moment in Mary's dream where her mother, having reached out smiling towards her, suddenly turns and walks away down a path in the secret garden, leaving her daughter distraught and all alone; and the one (prior to that) where Mary is interrupted in her search for the garden by her first encounter with Dickon. Having drawn attention to himself by his laughter, the boy on that occasion was shown running away through the winding paths of the grounds and out onto the moors via an archway in
the wall before jumping onto his horse and riding off into the distance.

Creatively imagined in ways that are once again unique to this particular adaptation of Burnett’s story, both of these moments deal with situations where important people in Mary’s life are shown turning and hurrying away from her. But if the one involving her mother seems designed to re-enact her sense of abandonment as a young child (in not feeling loved and in being left alone following her parents’ death), then the one relating to Dickon carries much more positive suggestions, associated as it is with childlike notions of play (she is now prompted to chase after him) and, considering the look of curiosity she gives him on arriving herself at the archway, emerging friendship and attraction between them. The precise timing of Dickon’s appearance, following on directly as it does from Mary’s appeal to the robin, perched on the handle of a nearby spade, to lead her to the garden (“If you know the way, show me”), is crucial in suggesting the boy’s potential to act as an alternative guide for Mary. Someone who, rather than directing her to the ‘womb-like’ space of the garden, is capable of drawing her away from this and out towards a wilder, less protective realm redolent of freedom, independence and the discovery of romantic desire.

In invoking and reworking these two visual tropes (the mother’s act of walking away down a path in the garden, Dickon’s act of riding out onto the moors), the epilogue therefore brings them together in ways that now invite them to be read as two parts of one overall continuum of movement. The exact structuring of the film’s last two shots – as the woman is shown exiting to the right of frame in the first, only for Dickon to pick up the trajectory of her movement through his appearance from left of frame in the next – is vital in generating such an effect and this is enhanced all the more by the use of a dissolve to hold them together. The superimposition arising from such a device in fact creates the very particular impression of Dickon emerging from the canopy of leaves that had first obscured our fleeting glimpse of this woman, prior to her disappearance behind a bush. The mother’s act of walking away during Mary’s dream is consequently transformed through this process of juxtaposition from its original negative meaning of abandonment into something signifying progression and release: the woman’s retreat down the path and out of sight is now readable on this occasion as a gesture of freedom and independence for both adult female and child and one that, provoking none of Mary’s earlier distress, seems to pave the way for this transition into the world outside. And if the open-ended vision of Dickon riding away across the moors seems designed to symbolise the child’s journey towards independence and growing up, then the manner in which the film dissolves from the previous shot to this invites us to consider such a process as involving not a rejection of the maternal figure but a continuation of the values and qualities she embodies.

This is accentuated by the fact that it is, appropriately, Dickon – a boy rendered Other by his working-class position and embodying ‘feminine’ qualities of nurturing through his caring for animals and nature – who picks up the impetus and direction of that woman’s movement, and this underlying sense of him as an extension of the maternal figure finds further expression in the mirroring of the woman’s white dress in the colour of his shirt and horse. Ronstadt’s song (the darker thematics of which develop the garden’s own associations with nature’s cycle of life, death and rebirth) adds another dimension to Dickon’s links with the feminine, while the use of an ascending chorus of female voices as an aural bridge between the two shots also helps generate a feeling of the mother’s spirit being released and diffused out onto the moors.

It is not only the mother whose sensibility finds outlet in this way but Mary too, since it is her newly discovered vision of the ‘whole world [as] a garden’ that the film seeks to realise in this concluding shot. Its effectiveness in doing so owes much to Holland’s rich orchestration of a whole range of detailed continuities between these two spaces. We have already noted one such instance of this in the aural bridge created by the rising chorus of female voices that marks the beginning of Ronstadt’s song, and this is reflected in the craning of the camera itself as it rises away from the pond right up into the trees in the garden before soaring high above the heath. This camera trajectory in turn reveals another visual link, with the close-up view of the water-lily pond eventually giving way to the image of a distant tarn. The use of a dissolve also results in the garden’s canopy of leaves being momentarily superimposed over the heather-clad moors and this visual overlapping is beautifully mirrored on the soundtrack through the carrying forward of the garden’s glorious bird-song into the film’s final stunning vista.

Awareness of such effects counters the sense of class isolation otherwise invoked by the camera’s retreating aerial view of Dickon, gesturing instead towards Mary’s deepening emotional affinity with this character who, having imparted his vision of nature to her, now becomes part of her own pastoral outlook. In allowing Mary to arrive at this point of insight, the film thereby completes a broader transformation of perspective that began earlier in the narrative when she was shown telling Colin a story she’d learnt back in India about a young god who was just like other people except for the fact that ‘when you looked down his throat you could see the whole universe there’. This is something that Colin initially finds impossible to accept, using science and rationality to argue that ‘it doesn’t make sense … it’s so stupid’. But his scornful rejection of the magical properties of children’s fiction is completely discarded when, on entering the secret garden for
the first time, he attempts to explain his feelings of fullness and wonderment by saying, 'It's like the story', and adding (as he points to his chest), 'The whole universe is in here.' In giving expression to Mary's vision of 'the whole world [as] a garden' in its final shot, the film thus extends its fascination with the imaginative flexibility of the child's perspective and in a way that now seems intent on suggesting the need to move on from that earlier process of internalising the garden's wonders to learning to project what one has discovered from it onto one's experience of the world outside.

In doing so, the film's epilogue refuses a more conventionally pessimistic reading of the story's ending, the implied question of what will happen now that the secret garden is no longer secret being met not with an admission of its vulnerability to intrusion from the outside world (something that the enigmatic image of the woman's hand trailing through the water-lily pond strenuously resists) but with an assertion, rather, of the garden's capacity to expand outwards into the child's experience of the world at large. As such, the epilogue fulfils the director's overall designs in opening up *The Secret Garden* as a text to its earlier complexities, with Holland using the distinctive properties of film to breathe new life into the story's ending. To extend the meaning of Mary's closing voiceover, one might indeed be tempted to sum up the achievements of this adaptation in the following terms: 'The Secret Garden is always open now. Open ... and awake ... and alive.'

**NOTE**


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


A Magnified Meeting in *Written on the Wind* (1956)

STEVEN PEACOCK

The meeting – that is to say the point of first acquaintance – of central characters is an inevitable and important moment in many narrative films. Some films build dramatically to a long-awaited encounter, creating an appointment fraught with tension and anticipation. For example, *Heat* (Mann, 1995) plots a ‘cat-and-mouse’ course of pursuit towards the face-off of cop (Al Pacino) and robber (Robert De Niro), in doing so, infamously bringing these two actors together on screen for the very first time. Others shape the moment of meeting as apparently inconsequential or happening, only later revealing its significance (in films from *City Lights* [Chaplin, 1931] to *Psycho* [Hitchcock, 1960] to *Pulp Fiction* [Tarantino, 1994]). Still more simply pass over the instant, marking a necessary social contract without ceremony (getting on with business), or immediately declare their impact (as a femme fatale walks into the office of a suddenly flustered PI, or, more strangely, as the eponymous protagonist apparently comes back from the dead to meet the entranced gumshoe in *Laura* [1944]).

The meeting in *Written on the Wind* (Sirk, 1956) finds ways to present a first encounter that is both exaggerated and indeterminate. We are five minutes into the film. In the hot nightspot setting of ‘21’, oil tycoon Kyle Hadley (Robert Stack) is introduced for the first time to his future wife Lucy (Lauren Bacall) arriving with his best friend Mitch (Rock Hudson). The film moves to the meeting via two preparatory moments: Lucy and Mitch whisking to ‘21’ in a taxi, and Kyle waiting (with two stopgap companions) for their arrival. Kyle has routinely arranged to see Mitch (and, customarily, he gets what he wants). The appearance of Lucy is a pleasant surprise.

One would tend to overlook this meeting in a film filled with more demonstrative instances of dramatic richness. Elsewhere in this book, and across his work, Andrew Klevan has explored ordinary, in-between or ‘apparently unrealised’ moments in film. In the light of Klevan’s work, I am interested in looking at a moment that expresses ‘apparently unrealised’ feeling within an environment of dramatic amplification. The meeting in *Written on the Wind* is both passing and emphatic; diffuse impressions float around forceful declarations. It takes its lead from Kyle Hadley: insistent arrangements of mise en scène convey this character’s tendency for overbearing displays. At the same time, the film’s compositions carry subtle appeals and drifting concerns. Showy signs of décor, gesture and colouring match aspects of Kyle’s declamatory presence, but also prickle with subliminal energies.

