

Cinema, Memory, Modernity

The Representation of Memory from
the Art Film to Transnational Cinema

Russell J. A. Kilbourn



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*To Sandra and Francesca, stelle stelline
And to my brother, in memoriam*

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Introduction

Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Return of Film as Memory

This discovery of the Lumière brothers finally provided the metaphor for a memory which not only preserved images but also allowed them to move. In the end, isn't human memory just like cinematography, a combination of movement and stasis, a magic marriage of camera obscura and photography?

—Douwe Draaisma

To remember is, more and more, not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture.

—Susan Sontag

All film images are memories of their own inscription.

—Maureen Turim

Can it be that the memory is not present to itself in its own right but only by means of an image of itself?

—St. Augustine

INTRODUCTION: THE RETURN OF FILM AS MEMORY

One of the benefits of writing on memory at this stage in the development of ‘memory studies’ as a field of truly interdisciplinary academic inquiry is the fact that much of the difficult groundwork has already been done.¹ There is no obligation to summarize the long and complex history of thinking about memory in the context of what we once called in shorthand ‘Western culture’. This study is able to *begin* from the assumption that memory today derives its primary meaning, its existence as such, from visually based technologies like cinema; that cinema is not merely one of the most effective metaphors for memory but that cinema—alongside photography—is *constitutive* of memory in its deepest and most meaningful sense.² Beyond

2 *Cinema, Memory, Modernity*

the photographic image, this is the direct result of cinema's long-standing status as pre-eminent narrative mode in the twentieth century; the primary purveyor of a kind of iconic realism characterized at once by its representation of three-dimensional space and its complex relationship to time. Anton Kaes, writing on the cinema of Nazi Germany, advances what appears to be the same basic argument:

Images, fixed on celluloid, stored in archives, and reproduced thousands of times, render the past ever-present. Gradually, but inexorably, these images have begun to supersede memory and experience . . . Cinematic representations have influenced—indeed shaped—our perspectives on the past; they function for us today as a technological memory bank. (ix)

Kaes's notion of 'The Return of History as Film'—which Thomas Elsaesser adopts as a specific 1970s postmodern genre³—provides an excellent formulation of that aspect of my argument which deals precisely with this notion of cinema as "technological memory bank," but without the nostalgic privileging of "memory and experience." This formulation therefore also stands as a kind of amendment to Frederic Jameson's famous claim that "[it] is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think *historically* in the first place" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* ix).⁴

Far from bearing out the argument that "cinematic representations" as "memory bank" have 'superseded' a more authentic realm of being or identity, I begin from the counter-argument that for much of the twentieth and now the twenty-first century what we talk about, glibly and unreflectively, as 'memory', is always already mediated, whether by physically external, 'prosthetic' technologies of inscription or storage, or by internalized, naturalized 'technologies' of memory, where the latter are framed in comparably, quasi-metaphorical, quasi-literal, terms, derived from the former. As suggested, I am fortunate in that this counter-argument has already received eloquent presentation in a variety of recent books.⁵

Rather than re-traversing the same ground, then, I will elaborate a different kind of argument with a much more restricted focus on cinema—whether as mass media visual technology, dominant narrative mode, or forum for quasi-individual artistic expression. I make no apologies if this sounds like a somewhat retrograde focus, given current work on new media, 'moving image studies', digital media, and the much broader post-cinematic technological matrix that is contemporary culture. If anything, my general goal here is to theorize a still-incompletely documented transitional period in the history of late modernity as a cultural moment profoundly determined by cinema. In Leo Charney's words, "film became the defining art form of the temporal experience of modernity" largely because of its unique propensity to depict the present moment as it occurs

(285)—something previously apprehensible only as bodily sensation, not cognizable until after the fact—the very definition of a ‘traumatic memory’ (Caruth 202–3). At the same time, after theorists of modernity like Walter Benjamin, filmic montage was seen as constitutive of modern epistemology as much as modernist art practice (Charney 285).

MODERNITY, VISUALITY AND MEMORY

‘Modernity’, it goes without saying, is as inclusive as it is contentious.⁶ Historically speaking, ‘modernity’ here designates the modern era, beginning with the end of the Latin Middle Ages and gradual coming-to-dominance of Europe’s vernacular languages, but really fully emerging between the eighteenth and the mid- to late-twentieth century—a period in which a world under the sway of European political and religious authority was transformed by the scientific revolution, culminating in the industrial revolution and the various forces and systems of so-called modernization: urbanization, secularization, colonialism—above all, capitalism (see Long 1). ‘Modernity’ is that period which, whether it is assumed to be completed or not, includes within its horizon of concerns a preoccupation with or need for a subject, even a de-centred, de-territorialized or deconstructed one.

The question as to whether ‘we’ still dwell within a late- or postmodern period is also relevant in this study in terms of the history of the specific developments within film that I am tracing. I invoke ‘modernity’ here more thematically, however, in terms of a certain technological metaphoricity (see Blumenberg), to designate what Martin Jay calls “the modern era, variously described as the heyday of Cartesian perspectivalism, the age of the world picture, and the society of the spectacle or surveillance” (543). Whatever its other constitutive features, then—chronological, economic, epistemological, political, technological—my usage centres around the putatively ocularcentric nature of modernity, in which vision is the “master sense” (543; see also Lefebvre 286). Philosophically speaking, then, this sense of modernity is determined by what Jay (quoting Levinas) calls “the traditional philosophical preoccupation with ontology based on ‘the eternally present order of vision’” (554), exemplified, in the twentieth century, by cinema—which, soon after its invention at the end of the nineteenth century, “became the fullest expression and combination of modernity’s attributes” (Charney 1).⁷

‘Memory’ today is all too often invoked with inadequate theorization, the word acting as a catch-all for: (1) the *process* of recollection or retrieval; (2) the *form* or ‘place’ in which memory-content is both stored and lost (the archive); and (3) the mnemonic *content* itself: what is commonly referred to as a ‘memory’. This imprecision is only exacerbated by the confusion and conflation of personal ‘natural’ memory and forms of collective cultural ‘memory’—as often as not, is another way of talking about ‘history’. Modern

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theorists of memory have long recognized that in speaking of memory one is describing not a unitary subjective phenomenon but a grouping of cognitive functions—or, in terms more amenable to this study, a constellation of interconnected metaphors. These metaphors continue to be both familiar and powerful, most notably in terms of modernity's stubborn insistence on memory's *spatial* nature. This might seem to run counter to the more ‘psychological’ memory theories of Freud or Proust, for example, but in practice the two approaches—the spatial-visual and internal-psychological—are more complementary than contradictory, standing in contrast to those alternative models of memory predicated on time and duration, with their dependency on absence and deferral over the presence and plenitude implied in a privileging of space (see Jay 493–523). Proust and especially Freud are not cited so much as appropriated here somewhat liberally, for the rich, provocative—and thoroughly modern—metaphorical models they provide, as part of a larger constellation of analytical tools. The metaphors do not simply persist; they continue to contribute in an active way to the very shape of thought, even as ever-evolving technologies of representation continue to determine the dominant metaphors of social discourse. Today the metaphors may have altered somewhat, to the no-longer-properly metaphorical archive or data bank or ‘matrix’: the catachresis of ‘computer memory’, which, like writing in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, is a technology that *literally* supplements and perhaps even replaces memory in its naturalized modes.⁸

In a contemporary visually based culture, memory as ‘technology’, technique or ‘art’ (Gk. *techne*) all but takes the place of a ‘natural’ memory by supplementing and augmenting it. This notion of an artificial or ‘prosthetic’ memory stands in a telling homology with the classical ‘art of memory’, or *mnemotechnics*. Centuries before this, however, Plato, in the *Theaetetus* proposed the metaphor of the mind as a block of wax,

the gift of the Muses’ mother, Mnemosyne, [which is imprinted by] perceptions or ideas . . . as we might stamp the impression of a seal ring. Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression we have forgotten and do not know. (*Theaetetus* 25)

In one of his alternative accounts of memory, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates recount the myth of the origin of writing as *hypomnesis* (Gk: ‘sub-’ or ‘under-memory’): not true memory but merely an *aid* to memory (writing as *techne*: technology), and therefore an encouragement to forgetting. On the brighter side, writing in this sense also constitutes the basis of memory as *archive*: as externalized, prosthetic technology of memory.