The channelling of psychological elements into style is a noted characteristic of melodramas like *Written on the Wind*. As Thomas Elsaesser famously suggests in ‘Tales of Sound and Fury’, such films often present ‘a sublimation of dramatic conflict into décor, colour, gesture and composition of the frame, which in the best melodramas is perfectly thematised in terms of the characters’ emotional and psychological predicaments’. *Written on the Wind* offers exemplary renderings and Elsaesser draws out one such instance from the film, detailing how:

> When Robert Stack … standing by the window he has just opened to get some fresh air into an extremely heavy family atmosphere, hears of Lauren Bacall expecting a baby, the most eloquent thing about his misery is the way in which he squeezes himself into the frame of the half-open window, every word his wife says to him bringing torment to his lacerated soul and body.

The moment of first meeting highlights a different handling of suggestive mise en scène. While it presents a ‘sublimation of dramatic conflict into décor’, the sequence is foremost charged with Kyle’s assertiveness. It rearranges the melodramatic effect described by Elsaesser. Instead of a small gesture eloquently capturing a hidden magnitude of feeling (the totality of ‘torment’), expressions of overstatement convey more mute impulses. At this point in the film, Kyle can’t help showing off, and his brash displays are subtly revealing.

In the first of the two precursory instants, red colouring, while bold, expresses something more diffuse. The colour’s forceful presence in the frame is suggestive of undecided
associations that remain, for the characters in this scene, ‘apparently unrealised’. A pattern of red picks up as Mitch and Lucy take the cab to ‘21’. Wryly commenting on Kyle’s indulgences – travelling 1,580 miles for a steak sandwich – they rest back on the deep-red leather seating. The image recalls the shape and hue of earlier instances. Red placards stand between the two when they first meet in Lucy’s office. It also rhymes with the initial view of Lucy in the credit sequence, tumbling down on her red-backed bed. Like Kyle, red stresses the characters’ arrangements by implication. The tone of a conversation can become tainted by thoughts of an illustrious figure, especially in their absence. Lucy smiles in accord with Mitch’s remark that they might be ‘two of a kind’. The bright red of her lipstick plays off the richer, darker shade of the leather. Although they are not yet aware of it, they will become two of a kind only in their link to Kyle. The colour is assertive and allusive, forming a backdrop to a relationship that is both overwrought and unsure. Even before these three people come together, Mitch and Lucy are indirectly associated with Kyle’s brashness.

The next scene takes us to the rendezvous point, introducing how a focus on Kyle’s overstatement leads to more scattered suggestions. Already holding court in ‘21’, Kyle sits at a table with two female companions. The brightness of the occasion threatens to peter out. As if participants in a lacklustre card game, the women stare into their drinks, down to the flat surface and red edge of the tablecloth. The camera angle places the characters in the middle of the frame: a loud but jaded centre table. More animation comes from surrounding bodies. A course of bustling customers and white-coated waiters passes in front of and behind the seated party. (Far left, Harry the barman wipes a glass clean: a sidling reminder of Kyle’s craving – most of his conduct banks on drink.) A flow of agitation on the verge of the table hints at how the present company grates, while thoughts of Mitch niggle. In a roundabout way, the diverting appeal of Mitch coming is central, yet its significance remains indirectly articulated. Placing Kyle (at the) dead centre, the film asserts the position of an overassertive character. At the same time, in the surrounding bustle, it introduces the suggestion of more circuitous stimulations to come in this place.

Things on the edge make the scene’s domineering personality complex. Particular decorative trappings, placed above Kyle, evoke products of a lifestyle that hang over his undertakings. Set along a horizontal arc tracing top left of the frame down to Kyle’s head, a bright-red toy truck tilts towards a strung-up model biplane. These toys recall other more ostensibly adult objects that reveal Kyle as a childish hedonist. The red truck brings to mind the first sight of Kyle, racing along in his yellow roadster; the biplane is a pre-echo of his private jet, the means to take Lucy on an ill-fated trip to Miami. The models are flagrantly referential as symbols and at the same time peripheral, creating an impression of significance that is at once emphatic and adrift.

A decisive gesture encapsulates Kyle’s misguided force of forward direction. His first words of the restaurant scene – ‘Harry, put it on my tab’ – are accompanied by a jabbing forefinger, his hand cocked gun-like towards the barman to stress the drinks order. Like Kyle, the gesture is a little too aggressive: an oddly effortful play at playfulness. (As he delivers the order, little dragon puffs of cigarette smoke issue from his mouth with each word.) Command and gesture suggest this character’s belief in his belligerent control of surroundings and circumstances.

In film, a cut to a close shot often conveys a gathering of focus and determination, but in this instance it also points to more diffuse currents of feeling. The cut comes midway through Kyle’s description of the anticipated guest, as ‘Mitch Wayne, my sidekick’. On ‘my sidekick’, the camera reframes nearer to Kyle and his blonde companion (Dani Crayne). Tossing a spent match into the ashtray, Kyle casts his words as throwaway. Yet splitting the sentence in an edit faintly underscores the line, encouraging a little more attention on this particular turn of phrase. ‘Sidekick’ conjures jocular associations of a knockabout playmate. The dismissive edge to phrase and delivery suggests prescribed subordination. Kyle’s tipsiness adds another kind of slur, with ‘sidekick’ muddling in his mouth to sound like ‘psychic’. The precise form of this unconscious correlation hints at a more entrenched connection between the men, an unspoken depth of feeling now fuzzily floating to the surface in champagne bubbles.

Having described his ‘sidekick’, Kyle gazes smiling down at his drink, caught in a little reverie. His eyes dart defensively upwards when pressed on Mitch’s history by the blonde girl. The spat of patter starts with her blunt question:

COMPANION (UNNAMED): Where do his millions come from?

KYLE: He’s eccentric; he’s poor.

COMPANION: Ha ha ha! I bet.

KYLE: Honey, you lose; Mitch is just a country boy; the kind of assets he’s got you can’t buy for money.
Suddenly the stale card-game gamble of cocktail-hour conversation flutters back to life. The revelation of Mitch’s ‘lot’ is played by Kyle as an ace. Using his friend to trump the girl is rather vulgar, and frostily characteristic. The framing of the shot places the bartering couple under a brash piece of décor: an oversized gold coin on a blue placard hangs on the wall behind them. Its obtrusive appearance matches the garish tone of chatter and the crude stake of their exchange. Kyle vaunts Mitch’s natural appeals (‘the kind of assets he’s got you can’t buy for money’) in a brassy boast. Forming under the sign of the coin, his words are at once caustic, clichéd and longing.

As the characters chat over their drinks, headiness mixes with flickers of conflicting energy. Having swirled her drink’s olive-topped swizzle stick in champagne, the blonde girl brushes it against her lips, snuffed desire, with intrigue. The stick’s quiver adds an inflection to the certain refrain, suspending a morsel of interest. It is a needling show of diverse feeling, disappointment blending with intrigue. The stick’s quiver adds an inflection to the moment’s emphasis, pricking Kyle’s inflated claims.

Rather than cut to Mitch and Lucy entering the restaurant, the film stays with Kyle: it is a final act on the periphery of a domineering dramatic centre. The accomplishment of the arrival suggests Kyle’s (over)asserted authority of the instant and more drifting aspects. On ‘you can’t buy for money’, Kyle takes a proud gulp of champagne. Tipping hand and head to glass in an oft-repeated gesture, he swivels in the direction of the door. The camera nudges left with Kyle’s quaff, bringing Mitch and Lucy into view. Kyle completes a boastful spell and Mitch materialises. The coupled move of Kyle and camera underlines the tycoon’s sway. (That the camera movement is the first of the scene adds a further note of emphasis.) At the same time, a waft of Kyle’s cigarette smoke floats across the sight of the couple just as they enter the vestibule. At the point of his merits being voiced, his ‘assets’ now at the forefront of Kyle’s mind, Mitch steps over the threshold, but still there is a haziness about the effect of his appearance.

Seeing Mitch instantly lifts Kyle’s spirits, yet casts more ruminative musings out, along with the female companions. Kyle stands with a clipped farewell to the girls, dipping his cigarette down to fizzle in his glass of champagne. The small gesture is full of drink, snuffed desire, power and impotence. It is a transitory move on the cusp of a connection, all the more eloquent for its automatic execution. Emphatically completed, the little plunge sullies and moves into a stressed greeting.

After a passage of rich opacity, the first physical meeting between Kyle, Lucy and Mitch is dramatically decisive and uncertain. Lucy’s reaction counters Kyle’s pomposity, quickly thinning the moment out. Yet possibilities are in the air. As Kyle strides over to deliver his greeting, the film cuts to a medium shot of the three figures. Whereas the tycoon’s outspoken manner dictated the previous encounter’s surface displays, Lucy’s more demure attitude flattens a showy moment into formal staidness. The three characters stand in a uniform row, colours muted to tawny browns (for Mitch) and pale blues (for Lucy and Kyle), arms outstretched, faces fixed in cautious pleasurants.