The notion of a mnemonic *image* as the basis of natural memory is comparably ancient. For Aristotle, in *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* (‘On Memory and Remembering’) (ca. 350 BCE),

[I]t is not possible to think without an image. [. . .] Memory, even the memory of objects of thought, is not without an image. [. . .] One might be puzzled how, when the affection is present but the thing is absent, what is not present is ever remembered. For it is clear that one must think of the affection, which is produced by means of perception in the soul and in that part of the body which contains the soul, as being like a sort of picture, the having of which we say is memory. For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings. (29–30)

For Aristotle, in other words, memory is not part of thinking (conception) but rather part of the basis for thought, as an aspect of sense perception. A strong sense perception leaves a palpable impression or ‘image’ on the soul of the recipient; this literal image in turn occasions an ‘affection’ or emotion or ‘movement’ in the soul which is the direct cause of the memory (the process of recollection). On the one hand, then, memory in this sense—as mnemonic *image*—has the same basis as sign theory, which first developed in late antiquity⁹ and flourished in the Middle Ages: the absence/presence dialectic predicated upon the sign (mnemonic image) as stand-in for the absent referent. On the other hand, this notion of memory as connected directly to sense perception and attendant emotional response marks a significant diversion from the notion of memory as ‘writing’ as mode of intellection or rational thought.

Continuing a line of thought from Plato and Aristotle, Freud offers his own version of the memory as unconscious substratum (the “mnemonic systems”) upon which quasi-permanent “memory-traces”¹⁰ are inscribed as the result of conscious perceptions (the memory-trace remains retrievable, while the original perception does not). In doing so he anticipates by several decades Marshall McLuhan’s theory of the mass media as prosthetic extensions of the human sensorium (3–4),¹¹ as well as Alison Landsberg’s notion of ‘prosthetic memory’—while strongly echoing the ironies and complexities of the classical art of memory. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud had already written of “the trace . . . left in our psychical apparatus [by] the perceptions which impinge upon it. This we may describe as a ‘memory-trace’; and to the function of relating to it we give the name of ‘memory’” (687). In “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad”, Freud notes that he is

able to supplement and guarantee [his memory’s] working by making a note in writing. . . . [T]he surface upon which this note is preserved . . . is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemonic apparatus, which I otherwise carry about with me invisible. I have only to bear in mind the place where this ‘memory’ has been deposited and I can then ‘reproduce’ it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained

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unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory. (429)

In the decades since Freud a general consensus seems to have emerged that memory has taken on a second-order quality; or rather (as with identity or ‘reality’ itself), an artificial or simulacral double has emerged and developed alongside an ‘authentic’, ‘natural’ memory—indeed, for many people today, they are indistinguishable. Differences arise, however, in terms of the manner in which such an artificial memory functions, and above all how it is *valued* in contemporary global culture(s). For J. J. Long, modern subjectivity is “ineluctably dependent on external mnemotechnical prostheses” (163). This does not produce so much as it attenuates what I call the de-ontologization of memory; its grounding in social reality and its representations rather than an extra-cinematic, subjective interiority. This is a collective, thoroughly ‘artificial’ ‘memory’, constituted, legitimized and ‘naturalized’ through and by means of primarily visual media, most significantly cinema; memory *as* representation in a perpetuation of a Euro-centric privileging of the visual over other faculties and senses.¹² Moreover, cinema is read here as providing the viewer with not only the *content* and *form* of memory, but also (as Maureen Turim anticipates¹³) with its own ‘directions for use’: the required codes and conventions for understanding and using this crucial prosthetic technology—an ‘art of memory’ for the twentieth century and beyond. In short, ‘cinematic memory’ in this sense at best supplements and at worst destroys ‘natural’, human memory by naturalizing the technical and artificial, providing a seemingly ‘universal’ objective visual language for the representation of the subjective (re-)experience of the past. All the films discussed in this book can therefore be said to comprise a special category—if not a *genre*—of films that do not simply *represent* memory but, even more significantly, employ memory *as* the basis of a cinematic aesthetic.

ARTIFICIAL MEMORY AS LINGUA FRANCA

It might sound contradictory to emphasize that not only is the primary sense of memory here literary or, more generally, textual, but it is also intersubjective, relational, external; ‘public’ as much as ‘private’, general as much as singular: it is a ‘subjective’ phenomenon that throws into question the bounds of an individual consciousness. Contemporary theories of memory are always haunted by Plato’s designation of writing *vis-a-vis* speech (as presence of *logos*) in the *Phaedrus* as “*hypomnesis to mneme*, the auxiliary aide-mémoire to the living memory” (Derrida, *Memoires* 37). But this memory is not viewed as adjunct or ancillary to some empirical, ‘living’ memory as a cognitive function, which is after all a component of that thing, mind, which is unsusceptible to this type of inquiry except as ‘translated’ into textual form: “One speaks or writes the self . . . because

minds are unknowable" (Brian Stock 214). This is memory as a means or medium, mercurial and hermetic, an intertextual nexus or channel for the transmission of a mnemonic content as 'message' from one absence toward another: self and other construed as textual functions. That the art film has a stylistic and thematic advantage over classical or much contemporary commercial Hollywood cinema in this respect is evident in terms of the notion—to cite one of David Bordwell's truisms—that characters in art films tend to act without obvious motivation, thereby contributing to this cinema's alternative brand of realism (Bordwell, *Narration* 207).

Structured according to the logic of the trace, this model of memory does not remain within the opposition established by Plato; it encompasses, as writing does for Derrida, *mneme* and *hypomnesis* alike (see *Archive Fever* 11). In this sense (to adapt Derrida's famous formulation), *there is nothing outside of memory*. Most significantly, the relation between self and other in memory becomes paradigmatic of the ethical relation as such. In other words (to reiterate), in terms of modern subjectivity, memory here looks toward the extra-subjective and therefore the possibility of the post-subjective: a memory, if not utterly free of the individual subject, then at least not limited to or determined by that subject.

This book aims to shed light upon the translation and *migration*—the diasporic appropriation, recontextualization and resignification—of what might be called the naturalized structures of memory in post-WWII cinema, from the Western European art film to Hollywood to the contemporary transnational cinema; in other words, from the dominant model (in both production and stylistic contexts) to other, 'independent' or 'auteurist' models, moving to the contemporary hybrid forms that have vastly complicated the dominant-subordinate binary. I begin from the observation that recent studies of memory in film have tended to focus on dominant or 'mainstream' popular cinema, alongside other cultural-industrial products, thereby privileging Hollywood with its highly qualified, generally nostalgic vision of 'pastness' and 'history'. Of course, if one wants to consider cinema as a mode of *collective* memory then it is necessary to begin with Hollywood, as one of the first film industries to achieve truly 'global' appeal. Discussing the representation of memory in the art film therefore presents certain unique problems. First, historically the audience for art films in general is far smaller and more particularized than Hollywood's. Second, the apparent universality of cinematic representations of memory and/or history breaks down in the face of art cinema's *sui generis* qualities: with each example the techniques for representing the past are more or less different, sometimes adapting and exploiting classical film style; other times seemingly re-inventing a vocabulary of 'pastness' for which no interpretive codes may exist other than those which the film supplies the viewer.

Conscious of the recent 'transnational turn' in film studies, I have endeavoured to bring together here a representative sampling of films from diverse national-cultural *milieux* in order to comparatively analyze not

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just the formal-stylistic representation of subjective or objective ‘pastness’ (the ‘flashback’), but also the very *constitution* in (largely unconscious) cinematic terms of dominant *extra*-cinematic notions of ‘memory’. In the process I also examine the meaning and value of an ‘art film’ today, one of whose tacit functions historically is to resist the seemingly ineluctable commodification of the cinematic image (see Chapter 3). To say this is obviously to set the ‘art film’ alongside other, related or overlapping, categories within an English-dominated cinematic market: the ‘foreign film’ (characterized by subtitles); the ‘art house film’ (whose reception takes place in non-mainstream venues); ‘world cinema’; and now ‘transnational cinema’. As articulated by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, “the transnational comprises both globalization—in cinematic terms, Hollywood’s domination of world film markets—and the counter-hegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries” (1):

The concept of transnational . . . problematizes ‘postcolonialism’ as an attempt to maintain and legitimize conventional notions of cultural authenticity. [. . .] Alternatively, transnationalism offers a more multivalenced approach to considering the impact of history on contemporary experience owing to the fact that the issues of immigration, exile, political asylum, tourism, terrorism, and technology with which it engages are all straightforwardly readable in ‘real world’ terms. And increasingly, this real world is being defined not by its colonial past (or even its neo-colonial present), but by its technological future, in which previously disenfranchised people will gain even greater access to the means of global representation. (5)