This more restrained assembly is quietly expressive of things to come. The colours of their clothing set Mitch alone in the middle, beginning a pattern of coupling and isolation that finds its fullest expression on the plane trip to Miami. In this later moment, as Kyle and Lucy stoop to enter the aircraft, the couple’s matching light-grey jackets brush together. Mitch’s surprise presence quickly complicates a moment of parity. His tawny brown jacket fits with the interior of the plane: he is, perhaps reluctantly, somewhat at home in this familiar place. While accustomed to these confines, he muddies the new light tone of the fledgeling relationship, standing in between Lucy and Kyle in the overcrowded cabin.

Equally, on the point of their first meeting at the restaurant, while Lucy is sceptical of Kyle’s dubious charms, her top three open coat buttons may already hint at the consequent capacity to loosen her guard (and come undone). A curt handshake seals their initial encounter, their joined hands holding them together and forming a barrier across Mitch in the middle. Minor details make a simple gesture complex. Lucy takes the initiative, extending her hand first. Wariness meets resolve: her hand is gloved. (Only later, in Kyle and Lucy’s doomed and quarrelsome marriage, will the gloves come off.) As her hand finds Kyle’s, their eyes turn instead to Mitch. A love triangle of involved combinations is held in a stark tableau of greeting. The fledgeling firm link between Lucy and Kyle is bound across and through Mitch (he is, in many ways, the star-crossed abettor, a better man but go-between). They hold him in. Alert to the expected automatic enactment of
a handshake on first meeting, the film hints at the base impulses in a basic, impulsive connection. For better or worse, Kyle and Lucy are now joined, just like that.

In a quick shift, a sober first meeting’s final gesture suggests Kyle leaning towards his more usual lusty position. Grabbing at control, a presumptuous hand falls on Lucy’s shoulder. Her eyes are icy, yet she yields. Keen to change the outlook of the encounter, a grip on the shoulder allows Kyle to turn Lucy away from Mitch, to guide her into the den.

The previous dull party is put out with the dunked butt, making way for freshly audacious designs. Kyle leads his new guests to a clean table. Wealth’s enchantment again touches the scene, with Kyle as society’s sorcerer. The film does not make the change of tables clear; there is the suggestion that the two tedious girls have simply disappeared. The sparkle of fresh champagne takes their place, magically appearing in the melt of a dissolve. As the new threesome sits, the camera tilts to loom over the tablecloth. Whereas the red cloth previously added only an edge of colour, it now fills the frame in a burst of brightness. Here is the first flush – too much. The move matches the effect of Kyle’s own grandiose gestures; both overreach.

For Lucy, the day’s dealings are undeniably exciting, yet Kyle’s showy boasts and shallow clichés are embarrassing. Held for a beat too long, the commanding shot of the red cloth is suggestively emphatic. Pushing into an extreme position, this melodrama’s poise threatens to topple over into embellishment. The camera passes over the tablecloth, the closest it will get in this film to the surface of things: the moment of greatest magnification. Just as quickly, the dissolve brings the champagne glasses into view over the dense red block. The moves are at once declamatory and mysterious. As the camera tips, colour swells and glasses gradually appear, meaning is at once suspended, opaque and dissolved. While Kyle remains steadfast in his self-belief, the looming camera fleetingly and forcefully marks a little crisis. It urges attention and yet the significance of these urges remains unspecified. As in many other films, the future of two lovers hinges on the form of their first meeting; here a first encounter balances precariously – as the couple’s relationship will do – between crude declarations and more tacit disturbances.

NOTES
1. For example, Tag Gallagher writes about the plane ride to Miami, and the death-dealing dance of Kyle’s sister Marylee (Dorothy Malone), as she ‘writhes in sadomasochistic masturbation, craving power’ (‘White Melodrama: Douglas Sirk’, Senses of Cinema vol. 5 no. 36);
Fred Camper notes the scene in which Lucy is taken to an ‘unimaginably opulent hotel suite’ (The Films of Douglas Sirk: The Epistemologist of Despair, <www.fredcamper.com> (accessed 19 September 2009)); and James Harvey talks with Douglas Sirk about moments embracing the ‘blatancy of symbols … for example, the boy on the rocking horse whom Stack sees just after the doctor has told him that he can never have children … it gets such emphasis – Stack bugs his eyes and the music swells’ (‘Sirkumstantial Evidence’, in Lucy Fischer (ed.), Imitation of Life (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 223).
2. See also Andrew Klevan, Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000).
4. Ibid., p. 11.
5. For a sustained appraisal of colour in Written on the Wind, see Steven Peacock, Colour: Cinema Aesthetics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Peacock, Steven, Colour: Cinema Aesthetics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).
In the spirit of the line of dialogue quoted above, this chapter looks at not one moment but two from I ♥ Huckabees (Russell, 2004), both tracking shots involving Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman) and Tommy Corn (Mark Wahlberg) riding bicycles.

In late afternoon sunshine Albert and Tommy approach along the nearside of an urban, multi-lane road, the camera panning through 180 degrees with Albert as he passes. They ride across the mouth of a junction and negotiate the curb, Tommy’s bicycle looping out in a wide arc. A dissolve shifts us to a residential setting, now overcast. In mobile long shot we see Tommy; Albert then swings onto the street, as though from round the corner, and the two cycle side by side, gradually nearing the camera until they are held in medium shot.

They are looking for the house where Steven Nimieri (Ger Duany), the Sudanese refugee and the subject of Albert’s coincidences, lives with his adoptive family. Albert has the address on a scrap of paper, which he consults as he rides, but it is Tommy who sees Steven first, pointing off screen to where he is playing basketball on the drive: ‘Hey, is that him there?’ The shot ends between the first two words of Tommy’s question, with a cut to a camera position at the side of the road.

The shot is twenty-five seconds long, which gives time for us to experience movement and, in combination with the framing, to achieve a good view of how each rides. They are half coasting, but Tommy manages an easy, even action while Albert pedals in faster bursts. Tommy’s saddle is fixed too low, but this contributes to an open-legged stance, which evokes a relaxed but robust approach. The design of Albert’s bike is toward a traditional roadster, with hub gear, three-quarter mudguards, a basket and a rack: slightly prim, perhaps, for a man in his early twenties. Tommy rides a more modern, hybrid design, with wide handlebars. Albert wears a suit and shirt and his hair shoulder length.
Tommy wears blue trousers, a collared short-sleeved shirt with the buttons done up unevenly and his firefighter's boots, folded down below the knee. Both are unshaven.

The score combines an upbeat guitar rhythm, light percussion elements evocative of bicycle bells and a cooing chorus of male voices, broadening across the mix, as the shot gets into its stride, with the gentle addition of strings.

The movie has darted off in an unforeseen direction – one not anticipated even by the existential detectives, hitherto the film's leading source of the unexpected – and the whole enterprise is rolling through space, us with it. We have been invited to join the extraordinary, preposterous investigation of Albert's coincidences, and suddenly, spontaneously, we are on the move. Immediacy and duration, music and movement catch us up in this endeavour which the characters take so seriously.

That it is a two-shot is important. We have journeyed with Albert on his own before, in the Steadicam shots which appear under the titles as he searches for the Jaffes' office in a maze of corridors, first energetically then hesitantly. Now he and Tommy ride together. The foundations for the partnership are laid in the preceding scene, in which trust rapidly develops between Albert and Tommy, despite Brad's (Jude Law) attempts to enlist Tommy in undermining Albert, and which turns on Tommy's readiness to jeopardise his standing to create a diversion for Albert. The stand-off which ensues reminds me of an exciting moment in a Western, like Bend of the River (Mann, 1952), where various characters throw their cards in together, based on a shared respect and a sense of uniting against a common antagonist, even though they may be on different journeys.

Bicycles have a playful aspect and provide freedoms uncommon in other forms of transport, qualities which contribute to the pleasures and character of the moment. For these particular riders, cycling corresponds to deeply held views: Tommy refuses to use petroleum on ethical grounds, and Albert, who is much more concerned about image than Tommy, and his outbursts fail to influence those around him. Some good examples occur over dinner with Steven's family which follows:

TOMMY: If Hitler were alive he'd tell you not to worry about oil.
MRS HOOTEN (Jean Smart): You're the Hitler! We took a Sudanese refugee into our home!
TOMMY: You did. But how did Sudan happen, Mam?
Could it possibly be related to dictatorships which we support for some stupid reason?

Another of Tommy's condensed arguments appears in the corresponding movement away from Steven's house that provides our second moment. Albert and Tommy emerge to find the Jaffes standing in the flowerbed, where they have been listening to the conversation. Albert and particularly Tommy are scathing about the detectives' methodology, Tommy taking on directly Bernard's conviction concerning the benefits of recognising the interrelationship of all matter and experience, which Bernard tends to consider in metaphysical rather than socio-economic terms.

The second bicycling tracking shot begins, with Tommy and Albert pushing themselves along before starting to pedal and the Jaffes accompanying them from the sidewalk.

TOMMY: Okay, how does this connect? Mr Nyere's [sic] an orphan from Sudan who was chased by soldiers and crocodiles. So how does the love glow fit into that, man?

As the bikes begin to move faster the Jaffes begin to jog, Bernard pointing towards Albert to emphasise his point.

BERNARD: It's connected. Albert and Mr Nimieri share a great deal. It's just that … . Oh! Oh, my God!

Matching the speed of the bicycles, in the frame-right foreground, but for most of the shot unnoticed by the characters, is the hood of a pale yellow sedan.

It becomes more prominent to us after speeding up and as a new element of the score emerges on the right-
hand speakers. When Bernard catches sight of the passenger, he breaks off, and we cut to a reverse field close-up of Caterine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert) riding on the back seat of the car, motionless, staring fixedly.

VIVIAN: What's she doing here? … Oh, this is worse than I thought!
BERNARD: Oh, it's much worse.

The configuration of this second movement, with Tommy and Albert flanked on one side by the attentions of the Jaffes and on the other by Caterine's adversarial approach, neatly articulates the choice that confronts the cyclists on their philosophical and political journey. Tommy has already been reading the work of the steely Vauban, and against his instinct finds the idea that 'nothing is connected, it doesn't matter what you do' compelling, at least in explaining 'why people do destructive things like it doesn't matter'. After Albert has been thrown out of the environmental coalition, he too is ready to 'come over to [her] side', and the two leave the Jaffes, embarking on an encounter with the 'cruelty, manipulation, meaningless' which Caterine claims is the nature of the universe. Ultimately, Albert and Tommy will find a middle way, which holds the Jaffe and Vauban methods in dialectic, but this is not yet the case and the two are caught between competing philosophies.

It is characteristic of the film that such matters are played out in this absurd situation, and with everybody on the move, the Jaffes gamely battling with headphones and handbag as they scurry along, Vauban coolly chauffeured, looking not at Tommy and Albert but directly at her adversaries. Ridiculous and serious simultaneously, the film gives the action the same weight as the characters do.

Bernard doesn't mind standing in a flowerbed or running with headphones around his neck. His shaggy moptop and skewed suit suggest that he chooses his clothes deliberately but doesn't wear them carefully, consistent with someone whose attention lies beyond his immediate circumstances. Vivian gives more attention to self-presentation, dressing in a series of immaculate outfits, but she is equally prepared to run along a sidewalk in heels, dive into a trashcan or run through lawn sprinklers in following a case. The unself-conscious manner with which they conduct their investigations is matched by the film's presentation of these extraordinary pursuits.

Caterine's controlled entrance, in appropriate contrast, is in keeping with her hard-edged approach. Soon she has Tommy and Albert riding in her car, Albert's bicycle poking uncomfortably out of the trunk in one shot: a powerful detail, given Tommy's convictions concerning motoring and that the preference for cycling was one of the things which helped establish his friendship with Albert.

Despite the charming qualities the Jaffes bring to the picture, including their commitment to their clients, the film's journey exposes problems with the service their agency provides. Vivian draws on psychoanalysis, working through the evidence betrayed by personal behaviour. In cohort, but with a different emphasis, Bernard encourages clients to dismantle their ordinary perceptions and recognise a fundamental interconnection between the self and the rest of the universe, using a blanket as illustration: 'When you get the blanket thing, you can relax, because anything you could ever want or be, you already have and are.' However, Bernard's understanding of these connections clearly isn't working for Tommy, who comes to regard it as offering merely personal equilibrium without answering to broader social realities. Caterine's paradigm admits to the inequalities and destructive trajectories of society but delights in them, inviting her followers to embrace desire and degradation, wallow in the deep sorrow of existence and take cynical and self-serving pleasure in suffering.
The end of the film gives us Tommy and Albert sitting on the rock, Tommy still in his boots, Albert now with dishevelled clothes, reunited after the divisions which Caterine's promise of 'human drama' introduced between them. They have drawn on the personal investigation offered by Vivian and on the sense of connection which is central to Bernard's 'method', but also faced up to some of the more challenging consequences of recognising the interdependence of everything. (Also, Tommy has connected with Dawn [Naomi Watts] and Albert has worked through an understanding of his relationship with Brad, but that's another part of the story.)

Friendship restored, they plan to chain themselves to the bulldozers which will arrive to develop the marsh the next day, and the rival detectives, watching from the sidelines, agree that something important has been achieved. And should this charting of the film's philosophical structures have become unduly earnest, it's worth remembering that Tommy still has time to hit himself and Albert in the face with a space hopper (or 'hoppity hop') as the final image recedes from focus.

There remains a flaw in the film’s exploration of these issues, however, one that concerns Steven. The problem lies not with the dinner scene between the bike rides but later, when Caterine reveals her explanation of Albert and Steven's coincidental encounters. Her argument is that Steven, an orphan, is a displaced symbol of Albert's neglect by his indifferent parents, a conclusion which appears to speak to Albert and which the Jaffes largely go along with. The problem here – one that Tommy might appreciate – is that this reduces Steven to a mute symbol of Albert's family drama. The explanation claims a connection, but one that renders Steven's experience (or, rather, his reported experience) a simile for Albert's upbringing. This is a Caterine explanation, certainly, but not one which the film ought simply to accept. Unnoticed by the other characters, Steven gives a quizzical look as Albert and friends leave the building, but rather than leaving him a prop in Caterine's coup de théâtre, the film might have invited his thoughts on the subject of the comparison, and what the coincidences might mean for him; an opportunity missed, not least as Ger Duany is one of the Sudanese 'lost boys'.

Alongside its interest in finding dynamic and amusing ways of physicalising elaborate debates, the film is characterised by taking seriously the badly argued but deeply felt ways in which characters, and especially Tommy, express themselves. We know to invoke Hitler is one of the poorest forms of rhetoric and that if the ethnic conflicts of Sudan are linked to the pursuit of American interests then establishing this demands careful marshalling of evidence. The more cogent The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars indicates that US support for Nimeir and his successors, which included military aid, was indeed one of the major factors that contributed to the second civil war.)

Yet there are real pleasures offered in watching Tommy argue, partly because of his directness and disregard for niceties; and if Tommy were able to fully elaborate his arguments it would damage the film's qualities of vital comic drama, slipping damagingly toward the didactic.

Equally, though Tommy is right in seeing the relationship between shoes in a western closet and labour conditions in other parts of the world, his way of vocalising this is incendiary, and we can see why his wife has left him. The film achieves a balance here too. While emotionally and conceptually on Tommy's side in the argument with the Hootens, the dinner scene also manages to give his opponents weight, realising the members of the family in only a few minutes, and registering qualities as well as limitations. This is a tribute to dramatic construction and to performance but also to the tone of a film which won't reduce its characters to caricatures.

Relationships between people and events are among the conceits which narratives impose upon the world, and when they become too evidently a design we reach for words like contrivance and implausibility. In this film, however, seeking out connections and investigating coincidences are matters in which the characters are actively engaged, and major concerns of the film. That to an unusual degree everything is connected (and everything matters) also presents a critical challenge: rather than be content to plumb the depths of a single moment, this chapter needed to range widely across the film's length in order to put into words the ways both moment and film work. Any good film, and any sensitive analysis, obliges us to think in both dimensions: to consider the patterns and systems of the whole as well as study the interaction of different elements in the instant. Here, however, explicating the moment has demanded unusually extended recourse to structures and information deployed through time, and considerable care in fashioning an argument which respects these relationships in the form of a close reading. There may be something highly characteristic about the film in this regard, or lengthier enquiry might reveal this to be a significant feature of, say, comedic, as opposed to melodramatic, forms of popular cinema. For the time being, it can act as a reminder that if we are interested in moments, we need also be alive to connections.

I ♥ Huckabees is strong in both.

NOTE

BIBLIOGRAPHY
What happens at the end of \(8\frac{1}{2}\)? Guido (Marcello Mastroianni) is on the set of the film he has abandoned trying to make. With him is his advisor, the critic Carini (Jean Rougeul), who is telling him that his decision not to make the film shows great intellectual rigour. They get into a car. Maurice (Ian Dallas), a master of ceremonies and old acquaintance of Guido’s, appears; he makes a beckoning sign with his baton and people from Guido’s life, dressed in white, are seen and begin to move forwards. Carini’s discourse eventually stops, and Guido in voiceover speaks of a ‘glow of happiness’ that has come over him that ‘makes me tremble but gives me strength and life’ and of his readiness to love and be loved by everyone he knows. Maurice oversees the putting in place of lights and a makeshift circus ring, and a quintet of musicians, four dressed as clowns, the other a little boy in a schoolboy’s cape, appear. Guido joins in the organising and eventually joins everyone as they dance along the circus ring. Then only the musicians are left and finally only the little boy, who marches off.