The ‘migratory potential’ characteristic of the transnational film manifests not only on the level of diegetic theme, but is “apparent . . . in the very fact of the greater availability of a wider range of films to a wider range of audiences” (7). As a way to focus this wide-ranging comparison, then, I will examine here the manner in which *cinematic* migration reflects the migration on the more intimate scale of individual or collective *identities* thought of as relatively stable positions grounded in memory and history. Identities migrate, of course, through the flows of material signs—in this case, cinematic—that characterize a rapidly globalizing cultural landscape. Specifically, identities migrate, transform, and re-consolidate in the second-hand form of the cinematic avatars of selfhood, the protagonists in the films we consume every day. In effect, these (and other) criteria have determined the privileging as examples of postwar, contemporary and international films whose narratives centre around the protagonist’s overt ‘quest’ for or exploration of the meaning of her/his identity.¹⁴ All of the films discussed here have this very general feature in common—the narrative basis of a great many films produced since the Second World War, but traceable to the Weimar period and German Expressionism. These films, however, are

set apart by their focus on the role and significance of memory in this quest; a journey, whether real, metaphorical or virtual, that takes place primarily in spaces and times outside of or other than those of the films' diegetic present tense. Hence the application of the term 'memory-film' to this extremely large and diverse sub-genre, which remains open-ended. The filmic examples discussed herein are representative of certain stylistic and thematic tendencies, but the category can be extended to almost any narrative film. It is for this reason that the specific examples of memory films I analyze in Chapters 3 and 5 (e.g. *The Ring*; *City of God*) may not *obviously* qualify. That the number of possible examples is potentially unlimited I hope only strengthens my overall argument about the relationship today between cinema and memory.

THE OTHERNESS OF THE PAST

Cinematic migration entails a necessary quantum of change or loss, which is determined according to the degree to which a certain filmic 'language' remains legible or 'translatable' (in every sense of the word) across cultural-spatial and historical-temporal boundaries. I therefore wish to address the questions: What determines these spatial-temporal limits—the limits of various cinematic 'realisms'? What gets lost in the process of translation? What is at stake for the constitution of identity, whether individual or collective, or for the self's consequent understanding of otherness? After all, for many audiences today the most radical otherness resides not in another place or in the future but in the past itself—the very definition of an absent presence. As technologies like cinema grant us the means to remember, and therefore a putative understanding of the past, memory (in any pre-cinematic sense) is gradually eroded—forgotten. We can no longer remember what it was like to remember in a world before cinema, just as the early nineteenth-century reader likely already had difficulty imagining a world unmediated by the novel. The feature film remains the dominant narrative form in the twenty-first century; hence the importance and urgency of achieving a greater understanding of memory's determination, in a very meaningful sense, by cinema.

THE CONTEMPORARY 'ART FILM'¹⁵

In the postwar period (1940s on), with the break-up of the studio system in Hollywood and consequent (temporary) weakening of American film's domination of the international market—alongside other factors, such as the advent of television—a body of films began to emerge in Europe (and later Japan) that came to be categorized as 'art cinema'. Most critics agree that a new brand of cinematic modernism emerged in the postwar period,

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characterized by specific technical, stylistic, industrial and other differences from the first modernist period of the silent film. John Orr, for example, analyzes “the neo-modern turn of the cinema over a period of twenty years between 1958 and 1978 in its relationship to Western modernity” (ix). For Andras Balint Kovacs, likewise, “European Art Cinema” flourishes from 1950 to 1980. What most critics do not stress, however—apart from Maureen Turim—is that the most salient difference may be found in the “major transformations” undergone in “the expression of cinematic temporality” in the 1950s, exemplified in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Turim 210).¹⁶ There is also general critical agreement that this kind of formal and narrational transformation is characteristic of those art films, especially in France, which owe a debt to the modernist literary tradition, especially the *nouveau roman*.¹⁷

Given the critical consensus regarding the more or less direct influence of modernist literature (especially the *nouveau roman*) on postwar art film narrative, I seek here not to argue for the medium specificity and autonomy of the latter so much as to negotiate the complex relationship between the two mediums, making use of both adaptation theory and the contemporary discourse of intermediality. For, if this discourse is to be of any real critical-analytical value, it has to help shed a new and revealing light on older questions of influence, imitation, allusion, adaptation and intertextuality. This is also of course one of the implications of adopting a quasi-social constructionist approach; while close attention will be paid when possible to specific details of scene, shot and stylistic element, the film’s larger cultural-historical context will never be far away, especially in terms of its intertextual relations to other texts, filmic and otherwise.

Turim argues that, while the first French New Wave films by Godard and Truffaut and others by and large retained a linear temporal structure, avoiding frequent flashbacks, many of the other filmmakers (Resnais, Robbe-Grillet, Duras), whose roots were in literature, make frequent use of flashbacks and other “temporally disjunct inserts” in wholly original ways (210; 216–17). Of course to claim that certain films are more ‘influenced’ by literary stylistic (or intertextual) elements than others demands a clarification that theorists of art cinema do not always have space to offer. As Turim points out, the question of the representation of temporal relations in modernist film and literature is complex: “If anything it is a constant give and take between language and image, the filmic image seeking a transformative relationship to the literary voice in these modernist films” (225). The fact remains that all the major theorists of the art cinema agree on this point of a meaningful debt owed to modernist literature.¹⁸ In this study, therefore, I will identify and analyze such points of contact in a representative sampling of films.

According to David Bordwell, ‘art cinema’ names “a distinct mode of film practice, possessing a definite historical existence, a set of formal conventions, and implicit viewing procedures” (“Art Cinema” 774–75).¹⁹ In

his two-volume work on cinema Deleuze famously figures this distinction between classical Hollywood cinema and the postwar European art cinema not in terms of production conditions but in terms of dominant style; as a distinction in other words between the “movement [or action]-image” and the “time-image”.²⁰ This essentially comes down to the distinction between two stylistic dominants—montage (in the movement-image) versus the long take (time-image), invoking two complementary conceptions of time: “the distortions in modern cinema are often motivated not by ‘Newtonian’ time [classical style; movement-image] but rather by ‘psychological’ time of the sort discussed by Bergson” (qtd. in Bordwell, *Narration* 209). Deleuze delineates what is for him the crucial difference between these two kinds of time, seeing in the temporary ascendance of the Bergsonian psychological temporality of the art film’s ‘time-’ and ‘memory-’ (or ‘recollection-’) images the fulfillment of what Kovács labels the ‘evolutionary’ model of film history (33–34). In his idiosyncratic typology, Deleuze enumerates “the five apparent characteristics of the new image,” forged, as he claims (following Bazin) under the influence of Italian neo-realism (*Cinema 1* 212):

the dispersive situation, the deliberately weak links, the voyage form, the consciousness of clichés, the condemnation of the plot. It is the crisis of both the action-image and the American Dream. Everywhere there is a re-examination of the sensory-motor schema; and the Actors Studio becomes the object of severe criticism, at the same time as it undergoes an evolution and internal splits. (210)

In this respect, I am in agreement with Kovács’s position that, historically speaking, more than a simplistically oppositional relation, European and international art cinema has always been in productive dialogue with an “action-centred” Hollywood cinema (17). In a deeper historical view, as Bordwell shows, while the art cinema in the first half of the twentieth century “has its roots in an opposition to Hollywood” (*Narration* 229), this is complicated by the fact that, in the postwar European cinema, a new kind of “saleable differentiated product” emerged:

The fullest flower of the art cinema paradigm occurred at the moment that the combination of novelty and nationalism became the marketing device it has been ever since: the French New Wave, New Polish Cinema, New Hungarian Cinema, New German Cinema. . . . (*Narration* 231)

Hence my contention that a constitutive resistance to the commodification of the filmic image (exemplified by Hollywood) is complicated by the art film’s own susceptibility to appropriation, cooptation and commodification, at least on the formal-stylistic level, through inter- and transtextual or transcultural exchange:

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The force of the European art film lay in large measure in making not genre but the author's oeuvre the pertinent set of transtextual relations, but the Hollywood cinema absorbed those aspects of art-cinema narration which fitted generic functions. (*Narration* 232)

This claim is of course dependent on a notion of the 'art film' as a quasi-unified, internally consistent aesthetic object.