There are various ways to understand this sequence. It could be daydream, a ‘wouldn’t it be nice?’ comparable to the earlier harem sequence. It could be a more transcendent vision of paradise on earth. Perhaps it is a kind of visual equivalent for Guido’s words, a way of visualising his ‘glow of happiness’. It might be an idea for a film, as earlier sequences in the film have been (for example, the Saraghina sequence, where little boys pay a hefty peasant woman [Edra Gale] to dance the rumba for them, a sequence evidently manipulated, visibly and aurally, with speeded-up motion, exaggerated close-ups and an acrid musical arrangement of a popular dance tune, ‘Fiesta’; after it, the film cuts back to Carini who comments that such a sequence would be of no interest).¹ The latter possibility does not eliminate any of the former: the sequence might be an idea for a film, or a daydream, vision or mental state.

The only things we can state with certainty are that it is a piece of film (part of \(8\frac{1}{2}\)) and the end of a film (to wit, \(8\frac{1}{2}\)). Like many sequences in \(8\frac{1}{2}\), it contrasts with a relatively conventionally observed overall narrative in which a film director, Guido, tries to make a film; this narrative frames these sequences, which can be variously construed as dreams, visions, thoughts, memories. However, in so far as the sequences are – also – ideas for a film, they embody a paradox, since they are not only ideas for a film but actually bits of film themselves. They suggest the magic of art: paint on canvas, ink shapes on paper, sounds produced from wood, brass and string, or fragments of celluloid strung together, which may seem to embody a feeling, disclose a world. \(8\frac{1}{2}\)’s framed sequences achieve this even while, indeed by, making more explicit the fact that they are – just! only! – filmic constructions.

The sequence is also not just the end of but an ending for \(8\frac{1}{2}\). All films come to a halt but most also have an ending that gives some kind of sense to what has gone before, tying up loose ends, explaining, ending on an emotionally satisfying note. \(8\frac{1}{2}\) has nowhere logical to go in this sense: Guido has abandoned the film, there is nothing to suggest his personal relationships are other than beyond repair. Yet the film wants an ending. Fellini regularly seeks out endings that affirm the fact of ending in the face of stories and possibilities petering out: Moraldo (Franco Interlenghi) in the train in I vitelloni (1953); Zampanò (Anthony Quinn) on the beach in La strada (1954); Cabiria (Giulietta Masina) walking down the road with singing youngsters in Le notti di Cabiria (1957). And what better way to round things up (literally) than the buoyant ending of a circus, the walk round of all the participants? The sequence achieves this because a film can magically reunite people (performers) who (as characters) are temporally, spatially and temperamentally drastically at odds. It also achieves it in the magic of moments that mobilise specifically cinematic and musical qualities. I turn now to look at two of these.

The first occurs as the climax of one long take, beginning with Guido entering the ring, then the musicians coming on, Guido picking up a megaphone to direct operations; they march past a bandstand and a high white curtain; the little boy marches towards the curtain which, on Guido’s command, parts to reveal people from earlier in the film walking down a long flight of steps (suggesting a
variety stage finale). The camera has not been still throughout this sequence, moving to keep Guido and the musicians in the frame, including turning to the right as the boy goes to take up his position to the right of the curtain. At that point, however, the camera’s movement ceases to be so functional and subordinate in relation to the characters but rather homes in, first apparently on the boy but then curving round and tilting up so that it gets the best – full-on, spectacular – view of the walk down.

With the camera movement, the music gets louder and also rises through two key changes. When the curtains part, the quintet is augmented by a full band, playing loud, slightly dissonantly, with a certain enthusiastic abandon, very much in the style of the circus or pit band in Fellini and Rota’s work. There is a source for this, the band on the bandstand glimpsed behind, but the sound is far greater than anything they could produce. At this moment in the film, the camera movement breaks free of its motivation in on-screen movement and the music loosens its diegetic moorings, both instead participating in the conjuring of this fabulous walk down. Part of the magic is the mesmeric effect of the frame of an image shifting of its own accord and the logistics of producing the shot (one take with such complexity of camera and on-screen moments and so many people involved) and also of the way mere sounds getting louder and changing key produce a sense of excitement. Part also though is this possibility of somehow almost entering into a fictional world, not in the illusion of identification, but getting nearer, sharing in the enthusiastic welcome for this walk down, helping to manage to have an ending.

The second moment occurs after Guido has asked Maurice to accompany Carla (Guido’s mistress [Sandra Milo]) into the ring. Guido continues to shout orders, there is a fanfare and Maurice leads everyone into the dance round the ring. The fanfare precedes a cut to an extreme close-up of Maurice; immediately the fanfare is finished there is the cut, a big jump forward, cutting onto Maurice already shouting and smiling to encourage everyone along behind him.

Rota makes great use of fanfares throughout his film work. Their pronounced syncopation embodies sonically their function, in both military and theatrical (especially circus and variety) contexts, of a call to activity, a herald of something new. They also have that ‘duh-daah!’ quality attendant on the completion of a magic trick as well as on a performer’s first appearance. Especially in Fellini, they occur as a new release of energy in situations of stasis or blockage, something fundamental to the sense of movement in his films, movement sometimes felt as confusion and headlong rush, but elsewhere as energising and healing, above all in the endless flow of circularity, something promised by the very basic architecture of, and word for, the circus. The fanfare – a mere sound – as if by magic provokes movement, and, what’s more, circular movement. It also heralds a dramatic cut, from Maurice in long shot to close-up and from stasis (of camera and people) to movement, and especially to the beginning of movement. One of Fellini’s most characteristic edits is to cut to a shot just at the point that movement is starting in it (that is, no or only an infinitesimal pause before on-screen movement but not coming in on movement already clearly underway). It is an effect of editing that produces the sense of getting going, of the release of energy and will necessary for motion to occur. The fanfare and this editing pattern together give a particular élan to the moment: ‘Here we go!’, ‘We’re off!’

The circular movement and gradual crescendo and key changes of the earlier moment usher in a splendid movement (and, in a kind of cutting, the people are already in movement before the curtain opens), but one that is all moving in one direction and seems to be going somewhere. The fanfare and the spatial jump, cut on incipient movement, of the second sequence, on the other hand, in themselves jerky and disruptive, nonetheless herald circular movement, movement that holds out the possibility of movement that can go on forever, the glorious neverendingness of circularity, going nowhere but keeping going. In both cases, one form of filmic and musical movement conjures a different kind of on-screen movement.

Conjuring. The man who leads the dance, Maurice, has been seen earlier in the film as part of a nightclub mind-reading act. There Guido takes him aside and asks him what the trick is. ‘There is some trick in it,’ says Maurice, ‘but sometimes also something real.’ Guido asks if he can
try it and Maurice’s assistant, Maya (Mary Indovino), the mind-reader, correctly guesses that Guido is thinking the apparent nonsense phrase ‘Asa Nisi Masa’. This introduces a sequence of children being put to bed, which explains the phrase as a childhood incantation that, as one of the boys says, will bring to life ‘the woman in the picture’ who will give the children treasure. The likelihood of Maya guessing correctly what is in Guido’s mind is so remote as to be impossible, suggesting that she really does read it. Moreover, it is magic heralding magic: what she reads is itself a magic incantation; the phrase is made up by a standard childhood game of adding syllables to words, which, when the additional syllables are shed, spells ‘Anima’, that is spirit, mind, soul.

The music accompanying Maurice’s act is the ‘passerella’ (walk past) that is played by the quintet in the final sequence. In the film, it is heard for the first time in the nightclub; it is presumably diegetic but its source is not made clear and it is a very characteristic piece of Rota–Fellini music. Often in the film, music that seems to be playing diegetically and unobtrusively crops up nondiegetically and obtrusively in the framed sequences. This could be explicable rationally: Guido unconsciously registers them as he goes about his life and brings them to the fore in his thoughts/ideas for a film. Yet this process too has something uncanny about it, another species of magic.

Fellini and Rota took the idea of magic very seriously. They consulted and took decisions on the advice of clairvoyants; Rota and his friend Vinicio Verginelli amassed voyants; Rota and his friend Vinicio Verginelli amassed

1. For further discussion of this sequence and its cinematic qualities, see Marilyn Fabe, Closely Watched Films (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 158–72.
4. I should like to thank Frank Kessler and Michele Pierson for conversations about magic and film while I was thinking about this article.
5. Helen Stoddart, ‘Subtle Wasted Traces: Fellini and the Circus’, in Frank Burke and Margaret Waller (eds), Federico

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Burke, Frank and Waller, Margaret (eds), Federico Fellini: Contemporary Perspectives (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

Miceli, Sergio, La musica nel film. Arte e artigianato (Fiesole: Discanto, 1982).
8½ (1963) 61–4
9/11, referencing/impact 153–4, 157–60
À bout de souffle (Breathless, 1960) 103
Aaron, Michele 123
Abdalla, Khalid 158
Adhikari, Mohamed 154
Adineh, Golab 8, 9
Agamben, Giorgio 23, 25
Agee, James 5, 7
Alien (1979) 123, 125, 162–5
Allan, Elizabeth 93
Allen, Jeanne 46–7
Allen, Robert 65
Altman, Rick 67, 95
American Gigolo (1980) 17
And God Created Woman see Et Dieu créa ... la femme
Andersen, Paul Thomas 25
Andersson, Bibi 31
Andrew, Dudley 82n
animation 119n, 127–9
Anne and Muriel see Les Deux Anglaises et le continent
L’Année dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad, 1961) 110n
Ansen, David 157
Anzalone, John 85
The Apple (Sib, 1998) 131
L’Arrivée d’un train à La Ciotat (Arrival of a Train, 1896) 71, 73n
Astaire, Fred 11–13, 13
L’Atalante (1934) 131
Atkine, Féodor 43
Auer, Mischa 91
Avec le sourire (With a Smile, 1936) 78–84
Bacall, Lauren 53, 55
Baignières, Claude 130
Baker, Josephine 80
Balzac, Honoré de 106, 107, 109n, 124
The Band Wagon (1953) 1–2, 11–14
La Bandera (1935) 86
Bani Etemad, Rakhshan 8–9, 10
Bardot, Brigitte 103
Barker, Jennifer 161n
Barnet, Boris 23
Barth, Roland 5, 16–17, 122, 124
Les Bas-fonds (The Lower Depths, 1936) 86
Basehart, Richard 63
Baum, L. Frank, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz 149
Baxter, Walter 93
Bazin, André 85, 86, 121, 125nn, 131–2
Beamer, Todd 158
Beard, Matthew ‘Stymie’ 35
Beatty, Warren 103, 104
Le Beau mariage (A Good Marriage, 1982) 43
Beethoven, Ludwig van 67–8, 116–19
Belmondo, Jean-Pierre 103
Belton, John 46–7
Bend of the River (1952) 58
Benigni, Roberto 38, 39
Benjamin, Walter 72
Bennett, Joan 166, 167
Benning, Sadie 161n
Benton, Robert 103
Berdouni, Omar 158
Bergman, Ingmar 30–1, 33, 74, 149
Bergson, Henri 130, 131–2
Berkeley, Busby 80, 82n
Berlioz, Jacques 86
Bernstein, Leonard 117
Bertolucci, Bernardo 125n
La Bête humaine (The Beast in Man, 1938) 85–9
Betti, Laura 15, 16, 18n
Beuver, Marie-Rose 108
The Big Trail (1930) 91–3
Bigger than Life (1956) 5
Bignell, Jonathan 67
Bin Laden, Osama 158
Biró, Yvette 23, 24
Bjørnstad, Ketil 130, 132
Björnstrand, Gunnar 31
Blanchot, Maurice 132–3
Blandick, Clara 149
Blood (O Sangue, 1989) 23–6
Bloody Sunday (2002) 160n
The Boat That Rocked (2009) 160n
Boles, John 171
Bolger, Ray 149
Bond, Ward 100
Bonnie and Clyde (1967) 67, 102–5
Booher, M. Keith 19
Booth, John Wilkes 93
Bordwell, David 65, 109, 123, 125n, 136, 138n, 166n
Bost, Pierre 87
Bourdieu, Pierre 71
Bowing for Columbine (2002) 117
Boyd, Billy 145
Braester, Yomi 116, 119
Brandon, Henry 98
Branigan, Edward 108
Braschi, Nicoletta 39
Braud's, Leo 87
Brecht, Bertolt 121
Galileo 5
Bresson, Robert 24–5, 131
Bride of Frankenstein (1935) 93
Britton, Andrew 121
Broken Blossoms (1919) 5
Broughton, Mark 67–8
Brown, Pamela 27
Brown, Tom 66, 68
Bruce, Sally Jane 5, 6
Bruzzi, Stella 137–8
Buchanan, Jack 12
Buck Rogers (serial, 1939) 111
Burke, Billie 150
Burn after Reading (2008) 160n
Burroughs, Raymond 47
Bush, George W. 127
Bustric, Sergio Bini 38
Butler, Alison 122
Cameron, Ian 2, 3
Camp, Cécile 130
Camper, Fred 56n
Campion, Jane 137–8, 138n
Cantarini, Giorgio 38
Canto e Castro 23
Capucci, Roberto 15, 18n
Les Carabiniers (1963) 72
Carette, Julien 86, 87
Carey, Harry, Jr 98, 99
Carné, Marcel 78
Carradine, David 20, 22
Carroll, Noel 123
Cartwright, Veronica 164
Casper, Drew 29n
Cassavetes, John 24–5, 109n
Cat People (1942) 66, 94–7
Cavell, Stanley 1–2, 11, 12, 123–4, 124n, 170, 172
Chapin, Billy 5, 6
Chaplin, Charlie 74–6, 77n, 83n
Charisse, Cyd 11, 13, 13–14
Chateaubriand, François-René de 133
Cheadle, Don 152
Chen Tsaiheng 116
Cherrill, Virginia 74, 77n
Chevalier, Maurice 78–82, 79, 82–4nn, 91
Chiba, Sonny 19
La Chienne (1931) 85
Children of Men (2006) 153–4
Chion, Michel 87
Cho, Michael 161n
Chronique d’un été (Chronicle of Summer, 1961) 133n
‘cinema of attractions’ 67, 68n
cinematic referencing 19–20, 131
City Lights (1931) 53, 74–7, 83n
Claudel, Camille 108
Clayton, Alex 122
A Clockwork Orange (1971) 117
clothing, as motif 15–17, 34, 35, 41–2
Coeur de lianes (1932) 80
Cohen, Leonard 141, 142
Colman, Ronald 93
Comédies et proverbes (1981–7) 43
The Constant Gardener (2005) 153–4
Conte d’été (A Summer’s Tale, 1996) 41–4
Cook, Pam 67
Copland, Aaron 113–14
Cortez, Stanley 5, 7
Corwin, Norman 27
Costa, Pedro 23–6
Cotten, Joseph 47, 170
The Countryman’s First Sight of the Animated Pictures (1901) 71
Courant, Curt 87
Cowie, Elizabeth 122–3
Crank, Fred 92
Crainey, Dan 54
Creed, Barbara 125n
Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (1935) 85
La Crise est finie (1934) 80
Critical Mass (1971) 144
Crowther, Bosley 105n
cruz Soublette, Andrés José 15
Czechka, Carl Otto 70
Dali, Salvador 124
Dallas, Ian 61, 62
dance 11–14
Dangerous (1935) 34
Dante (Alighieri), Inferno 107
Darling, David 130, 132
Davies, Bette 34, 34–6, 36nn, 93
Davies, Owen, Sr. 34
Davoli, Ninetto 15
Davy, Jean 130
Daybreak see Le Jour se lève de Baeque, Antoine 133n
de Haviland, Olivia 90
de Madeiros, Inês 24
De Niro, Robert 53
De Palma, Brian 25
Dead Poets Society (1989) 117
The Deer Hunter (1978) 115n
Deleuze, Gilles 125n
Demarest, William 172
Demy, Jacques 82n
A Dennis the Menace Christmas (2007) 117
Deren, Maya 6
Les Deux Anglaises et le continent (Anne and Muriel, 1971) 67, 106–10
Dietrich, Marlene 91
Dillinger, John 105n
Divine (1935) 80
Dombasle, Arielle 43
Donald, James 27
Donner, Jorn 33n
Dostoevsky, Fyodor, The Idiot 23
Douglas, Kirk 27
Dovzhenko, Alexander 7
The Dreamers (2003) 125n
Dreher, Carl 95
Dreyer, Carl Theodor 23, 150
Du Plessis, Rosemary 138
Dunaway, Fay 104
Duruye, Dan 166
Dussollier, André 43
Dyer, Richard 79, 81, 83n
early cinema 66–7, 71
Earth (Zemlya, 1930) 7
Egoyan, Atom 140, 143
Eisenstein, Sergei 7
Elias, Norbert 71
Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007) 160n
Ellis, Richard 67
Éloge de l’Amour (In Praise of Love, 2001) 130–4
Elsaesser, Thomas 53, 65–6, 67, 122
Emerson, Ralph Waldo 172
endings 136–7
Erice, Victor 23
Et Dieu créa ... la femme (And God Created Woman, 1956) 103
Exotica (1994) 140–3
Eyes Wide Shut (1999) 76
Fangelse (Prison, 1948) 74
Fawell, John 47
Fellini, Federico 61–3
feminist theory 137–8
Ferreira, Nuno 24
Feuer, Jane 81–2
film theory 121–4
Finkel, Abem 35
The First Auto (1927) 91
Flash Gordon (serial, 1936) 111
Fleming, Victor 90, 149
Flight 93 (TV, 2006) 160n
INDEX