Historically speaking I would place the turn from a properly 'modernist' international art cinema in the period from the 1950s—signalled less by the appearance of the French New Wave than by, for example, Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) or Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959)—to the mid-1970s, with the beginning of a whole new paradigm in American commercial cinema whose benchmark films are of course the two first summer blockbusters *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977). Interestingly, at the very same moment, as Paul Grainge argues, "the connections between memory and film become more tangible and self-conscious", especially in mainstream American Film, where a "shift from 'myth to memory' can be discerned" (9). This shift to a new breed of popular commercial film also heralded the end of the so-called Hollywood Renaissance, the brief flourishing of a uniquely American art cinema beginning in the late '60s—but that is a piece of the overall history to which I can only gesture here.

In Bordwell's taxonomy, the three 'principles' by which art cinema motivates its narratives (and which characterize art film as a 'non-genre' genre) are: (1) a kind of *realism* distinct from 'classical realism'; (2) something Bordwell calls 'authorial expressivity': the film drawing attention to itself as a film (*self-reflexivity*); and: (3) overall *ambiguity* of meaning. In the first case, art cinema 'realism' tends to play out in a differently weighted interplay of subjective and objective narration; there is a general tendency to combine objective documentarist factuality in depiction of settings etc. with intense psychological *subjectivity*. The combination of these two impulses in the same film results in the typical "illusion/reality" dichotomy of the art cinema":

Violations of classical conceptions of time and space are justified as the . . . subjective reality of complex characters. Plot manipulations of story order (especially flashbacks) remain anchored to character subjectivity . . . manipulations of duration are justified realistically . . . or psychologically. By the same token, spatial representation will be motivated [not merely as documentary realism] but as character subjectivity. [. . .] In brief, a commitment to both objective and subjective verisimilitude distinguished the art cinema from the classical narrative mode. ("Art Cinema" 777)

"In art cinema [Bordwell continues], the puzzle is one of *plot*: who is telling this story? How is this story being told? Why is this story being told

this way?" (779). In art film the form tends to *determine* content, to the point where, in any such films form and content are united in a radically self-conscious manner. In its most extreme form, this results in the self-reflexivity ('authorial expressivity') Bordwell identifies as characteristic of 'cinematic modernism'. Turim's observations regarding the representation of temporality in film—especially the flashback—are enlightening in terms of this key feature of self-reflexivity in the art film, representative of what she identifies as the dialectic of "knowledge and forgetfulness" as "two different ways of looking" within which the spectator is suspended (Turim 16–17). Turim argues that

more complicated flashback structures tend to emphasize the means by which film presents its fiction. [. . .] Multiple flashbacks, embedded flashbacks, abrupt modernist flashbacks can make spectators more aware of the modalities of filmic fiction, of the processes of narrative itself. (16)

The question remains, however, whether such radical self-reflexivity is limited to a certain moment in the art film's history, with mid-1960s Godard or Bergman's *Persona* as revealing, if extreme, examples. When one considers Michael Haneke's recent *Cache*, for instance, it becomes possible to talk about a contemporary cinematic 'modernism' (if the term still applies) that is both rigorously self-interrogating on the formal level and highly politically charged on the diegetic level. First, self-reflexivity can be defined as "[t]he practice of making viewers aware of the material and technical means of production by featuring those aspects as the 'content' of a [text]"; i.e. the laying bare within the text of the 'traces of the means of its production' (Sturken and Cartwright 364). "Reflexivity is both a part of the tradition of modernism, with its emphasis on form, and of postmodernism, with its array of intertextual references and ironic marking of the [margins of the text] and its status as a cultural product" (364). *Cache* affords an excellent example of this newer form of (ironic) cinematic reflexivity, and thus of the contemporary art film's re-appropriation of strategies long since appropriated by commercial culture from modernist art cinema. In this sense reflexivity "functions to prevent viewers from being completely absorbed in the illusion of an experience of a film or image, hence it is thought of as a means to distance viewers from that experience" (364).

THE FLASHBACK IN CLASSICAL FILM STYLE

An example of what we now view as a normative 'classical' style is the famous flashback scene from *Casablanca* (1942; Michael Curtiz), where Rick (Humphrey Bogart) is sitting alone at night in his bar, trying to stave

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off with booze the excoriating influence of memory. Announced with the line, “Of all the gin joints in all the world . . .”, this is the scene in which the nightclub pianist, Sam (Dooley Wilson), plays this film’s version of what I call in the next chapter the madeleine-object: the song “As Time Goes By” (Herman Hupfeld), which contains the thematically resonant lyric, “You must remember this: / A kiss is just a kiss . . .” This extended sequence illustrates the conventional flashback elements. As Sam plays in the background, the camera moves from a medium shot to a close-up on the anguished Rick, pauses, then closes in to frame his face in reverie. This dissolves to a wide, high-angle shot of the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris, which gives way to a brief, wordless montage of rear-screen process shots of Rick and Ilsa enjoying themselves together: the Arc in the background becomes a country lane, while the two figures in the foreground remain unchanged, their hair blown by a consistent studio wind. This dissolves to another idyllic rear-screen composition with the two in a foregrounded riverboat, a bridge over the Seine in the background. The montage ends with another dissolve to Rick’s room, where he opens a bottle of champagne and offers the toast, “Here’s looking at you, kid” (*Casablanca*). A wordless scene of the two of them happily dancing is followed by another exchange, in Ilsa’s apartment, which culminates in a kiss that gives way in yet another dissolve to a sequence of archival war-time footage, visibly different from the preceding glossy studio-shot images. Army vehicles on the bomb-damaged road to Paris are followed by battlefield images of soldiers, tanks, artillery and planes. Another dissolve returns us to the higher quality film stock of the flashback, otherwise produced entirely in a Hollywood back lot. Only after what must be several days or weeks within the temporality of the flashback are we returned to Rick, in the same position in his bar, in what may be only a few minutes or seconds in the temporality of the diegetic present.

In her magisterial study of the flashback in film, Maureen Turim reiterates Eisenstein’s argument, with Dickens as his main example, that the principal elements of cinematic montage (cross-cutting, the close-up etc.) were anticipated in the nineteenth-century novel (Turim 7). Although the “flashback narration” is not of concern to Eisenstein, Turim points out that the nineteenth-century novel also contains “the literary equivalent of a filmic flashback, though ‘naturalized’ in language” (6). Temporal shifts in the novel are rendered “as an invisible act of language” through “an arsenal of verb tenses and qualifying clauses” (7)—an arsenal for which there is no direct equivalent in film, no possibility of ‘translation’ into the other medium. In fact, adds Turim, in a ‘rearview-mirrorism’ characteristic of the culture,

the concept ‘flashback’ as developed by cinema makes us more aware of these temporal shifts in *literary* narration. After cinema makes the



Figure 0.1 *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942).

flashback a common and distinctive narrative trait, audiences and critics were more likely to recognize flashbacks as crucial elements of narrative structure in other narrative forms. (7)

For my argument here I am interested in addressing the formal-ontological difference between literary and filmic ‘languages’. In film, as Stephen Prince reminds us, everything in a sense happens *now*, in the *present*; in contrast to verbal language, there is no such thing as cinematic ‘past tense’ (“Discourse” 94).²¹ As *Casablanca* shows, temporal or chronological shifts get represented in classical film narrative, in which the emphasis is on the maintenance of spatial and temporal coherence:

The most common example of [re-ordered chronology in a film’s *plot*] is the flashback, when events taking place in the present are ‘interrupted’ by images or scenes that have taken place in the past. Typically filmmakers give audiences a visual cue, such as a dissolve or fade, to clarify that the narrative is making a sudden shift in chronology. [. . .] Usually the flashback is motivated by the plot, as when a character—any of the narrators in *Citizen Kane*, for example—recalls a memory. Flashbacks typically emphasize important causal factors in a film’s *fabula* [story]. [. . .] Editing also allows filmmakers to reveal a character’s dreams or fantasies. Like a flashback, a dream is usually signaled by a shot transition that indicates the boundary between reality and fantasy. (Prammagiore and Wallis 206)²²

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An instructive and very different example of the flashback occurs toward the beginning of *Citizen Kane* (1941), where Charlie's mother (Agnes Moore) signs the adoption papers and he first meets Mr. Thatcher, his new guardian. The flashback begins with the reporter in the monumental archive, searching Thatcher's memoirs for the secret to the identity of 'Rosebud'. A dissolve to an extreme close-up of the manuscript reveals the line "I first encountered Mr. Kane in 1871" (*Citizen Kane*). The white expanse of the page merges with a 'remembered' scene of a snow-covered hill, fake studio snow falling abundantly upon little Charles, playing happily in the far background. A thrown snowball leads to a cut to the front of his parents' boarding house; another cut brings us back to the original set-up, at which point the camera begins its famous slow dolly back through the open window, into the interior of the house, on an axis perpendicular to the axis of action, making the most of the resulting deep space to allow the principle action to unfold without any further cuts.

This is also of course the scene where the 'identity' of Rosebud is revealed, providing the story's central irony and constituting as well Kane's *aide-memoire*, his 'madeleine'—but one that functions in an utterly ironic, anti-Proustian manner (see Chapter 1). This scene also exemplifies what Andre Bazin prizes in his particular version of cinematic realism: deep focus, deep space, long takes—in effect, the spatialization of time,



Figure 0.2 *Citizen Kane* (Orson Wells, 1941).

producing what Andrei Tarkovsky calls the “pressure of time” within the shot (qtd. in Delenze, *Cinema 2* xii). Indeed, this is what his book’s title, ‘Sculpting in Time’, implies: cinema is the first art form that allows for an “impression” not of sensory data but of time “itself” to be taken, in a variation of the idea as old as Aristotle, also appropriated by Freud in his theory of the memory-trace (Tarkovsky 62). As Deleuze reminds us, Tarkovsky, like Bazin, privileges the shot over montage, in another instance of this emphasis on the allowing of time to as it were reveal itself, in contrast to the artificial manipulation of time (and space) via the cut. One of Bazin’s favourite examples of this kind of realism is *Kane*. As Deleuze remarks (in his preface to *Cinema 2*): “Welles’ characters occupy a giant-sized *place* in time rather than changing *place* in space” (xii). Either way, it is a *place*.

Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* (1950), by contrast, represents the postwar international ‘art film’ alternative to classical style, utilizing disjunctive temporalities and alternative versions of a past event, rendering its relative veracity moot. There is a temptation to see in this comparison (of *Rashomon* and *Kane*), what we might call (after Kracauer) the ‘two tendencies’ of the representation of memory in film, but this is complicated by subsequent developments; i.e. the Bazinian art film tradition that draws blatantly on Wellesian deep space composition (representing time spatially, and adding the temporal dimension of the long take), as well as more recent commercial films that partake of the complex narrative structure and ‘anti-’ or ‘post-classical’ (intensified continuity) style anticipated in Kurosawa and other postwar directors. In short, any attempt to distinguish between two general stylistic tendencies in the filmic representation of memory will not hold up as a critical tool insofar as the complex relation between the art film and classical Hollywood cannot be accounted for within a straightforward oppositional model.

FLASHBACK AS MEMORY

The de-ontologization of memory has an ironic correlative in what Maureen Turim calls the increasing ‘subjectivization’ of history: the framing of objective, historical knowledge within an intensely subjective dramatic genre.

If the flashback presents a narrative past, this past often refers to an historical past. The rendering of this historical past is coloured by both the general processes of fictional transformation, and by the specific framing and focalization of this fictional version of the historical past as flashback. [. . .] One of the ideological implications of this narration of history through a subjective focalization is to create history as an essentially individual and emotional experience. (17; see also 230)

In Turim’s reading of Rick’s Paris flashback in *Casablanca*, for instance,

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for the American audience this flashback became both a reminder of scenes they had witnessed in newsreels and through newspapers, the collective memory of history inscribed through visual and textual sources, and a supplement to that memory. Now fictionalized as the memory of Rick, this scene evokes a new kind of identification. (127)

Rick's apolitical, 'cynical detachment' is in effect 'redeemed' by the re-examination of his love for Ilsa that begins here: a redemption echoed allegorically on the national-political level of American isolationism prior to 1941 (126).

To invoke this scene from an iconic classical Hollywood film as an example of collective popular cultural memory is to imply several things, foremost of which is what might be called the second-order mimesis that comes into effect once these specific stylistic techniques and images become 'naturalized', allowing for (unconscious) internalization by the spectator. As artificial as they may appear to us today, fades, rear-screen projection and archival footage together comprise what history, through the lens of Rick's individual memory, would look like if it could be captured and projected onscreen. The illusory basis of classical Hollywood style emphasizes style as reproduction rather than (re-) construction.

According to Turim, "[c]ultural difference can be the source of a new vision of flashback narration" (243). In an example from very much outside the classic or contemporary Hollywood model, Michael Haneke's deliberate choice in *Cache* of high-density digital video for both the regular diegesis and the mystery video sequences extends to the memory/dream sequences experienced by the protagonist, Georges. In the first instance, because there is no change in the quality of the image, it is impossible to know that one is looking at a pseudo-flashback (the young Majid wiping blood from his mouth) cut into the diegetic flow without any contextual markers. It becomes apparent only later that this past episode was part of the lies Georges told about Majid in order to get him removed to an orphanage; therefore this image is *both* a memory *and* a fiction: the memory of a fiction whose consequences Georges has never faced until now. The truth of the past he refuses to confront is a kind of allegory of the truth that France itself has repressed since the Algerian War. In the end the effect is the complete opposite of *Casablanca*'s allegorical redemption of America's late entry into World War II through Rick's decision to join the Resistance and save both Ilsa and Laszlo, in that Georges's utter failure to accept his responsibility for ruining another man's life mirrors the French authorities' unaddressed guilt in the mass-drowning of over 200 Algerian protesters in Paris in 1961. I return to the intersection of memory, history, guilt and their technological mediation in *Cache* in the fourth chapter.

Rick's 'memories' of his relationship with Ilsa in Paris exemplify Deleuze's description of the flashback as

a conventional, extrinsic device . . . generally indicated by a dissolve-link, and the images that it introduces are often superimposed or meshed. It is like a sign with the words: ‘watch out!’ recollection’. It can, therefore, indicate, by convention, a causality which is psychological, but still analogous to a sensory-motor determinism, and, despite its circuits, only confirms the progression of a linear narration. (*Cinema 2* 48)

Deleuze’s ‘movement-image’ paradigm is useful here: standard shot sequence; montage; special effects; i.e. the past as rear-screen projection; archival footage; etc., where Rick’s ‘ownership’ of these flashback images, including the introduction of actual WWII battlefield footage, is clearly marked, allowing the smooth elision of focalization from subjective to third-person objective.²³ This sequence is therefore also a good example of what Turim identifies as a flashback that affords an image of both “memory, the personal archives of the past”, and “history, the shared and recorded past”; this flashback merges “the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, fictional individual’s remembered experience” (2). Turim refers to this as

‘subjective memory’, which here has the double sense of the rendering of history as a subjective experience of a character in the fiction, and the formation of the Subject in history as the viewer of the film identifying with fictional characters positioned in a fictive social reality. (2)

What *Casablanca*, as classical Hollywood film, does *not* do, is “take as [its] project the questioning of the reconstruction of the historical” (2). In this significant sense the film’s incorporation of appropriated archival footage and other effects is *not* self-reflexive; the potentially Brechtian distanciation in this sequence (especially the rear-screen projections) serves rather to promote spectatorial identification and consolidate overall diegetic continuity.

The other, major, point to take away from this last example is how the flashback functions in classical film, like everything else, in order to further the narrative. In this and many other films, the flashback scene is generally motivated by larger narrative concerns. In Billy Wilder’s *Double Indemnity*, for instance—a classic *film noir* from 1944—the bulk of the narrative is one long flashback contained within a frame-narrative in which the protagonist, Walter Neff, confesses his crimes into the impersonal ear of an insurance office Dictaphone, his actual interlocutor (Edward G. Robinson’s Barton Keyes) an absent addressee. This film, too, epitomizes the flashback as narrative device in which the uncanniness of memory images and the paradoxes of time-travel are utterly subordinated to the exigencies of story, character, mood and message (cf. Turim 184). In what is now an utterly familiar formula (see Chapter 5’s analysis of *City of God*), the plot begins just before it ends, and the bulk of the narrative is one long digression,

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explaining—from the restricted and only seemingly objective point of view of the male protagonist—how things came to this pass. In post-Mulveyan readings of this model, all is revealed at the end, even as the viewer is (ideally) left in a state of complacent ideological delusion.

In Maureen Turim's description, the ending of *Double Indemnity* displays “the full symbolic function of the confessional voice in retelling the past, to mark the past behaviour with the sad knowledge of what the outcome was destined to be” (184)—“destined” precisely because of the flashback/frame-narrative structure, which embodies its own justification. In other words, this example of ‘classical’ film narrative (*film noir* genre) is also a cinematic extension of the classical narrative paradigm that extends back through Dante's *Divine Comedy* to St. Augustine: the re-writing of classical epic as confessional proto-auto-biography that lays the ground for the emergence of a major tendency in the novel in the eighteenth century.

AUGUSTINE AND THE ‘ARCHIVAL SUBJECT’

Jacques Derrida's later work on Freud affords a valuable perspective on the significance of the archive for modernity. At once reaffirming and deconstructing the persistent metaphors, Derrida argues that the archive, as hypomnesic, mnemotechnical support,

will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory. *There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.* (Archive Fever 11; emphasis in original)

But where Derrida (at least temporarily) upholds the “distinction between *mneme* or *anamnesis* on the one hand, and *hypomnema* on the other” (see *Archive Fever* 19), I argue that, in the terms elaborated here, modern memory, whether individual or collective, is by definition ‘exterior’, hypomnesic, hence archival.

Walter Benjamin, juxtaposing the home and the office as spaces of modern subjectivity, aligns the home with interiority, in which the subject “brings together the far away and the long ago” (Benjamin, “Paris” 38). In his study of German author W. G. Sebald (a great student of Benjamin), J. J. Long identifies what he calls the ‘archival subject’ of modernity: one who “compensate[s] for his lack of memory by substituting the archive for interiority” (Long 162).²⁴ My claims here about the de-ontologization of memory are not meant to preclude discussion of the subject in other senses; after all, the visual-spatial constitution of the subject of cinematic narrative means that it is not as readily deconstructed as that of literary fiction. Narrative

cinema's unavoidable iconic-mimetic qualities, and its employment of the human figure and concomitant spectatorial identification, ensures the survival into the twenty-first century of very particular, exteriorized, 'public' modes of subjectivity.

How did this profound shift—from interiority properly speaking to an exteriorized interiority—come about? As I have argued elsewhere, its origins are likely not in the recent but in the much more distant cultural past (see Kilbourn, "Architecture" 140–54). But what does it mean to speak of an 'archival subject' today? As John Frow reminds us:

The logic of the archive is a logic of the inscription (or deposit) and the storage of information in systematically articulated space, and of ready retrieval on the basis of that articulation. The moments of inscription/deposit and of storage correspond to the two major metaphors through which European culture has conceptualized memory over the last two and a half millennia: The metaphor of the surface of inscription, traditionally a wax writing tablet (*tabula rasa*); and that of the *thesaurus* (the storehouse, and its metonyms: the aviary, the storage bin, and the box or cluster of boxes). Both metaphors suppose a direct relation between space and mental categories . . . (. . . '[M]emories or memory traces are considered to be discrete objects stored in particular locations in the mind space'); and both suppose the physical reality of memory traces. (225–26)

While the 'archive' may be individual and personal, it is by definition spatial, static and external to the human psyche. This is complicated, however, in an ancient model of memory as it persists into the modern period, abetted by new technologies and updated metaphors.

Jose van Dijck provides a succinct summary of the classical model of memory as (metaphorical) storage space as this model proves amenable to cultural and historical change:

Metaphors such as the library and the archive were commonly used to explain the retention of information or the preservation of experience in an enclosed space, from where it can be retrieved on command. When trying to remember something, the mind, triggered by a material object or image, searches through the stacks from which stored and unchanged information can be retrieved and reread. (30)

The storage model of memory is predicated on the notion that memories are "static data from someone's past"—an assumption that persists "in popular representations of memory" (30). It is precisely the "physically real" memory traces, inscribed via experience, that constitute the " retrievable content", in a model that owes its persistence to its adaptability in the age of digital technology and computer memory.²⁵

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How do we cross the vast distance from classical mnemotechnics, with its emphasis on memory as a practical tool within the art of Rhetoric, and in which the notion of a mnemonic storage facility is elaborated and concretized, to contemporary notions of memory as visually based, prosthetic, external, cinematic?

From the utilitarian classical ‘art of memory’ St. Augustine (in his *Confessions*) articulates for modern culture the model of memory as a kind of vast mental archive through which the self wanders, in a visual-spatial conception of interiority that eventually finds its ideal outward expression in modern Cartesian three-dimensional space. According to the dominant visual-cultural theory, this is the ontologized space predicated on the represented spaces of Western painting since the Renaissance, viewed from an ideal subject position, as if through a transparent window or screen (see e.g. Sturken and Cartwright). This is the position of *visual* (if not material) mastery at the basis of cinematic apparatus theory, in which the viewing subject is seen as unconsciously constrained within a fantasy structure of ironic identification and unfulfillable desire (see Baudry 286–98). The very persuasive argument persists that one of the things film has done best historically (as photographically based medium) is reproduce the illusion of three-dimensional Cartesian space in relation to which and within which an all-knowing, rational, all-seeing subject—the subject of ‘Western’ art history and capitalism alike—is ideally constituted as the very ground of a ‘realist’ aesthetic (see Berger 87; O’Brien and Szeman 74; Sturken and Cartwright, 352).

In book 10 of the *Confessions* Augustine lays the foundations for a conceptual bridge between a classical rhetorical mnemonic topology and a ‘postmodern’ phenomenology of memory predicated on a premodern approach to the representability and ‘exteriority’ of this aspect of individual subjectivity.²⁶ Behind Augustine’s theory of memory is of course the classical art or ‘technique’ of memory, in which a public speaker or narrator constructs a mental *topos* (often in the form of a sizeable architectural structure): a series of *loci* or positions, and the mnemonic images specific to these *loci*. The speaker, as subject of memory, then associates specific words, phrases or concepts with each image. By moving through this imaginative space, the subject can pick and choose from among the images with their corresponding discursive ‘labels’. In this manner (after much conscious training) long and complex speeches or narratives can be recalled with relative ease (see Cicero, *De Oratore* and *Ad Herennium*; see also Yates 1–28). This amounts to an artificial model of memory as a set of practices carried out deliberately within a purely imaginative space. Famously, Augustine imagines memory as being

like a great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds which are conveyed to it by the senses. In it are stored away all the thoughts by which we enlarge upon or diminish or modify in

any way the perceptions at which we arrive through the senses . . . until such time as these things are swallowed up and buried in forgetfulness. (10.8 214)

In an Aristotelian move, Augustine stresses that “the things which we sense do not enter the memory themselves, but their images are there ready to present themselves to our thoughts when we recall them” (10.8 215). Thus, when Deleuze asserts that “it is in the present that we make a memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past” (*Cinema 2* 52), he is on one level reinscribing Augustine’s privileging of the present moment in what we might call the phenomenological experience of living within time. Deleuze’s debt to Augustine’s distinction between the remembered object in its actuality and its *image* within the memory is inadvertently emphasized in Ronald Bogue’s useful gloss: “When we remember, we figuratively leap from the actual present into a virtual past, find a virtual memory-image, and then bring it into the actual present” (116). I will return below to Deleuze’s discussion of memory in film.

Augustine remains fascinated by this vision of the vast spaces of his own interiority, in which—in what we might with some risk call a proto-cinematic gesture—he meets himself along with everything else: “All this goes on inside me, in the vast cloisters of my memory. [. . .] In it I meet myself as well” (10.8 215). To read these passages is to observe a mind gazing hard upon itself:

The power of memory is prodigious, my God. It is a vast, immeasurable sanctuary. Who can plumb its depths? And yet it is a faculty of my soul. Although it is part of my nature, I cannot understand all that I am. [. . .] This means, then, that the mind is too narrow to contain itself entirely. But where is that part of it which it does not itself contain? Is it somewhere outside itself and not within it? How, then, can it be part of it, if it is not contained in it? (10.8 216)

And further: “I do not understand the power of memory that is in myself, although without it I could not even speak of myself” (10.16 223). Repeatedly Augustine revisits the notion that “the mind and the memory are one and the same” (10.8 220)—a notion reiterated by Derrida in his early work on Freud: “memory . . . is not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche” (“Freud” 201). In terms of certain kinds of memory-content (like factual information) Augustine has recourse to a Platonic *anamnesis*, for which the architectural metaphor is adequate to explain the stuff that is “hidden away in [the] deeper recesses” (218). Socrates, in Plato’s *Meno* (ca. 380 BCE), propounds the doctrine of *anamnesis* as recollecting what you already knew. Anamnesis names a paradoxical negation of an already-negated memory (*amnesia*): a ‘forgetting’ or ‘un-remembering’. Therefore *anamnesis* names an un-un-remembering,

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or ‘un-forgetting’ that is for Socrates, the basis of dialectical pedagogical theory. Yet Augustine finds this spatial model inadequate (“it is wrong to speak of it [the memory] as a place”, he remarks [217]), particularly when it comes to a rationalization of the ‘presence’ of a certain kind of radically *negative* mnemonic content; in other words, the present absence in the memory of something or someone never before encountered—God, for example (cf. Derrida, “Speaking” 26; Gasche 12). Of God he asks: “How, then, am I to find you, if I have no memory of you?” (224). I return to this category of radical alterity—unrepresentability ‘itself'; the question of a properly apotropaic, if not an apophaetic, cinema—in Chapter 4, in relation to the contemporary surveillance film.

Augustine’s theory of memory, predicated on his essentially *positive* relation to God, has an internal orientation one might assume is utterly lacking in the mnemonic dynamics of much modern literature. In what sense can we call Augustine ‘modern’? As I am arguing here, ‘modern subjectivity’ equals consciousness trapped within memory and therefore time; within time *because* of memory. As Augustine says: time is itself an extension of the mind, and the mind *is* memory (10.14 220). Sixteen centuries later Bertrand Russell echoes this fundamental idea in observing that the correlative of memory (oriented toward the past) is *desire* (oriented toward the future): “It is memory, with its correlative desire, that makes the past and the future real and therefore creates true duration and true time” (qtd. in Ward 11).

In book 10.13 Augustine reflects on the first nine books of autobiographical confession, asking a series of philosophical questions: What is the relation between who I was and who I am now? How can I relate this understanding to someone else? How can that other know me as myself (as I am “in my heart”)? The only way to do this is by *writing a text* that another person can *read*: the mind *in itself* is inaccessible (see Brian Stock 214). Furthermore, in the absence or infrequency of books in the ancient and medieval worlds it was the case that a ‘text’ need not be written down in book form: “in a memorial culture [like the Middle Ages], a ‘book’ is only one way among several to remember a ‘text’” (Carruthers 8). A book is already a “mnemonic” (8), one of the oldest and most abiding modes of what Alison Landsberg has recently labelled ‘prosthetic memory’.²⁷ For the Middle Ages, *memoria* was a name for “the process by which a work of literature becomes institutionalized—internalized within the language and pedagogy of a group” (9).²⁸ *Memoria* thus implied something far more inclusive and ‘human’ (albeit still technological) than the sum total of the books in one’s library (the archive), just as ‘literacy’ had much broader application in the Latin Middle Ages than it does today (10).

As Brian Stock shows, centuries before Dante Augustine’s meditation on memory discovers in it “a means of intellectual ascent” that is provided by reading and writing (14). For Augustine, the written and read text itself inevitably replaces architecture as the metaphor for memory.²⁹ This is not to say that such a mnemonic content is exclusively experientially derived,

nor is it exclusively a product of the reading of, and meditation upon, texts written by others. Augustine's insight is to recognize the 'textual' quality of memory, and that it is therefore subject to the same kind of exigencies as are texts. Like a text, the soul becomes an 'instrument of record', a 'frame for memory' (Brian Stock 15). Here is a characteristically self-conscious passage:

What does it profit me, then, O Lord, to whom my conscience confesses daily . . . what does it profit me, I ask, also to make known to men in your sight, through this book, not what I once was, but what I am now? I know what profit I gain by confessing my past, and this I have declared. But many people who know me, and others who do not know me but have heard of me or read my books, wish to hear what I am now, at this moment, as I set down my confessions. They cannot lay their ears to my heart, into which they cannot pry by eye or ear or mind. They wish to hear and they are ready to believe; but can they really know me? (10.3 209)

But is the mind, for Augustine, wholly accessible to *itself*? What does it mean when the mind takes *itself* as its own object, reflecting upon itself? As Augustine notes, in a line that resonates across the centuries, "there are some things in man which even his own spirit within him does not know" (10.5 211). Not in spite but because of Augustine's specific concerns, this is a question of far-reaching significance (gender and class privilege etc.) for subjectivity in the age of cinema—for ways of seeing and knowing, as they transform in relation to changing technologies of representation.

The enormous cultural-epistemological distance between Augustine, wandering in the "vast cloisters of [his] memory," and the contemporary spectator of visual culture, however, is marked by the difference in the form of mediation between the subject and some larger, objective 'reality'—ultimately, the relation between self and other as *the* ethical problem for modernity. Despite the enormous significance and influence of Freud's spatial-topological model of the psyche over modern theories of mind, memory and desire, the ground was already laid by the visual-spatial model, in place since antiquity, of mind, including often highly sophisticated, if 'unscientific', models of memory. Amongst the literate of late antiquity verbal texts mediated between a nascent subjective interiority and the radical, absolute exteriority of divinity (transcendent otherness) in relation to which the self was constituted. It is therefore necessary to attempt an articulation of the Augustinian idea of mediating the self-other relation through texts with something like the Deleuzian notion of cinema as thinking (or as 'philosophy') as itself an 'epistemology' (see Kovács 40–44). I am not proposing another Deleuzian reading—far from it—so much as I am aligning myself with the tradition from Augustine to contemporary social constructivism: one cannot know the mind of the other except through texts.

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In the terms presented here, for the visually literate spectator today radical otherness is always already assimilated to the same, domesticated, brought within the purview of consumerist desire in the commodified images of contemporary mainstream film. Contemporary popular culture is a ‘society of the spectacle’ that appears to afford a clear and masterful view of the present moment—but what does it mean to perceive things ‘as they really are’, not to speak of apprehending the past, even one’s own (to use Leopold von Ranke’s phrase, “[w]ie es eigentlich gewesen”), “how it really was” (qtd. in Terdiman 22)? Personal and social identities in a rapidly globalizing world are elaborated within the largely visually determined, simulacral spaces of the postmodern ‘cultural dominant’ (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 4). Arguably this is also true of the ‘spaces’ of subjective interiority—the spaces in which (according to the persistent model) memories are stored and recollection occurs.

‘MEMORY INDUSTRIES’: FROM ‘COLLECTIVE’ TO ‘PROSTHETIC’ MEMORY

Alongside the archive it is necessary to consider Maurice Halbwachs’s post-war concept of ‘collective memory’, which stands behind contemporary theories of artificial memory, a term (re-)coined by Steven Rose in the early 1990s to oppose to a so-called ‘natural’ memory. Halbwachs emphasizes the irreducibly *social* character of modern collective memory. This theory differs fundamentally from a much more pervasive model of memory like Freud’s in its insistence on the ‘completion’ or fulfillment of individual memory in the memories of others: As John Storey puts it, “what is provisional in our own memories is confirmed by the memories of others. [. . .] We often remember with others what we did not ourselves experience first-hand” (101–2). For Halbwachs, “collective memory is embodied in mnemonic artifacts, forms of commemoration such as . . . shrines, statues, war memorials . . . what French historian Pierre Nora calls ‘sites of memory’ [*lieux de memoire*]” (qtd. in Storey 104). Storey adds to Halbwachs’s list of mnemonic artifacts what he calls “the ‘memory industries’ . . . that part of the culture industries concerned with articulating the past” (104). This includes

heritage sites and museums . . . but we should also include the mass media (including cinema). [. . .] The memory industries, like the culture industries of which they form a part, produce representations (‘cultural memorials’), with which we are invited to think, feel and recognize the past. But these representations do not embody memory as such, they embody the *materials* for memory; they provide the materials from which ‘collective memory’ can be made. (104, emphasis mine)

Typical of contemporary memory theory is a dependence on the a priori existence of a ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ memory to which artificial memory can be opposed (Hoskins 6–7). There is also a generally unacknowledged debt to Plato; indeed, the account in the *Phaedrus* of the origin of writing and its impact upon memory is implicit in much of the current thinking about artificial memory and the archive (a debt manifest in thinkers as different as Derrida and Nora [see Storey 103, n. 23]). Marianne Hirsch’s ‘postmemory’ and Landsberg’s ‘prosthetic memory’ represent less socio-logically constrained theories of artificial memory in which representations in effect ‘precede’ reality (hence the application of the term ‘postmodern’ to these theories³⁰). Landsberg has advanced the idea of ‘prosthetic memory’ in relation to contemporary pop culture and film, while ‘postmemory’ has been theorized by Hirsch in the narrower context of the Holocaust and survivor’s family photographs (see, respectively, Landsberg; Hirsch)³¹—narrower however not in terms of the ultimate inclusivity of postmemory as an instrumental concept. Each theory offers its own approach to the phenomenon of appropriated memory in a postmodern culture of irreducibly mediated experience: memory in the age of technical reproducibility. Each implies comparable questions of authenticity, identity and the precedence of representations over ‘reality’. Hirsch’s theory, especially, in its appropriation by others—specifically, non-survivors, non-Jews etc.—continues to raise significant ethical, epistemological and aesthetic questions: Who ‘owns’ a specific memory, or memory in general? What is the difference between first- and second-hand memory? Between memory and history? What do these conceptions of artificial memory tell us about transformations in subjectivity or individual human identity, and how these changes are mediated by technologies of representation?³²

Landsberg’s notion of ‘prosthetic’ memory is predicated on the assumption that, long before television or web-based formats (preceded of course by photography), a mass medium like cinema already constituted a form of memory as both storage place and retrieval mechanism, existing independently of the body and in a complex relation to the mind. Cinema, in this view, is both a form of collective memory and a medium from which the viewer may glean information about the past—however banal or trite or inaccurate. Troublingly for some, Landsberg is concerned less with questions of historical ‘accuracy’ or the recuperation of an ‘authentic’ past and more with the ethically empowering potential for the individual of such an expanded mnemonic dimension:

The cinema and the technologized mass culture that it helped inaugurate transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Thanks to these new technologies of memory on the one hand and commodification on the other, the kinds of memories that one has ‘intimate’, even experiential,

access to would no longer be limited to the memories of events through which one actually lived. (146)

Landsberg's overly utopian privileging of capitalist-consumerist pop culture does little or nothing, however, to get us beyond the ethico-political contradictions of a culture in which the visual image is the ultimate commodity form, whose transcultural 'consumability' may mask its complexity and its resistance to facile interpretation. It is useful here to invoke Martin Jay's account of Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence implicit in both neo-Marxist theories of society as a 'spectacle' and its (false) antidotes. This is what Jay describes as *Of Grammatology*'s critique of "utopian desires to replace theatricality and spectacle entirely by 'festival', the distanced gaze of subjects looking voyeuristically at objects from afar by a participatory 'community of speech where all the members are within earshot" (506–7). Or, as in the theory of prosthetic memory, where the subject-object distinction on which Cartesian space depends collapses, and where all members come to reside together within the same virtual space of mutualy understanding and 'empathy', equivalent as both spectators and participants.

One could as readily interpret Landsberg's argument in the pejorative terms of the "*collapse* of memory" Andrew Hoskins cautions against, "as our understanding of the past is overwhelmed by its mediated representations" (Hoskins 11; cf. Sontag, *Pain* 89). I argue—more ambivalently—however, that this 'collapsed memory' is precisely what memory is for us today—and this is largely cinema's fault. As Hoskins's term suggests, the 'collapse' of memory is a bad thing: the radical folding of so-called authentic, 'original' memory into its subsequent mediated reconstructions; i.e. Landsberg's prosthetic memory minus the dimension of ethical-political empowerment (Hoskins 133). This yields what Hoskins labels 'new memory', which (as in Turim's earlier account), in a specifically cinematic context, amounts to the collapsing of 'History' into personal, subjective memory, via the photographic image—an image that prompts the memory of another image (134–35), in an endless vista of *petite madeleines*.³³

MEMORY, DEATH, REDEMPTION: CINEMA AS THE LAND OF THE DEAD

At issue here is also what Jurgen Habermas famously calls the 'incomplete project' of the Enlightenment in modernity. As Matei Calinescu remarks in his discussion of the Habermas-Lyotard debate on the postmodern, modernity is

premised on a finalistic vision of universal history, and in this sense Christianity (as the story of humanity's final redemption from the

original Adamic sin) is constitutively modern. All the major ‘stories of emancipation’ of modernity are essentially secularized variations on the Christian paradigm. (Calinescu 274)³⁴

What an analysis of memory in film should reveal is the degree to which the meaning and significance of the term ‘modern’—and therefore the very status of ‘the modern project’—continues to turn on this crucial issue of a kind of reflexive, avowedly secular ‘faith’ in a repertoire of metaphysical structures that constitute the ironically theological basis of contemporary Western culture. What Jochen Schulte-Sasse calls “the history of secularization . . . is a history of constant displacements of the transcendental anchor from God to the absolute ruler, the state, the world as substance, nature, the generic definition of reason, art, the genius, text/meaning, and so on” (116).

In the model that has dominated theories of the visual image since the mid-twentieth century, photography *stops* time, cinema *shows* it: time, motion, duration—‘life.’ It is not necessary to invoke Bergsonian *duree* to see this basic phenomenological effect of the moving image in its original cinematic form. Whereas the (analog) photograph is always a representation of something past, over and done, film, in its *iconicity*, is ‘life’; photography, in its *indexicality*, is ‘death.’³⁵ ‘Cinematography’ from the Greek means the ‘writing’ or ‘inscription’ of motion; film in a fundamental sense is *always* ‘animation’: whether in terms of the apparent mobility of the object onscreen or of the camera or frame itself. Fundamental to Roland Barthes’s work on photography, and Andre Bazin’s on the ontology of the image (see Barthes; Bazin), this dialectic of indexical and iconic signification in the cinematic image is the onscreen interplay of ‘death’ and ‘life’, at once literal and metaphorical. The semiotic play of presence and absence elides with cinema’s narratological dimension of character and story: of death-within-life, of life as a living death, of journeys from life to death and back. Memory is the guarantor of continuous, consistent subjectivity (whether fictional or not is another question), but it is also a relic of the Fall, before which “objects, events and other people” were immediately present to mind (Sutton 48).³⁶ Once a safeguard against misfortune (Yates 21), memory is also a necessary evil: the means to bridge the “post-lapsarian gaps between representation and reality” (Sutton 48). In a modern, post-Romantic perspective, the valuation of this schema ironically inverts: memory—a function of our ‘fallen’ condition—is life; immediate, prelapsarian presence, is death. The connections here with premodern mythological and literary narrative chronotopes, like the *katabasis*, or underworld journey, are not coincidental. Among the basic premises of this study are, on the one hand, the intertextual continuities from ancient to modern or contemporary cultural instantiations of this narrative model, and, on the other, the constant awareness of semantic and ontological disruption via recontextualization and resignification or transvaluation. This is intertextuality

in the broadest post-Kristevan (post-Bakhtinian) sense (as outlined below) as another name for cultural memory in material form, ultimately independent of authorial agency.

Each of the films discussed in Chapter 1 contributes in its own way to Western culture's long-standing association between memory and death; a relation often figured in spatial terms as a realm of enigmatic forms and meanings. This association finds its *locus classicus* in epic, from Homer through Virgil to Dante, after which it persists in the modern period in the novel's extension of certain epic tropes and structures within a radically different epistemology. In the post-Holocaust context more generally, the conflation of different architectural spaces acquires renewed and increasingly specific significance—memory as labyrinth or city of the dead (necropolis), through which the protagonist must journey, as in the *katabases* of classical epic,³⁷ and, in modern times, in the ironic and metaphorical underworld journeys of novelistic heroes. I set out these parameters in full recognition of the dangers of contemporary cultural criticism based in so-called mythic structures, as if these somehow existed and survived in some fixed transcendent form, beyond the concrete textual instances on which we base our observations about such historically and culturally bound meanings as identity or 'reality'. I want to make it clear at the very outset, therefore, that, in invoking the katabasis structure or theme I am not implicitly aligning myself with traditional mythological criticism of the likes of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell or certain brands of Structuralism, which seek to reduce the complexities of human cultural production to a limited set of mythopoetic tropes or types underpinning some putative common or collective consciousness or unconsciousness (see e.g. Campbell; Jung; Holtsmark; Ferrell). To do so of course is to reverse several decades of salutary re-thinking and ideological soul-searching under the auspices of first Poststructuralism and later Cultural Studies, in the best sense. My intention, in fact, is the opposite: I invoke katabasis as a linking or unifying chronotype here in order to better foreground the constructed and inter-semiotic nature of contemporary culture through the various examples of films discussed herein. In other words, just as Freudian tropes in the early to mid-twentieth century quickly became a kind of self-conscious '*lingua franca*' in narrative cinema, both commercial and otherwise, so certain mytho-literary elements found new life in cinematic form, attesting not to the transcendent or fundamental nature