The Flight That Fought Back (TV, 2005) 160n
Flynn, Errol 93
Fontani, Amerigo 40
Ford, John 5, 98, 99, 101n, 115n
Forouzan, Mohammad-Reza 8
Fougeré, Geoff 138
Fox, William 91
Frampton, Hollis 144
French, Kersti 3n
French, Philip 21–2, 33n
Freud, Sigmund 17, 170
Fried, Michael 33n
Frome, Jonathan 123
Fuller, Samuel 25
Gabin, Jean 80, 85–7, 87
Gable, Clark 90
Gale, Edra 61
Gallafent, Edward 20
Gallagher, Tag 56n
Garbo, Greta 91
Garland, Judy 151
Garson, Greer 36n
Garson, Greer 36n
Gaubrecht, André 68n
Gauquelin, Paul 27
The Gay Shoe Clerk (1903) 66
genre, characteristics/referencing 20, 114, 136–7
see also horror; melodrama; musical
George, Terry 154
Gere, Richard 17
Gerry, Toni 29
Gibbs, John 1, 3, 169n
Gillett, Sue 138, 139n
Girotti, Massimo 15
Gish, Lillian 5, 7
Glory, Marie 78
Godard, Jean-Luc 23, 72, 103, 122, 127, 130–3
Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933) 80
Golsan, Katherine 85, 87
Gomery, Douglas 65
Gone with the Wind (1939) 36n, 90–3
Gorbman, Claudia 67–8
Gorin, Jean-Pierre 23
Grable, Betty 36n
La Grande illusion (1937) 86, 87
Granger, Farley 47
Grant, Cary 91, 128–9, 172
Grapewin, Charley 151
Green, Calvin 140
The Green Mile (1999) 155
Greengrass, Paul 157, 160
Greenwood, Bruce 140, 141, 142
Griffith, D. W. 5, 76, 91
Gunning, Tom 66, 70, 72
Haley, Jack 149
Haller, Ernest 36
Halliday, Jon 74
Hamill, Mark 111
Hamilton, Margaret 149
Hanson, Helen 66, 67
Harbour, Thea von 70
Hardy, Ann 137
Harlan, Russell 27
Härting, Heike 155
Harvey, James 164–5
Heat (1995) 53
Hedren, Tippi 172
Hélia, Jenny 86
Hembro, David 140
Hestnes, Pedro 24, 25
Hicks, Russell 167
Hill, Bernard 147
Hinds, Samuel S. 166
Hitchcock, Alfred 2–3, 24, 44, 46–8, 76, 77n, 124, 127, 128, 136, 170–2
Hodgson Burnett, Frances, The Secret Garden 49–51
Hoffman, Dustin 58, 59
Holland, Agnieszka 49–52
Hollander, Anne 41, 42
Holm, Ian 162, 164
Holocaust, referencing 130, 154, 155n
L’Homme du jour (1937) 80, 83–4
Hood, Thomas 136
Hoover, J. Edgar 105n
horror film, conventions of 164–5
Hotel Ruanda (2004) 123, 152–6
Houseman, John 27
Hron, Madeleine 154, 155n
Hu Yaobang 117
Hubner, Laura 33n
Hudson, Rock 53, 55, 77n
Hunter, Holby 135, 138n
Hunter, Jeffrey 98, 99
Huppert, Isabelle 59
Hurt, John 164
Huston, John 3–4, 35
I ♥ Huckabees (2004) 57–60
In Praise of Love see Éloge de l’Amour
Indovino, Mary 63
Industrial Light and Magic 112
Insdorf, Annette 110n
Interlenghi, Franco 61
Ivens, Joris 133n
Jackson, Peter 144, 146, 147, 148
James, William 11
Jameson, Fredric 114
Jaubert, Maurice 131, 132
Jayamanne, Laliss 121–2, 125n, 139n
The Jazz Singer (1927) 67, 91
Jezébel (1938) 34–7
Jia Zhangke 116, 117–18, 119n
John, Georg 70
Johnson, Douglas 60
Jordan, Dorothy 98
Le Jour se lève (Daybreak, 1939) 86
Journey to Italy see Viaggio in Italia
Jules et Jim (1962) 110n
Kael, Pauline 105n
Karajan, Herbert von 117
Keaton, Buster 150
Keitel, Harvey 135
Kelly, Grace 45, 46
Kgoroge, Tony 152
Khanjian, Arsinée 141
Kiarostami, Abbas 136
Kimber, John 77n
Kieda, Jullan 30
Kings of the Road (Im Lauf der Zeit, 1976) 25
Kirshner, Mia 140, 141, 142
Klein, Michael 109–10n
Klevan, Andrew 53, 124n
Klinger, Barbara 123
Knott, Andrew 50
Kosari, Baran 8
Kosma, Joseph 86, 88n
Koteas, Elias 140
Kotto, Yaphet 164
Kubrick, Stanley 76, 117
Kuhn, Annette 125n
Lacan, Jacques 143
Lacouture, Jean 131, 133n
The Lady Eve (1941) 172
Lagney, Michèle 88n
Lahr, Bert 149
Landau, Martin 172
Landry, Gérard 86
Lane, Anthony 147
Lang, Fritz 25, 66, 70, 72, 166
Langlet, Amanda 41, 42, 43
The Last King of Scotland (2006) 153–4
Last Year at Marienbad see L’Année dernière à Marienbad
Lastra, James 95, 96n
Laughton, Charles 5, 7
Laura (1944) 53
Law, Jude 58
léaud, Jean-Pierre 106
Ledoux, Fernand 85
Lee, Florence 74
Lee, Helen 161n
LeFaur, André 81
Lehman, Peter 101n, 128
Leigh, Janet 2
Leigh, Vivien 90
Leigh, Janet 2
Leigh, Vivien 90, 92
The Leopard see Il gattopardo
Let’s Roll: The Story of Flight 93 (TV, 2002) 160n
The Letter (1940) 36
Letter from an Unknown Woman 38–40
light adaptation, processes of 49–51, 85, 144, 146–7, 149
The Little Foxes (1941) 36
Liu, Gordon 21
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) 124, 144–8
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) 147
Loridan-Ivens, Marceline 131, 133n
Love Me Tonight (1932) 79, 82n, 83n
Lubitsch, Ernst 23
Lucas, George 67, 112, 114
Lumière, Louis/Auguste 27–9
Lust for Life (1956) 27–9
Lynch, John 49
Maberly, Kate 49
Magnificent Obsession (1954) 74, 77n
Makmalbhaf, Samira 131
Malone, Dorothy 56n
Malraux, André 131, 132, 133n
Mamoulian, Rouben 82n
Man in a Polyester Suit (1979) 17
Mangano, Silvana 15–16, 17, 18n
Mann, Anthony 58
Manovich, Lev 132
Mao Tse-tung 117
Mapplethorpe, Robert 17
de Marchis, Marcella 15
Markham, Kika 106
Marks, Laura U. 159, 160, 161n
Martin, Adrian 44n
Masina, Giulietta 61, 63
Mason, James 172
Mastroianni, Marcello 61
The Matrix (1999) 131
Maxfield, J. P. 95
The May Lady (Banoo-ye Ordibehesht, 1998) 8, 9
McBride, John 99
McDaniel, Hattie 91
McDowell, Malcolm 117
McKellar, Don 140
McKellen, Ian 144, 145
McKillop, Ian 110n
McNeil, Isabelle 132
McQueen, Butterfly 90
Mean Streets (1976) 115n
melodrama, generic characteristics 8–10, 53, 56n, 135, 136–7
Le Mépris (Contempt, 1963) 110n
merchandising 114
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 159, 161n
Mesher of the Afternoon (1943) 6
Metropolis (1927) 72
Metz, Christian 122
Mézières, Annette-Marie 133
Miles, Vera 99
Milo, Sandra 62
Minnelli, Vincente 1, 11, 27, 29n
Mitchell, Elvis 147
Mitchell, Thomas 92
Mordi, Tania 46–7
Mohammed, Khalid Sheikh 158
Moore, Michael 160n
Moretti, Franco 155
Morgan, Frank 149
Morin, Edgar 133n
Morissette, Isabelle 73n
Mortensen, Viggo 145, 146
Mosley, Philip 33n
Moulin Rouge (1952) 3–4
The Murder of Stephen Lawrence (1999) 160n
Murnau, F. W. 72
see also dance; musical; sound
music hall 80, 82n, 83n
musical (genre) 11–14, 78–82, 119n
Neill, Sam 135
Nelson, ‘Baby Face’ 105n
Newman, David 103
The Night of the Hunter (1955) 5–7
Nimeiri, Jaafar 60
Noble, John 145
Nolkin, Aurelia 41
Nolte, Nick 154, 155n
North by Northwest (1959) 172
Notorious (1946) 128–9
Le notti di Cabiria (Nights of Cabiria, 1957) 61
Novak, Kim 170, 171, 171–2
Nou, Voyager (1942) 172
Nyman, Michael 135
O Sangue see Blood
O’Brien, Charles 68n
Of Human Bondage (1934) 34
Okonedo, Sophie 152
O’Shaughnessy, Martin 82
Ozu, Yasujirō 6, 23
Pacino, Al 53
Paisà (1946) 125n
Pallette, Eugene 91
Paquin, Anna 135, 138n
Parker, Bonnie 102, 105n
Pasolini, Pier Paolo 15, 16, 17
Paul, Robert 71
Paul, William 77n
Pauline à la plage (Pauline at the Beach, 1983) 43
Pearson, Roberta 47
Penn, Arthur 103
Pépé le Moko (1937) 80, 86
performance, nature of 127–9
Perkins, Anthony 2, 170
Perkins, V. F. 2–4, 83n
Persona (1966) 149
The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema (TV 2006) 76, 77n
Phoenix, Joaquin 154
The Piano (1993) 123, 135–9
Pickpocket (1959) 131
Pièges (1939) 83–4n
Pitts, Zasu 91
Pollard, Michael J. 103
Polley, Sarah 141
Pommer, Erich 70
Porter, Edwin S. 66, 71
INDEX

Poupaud, Melvil 41, 42, 43
Powrie, Phil 81
Princesse Tam Tam (1935) 80
The Prisoner of Shark Island (1936) 93
The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex (1939) 93
Prowse, Heydon 49
Psycho (1960) 2–3, 53, 170
Pudovkin, Vsevolod 128
Pulp Fiction (1994) 53
Purse, Lisa 123, 125n
Putzulu, Bruno 130
Pye, Douglas 1
Pyle, Denver 103

Le Quai des brumes (Port of Shadows, 1938) 86
Quinn, Anthony 27, 61

Raising Arizona (1987) 117
Randolph, Jane 94
Rapper, Irving 34, 36
Ray, Nick 5
Reagan, Ronald 114
Rear Window (1954) 45–8
Reeves, George 92
Renoir, Jean 78, 85–7
Resnais, Alain 110n, 136
Richter, Paul 70
Rigolboche (1936) 80
Rimbaud, Arthur 16
Ripley, Clements 35
Ritter, Thelma 45
Robinson, Edward G. 166, 167
Robinson, Neil 137
Roché, Henri-Pierre 106
Rodin, Auguste 67–8, 106–9, 109n, 110n
Rodowick, D. N. 122
Rohmer, Eric 41–4, 44n
Le Roi du cirage (1931) 80
Romand, Beatrice 43
Romney, Jonathan 140
Ronstadt, Linda 50, 51
Rossellini, Roberto 15, 109, 121, 131
Rota, Nino 62
Rothman, William 124
Rouch, Jean 133n
Rougeul, Jean 61
Rousseau, Henri ‘Le Douanier’ 143n
‘Rube’ films 71
Rubin, Martin 82n
Salt, Barry 65
The Sands of Iwo Jima (1949) 100

Sarris, Andrew 99
Scarlet Street (1945) 124, 166–9
Schafer, Martin 25
Schatz, Thomas 34–5
Schiller, Friedrich von, ‘An die Freude’ 117
Schindler’s List (1993) 154
Schoen, Naomi 124, 126n
Schrader, Paul 17
Schwartzman, Jason 57, 59
Scorsese, Martin 24, 25
Scott, Pippa 98
Scott, Ridley 162
The Searchers (1956) 5, 98–101, 114, 115n
The Secret Garden (1993) 49–52
Selznick, David O. 36n, 90
Seurat, Georges 28
Shadow of a Doubt (1942) 47, 170
Shadows (1959) 109
Shakespeare, William 6
Shcherbakova, Alla 118
Shiibani, Ebrahin 8
Sherlock Jr. (1924) 150
Shimizu, Hiroshi 6
Shine (1996) 117
Shirley, Anne 171
Shore, Howard 144
Siegfried (1924) 66, 70–3
Silkow, Ed 36n
silent cinema 67, 68n, 74–6
Simon, Gwenaëlle 41
Simon, Simone 85, 94
Sirk, Douglas 56n, 74–5, 136
Sjöström, Victor 30
Skerritt, Tom 162, 164
Smart, Jean 58
Smith, Kent 94
Smokin’ Aces (2007) 160n
Sobchack, Vivian 159, 161n
sound 67, 75–6, 90–3, 94–6, 158–9
see also music, technology
Die Spinnen (The Spiders, 1919) 72
Spottiswoode, Roger 155n
Stack, Robert 53, 54, 55, 56n
Staiger, Janet 65
Stam, Robert 47
Stamp, Terence 15, 16, 17, 18n
Stanwyck, Barbara 170
Star Trek (1979) 112
Star Wars (1977) 67, 111–15
Stella Dallas (1937) 170, 172
Sterke, Jeanette 27
Stewart, Garrett 109
Stewart, James 45, 46, 47, 170
Stoddart, Helen 63
Stone, Irving 27
La strada (The Road, 1954) 61
Strangers on a Train (1951) 47
Stravinsky, Igor 25
Strindberg, August, The Ghost Sonata 33n
A Summer’s Tale see Conte d’été
Sunrise (1927) 75

technology 68, 75–6, 90–1, 95–6, 112–13, 114–15, 132–3
Tendeter, Stacey 106
TheOneRing.net (website) 147–8
Theorem (Teorema, 1968) 15–18
This Is Korea! (1951) 100
Thompson, Kristin 65, 124
Thulín, Ingrid 31
Thurman, Uma 20, 21, 22
Tiananmen Square 117–18
Toland, Gregg 121
Tolkien, J. R. R. 144, 146, 148n
Tomlin, Lily 58, 59
Tourneur, Jacques 94
Tout va bien (1972) 23
Towne, Robert 103
Truffaut, François 67, 103, 106, 107–9, 109n, 110n
Uncle Josh at the Movies (1902) 71
Under Fire (1983) 155n
Under the Skin of the City (Zir-e poost-e shahr, 2001) 8–10
United States, foreign policy 100, 127
Van Gogh, Vincent 27
Verginelli, Vinicio 63
Verlaine, Paul 16
Verny, Françoise 130
Vertigo (1958) 44, 170–2
Veyran, Marcel 86
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

While considerable effort has been made to correctly identify the copyright holders, this has not been possible in all cases. We apologise for any apparent negligence and any omissions or corrections brought to our attention will be remedied in any future editions.

The Night of the Hunter, © Paul Gregory Productions; Under the Skin of the City, Omid Film; The Band Wagon, Loew’s Incorporated; Theorem, Aetos Film; Kill Bill Vol. 2, © Supercool Manchu, Inc.; Blood, Tropico Filmes; Lust for Life, © Loew’s Incorporated; Wild Strawberries, Svensk Filmindustri; Jezebel, © Warner Bros.; Life Is Beautiful, Melampo Cinematografica srl; Conte d’été, Films du Losange/Sept Cinéma; Rear Window, © Patron, Inc./Paramount Pictures; The Secret Garden, Warner Bros./American Zoetrope; Written on the Wind, © Universal Pictures Company; I ♥ Huckabees, © N1 European Film Productions GmbH/© Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation; 8½, Cineriz di Angelo Rizzoli/Francinex; Siegfried, Decla Filmgesellschaft/Ufa; City Lights, Charles Chaplin Corporation/United Artists; Avec le sourire, Film Marquis; La Bête humaine, Paris Film Production; Gone with the Wind, © Selznick International Pictures; Cat People, © RKO Radio Pictures; The Searchers, C.V. Whitney Pictures Company; Bonnie and Clyde, © Warner Bros.-Seven Arts/© Tatira Productions/© Hiller Productions; Les Deux Anglaises et le continent, Films du Carrosse/Cinétel/Simar Films; Star Wars, Lucasfilm Ltd/Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation; The World, © Office Kitano/Lumen Films/Xstream Pictures Ltd; Team America, © MMDP Munich Movie Development & Production GmbH; Éloge de l’amour, Avventura Films/Péripéhérie/Canal +/Arte France Cinéma/Vega Film/Télévision Suisse Romande; The Piano, © Jan Chapman Productions/GiBy 2000; Exotica, Exotica, a division of Speaking Parts Limited; The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, © Lord Dritte Productions Deutschland; The Wizard of Oz, Loew’s Incorporated; Hotel Rwanda, Kigali Releasing Ltd; United 93, © Universal Studios; Alien, © Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation; Scarlet Street, Universal Pictures Company Incorporated; Vertigo, © Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions.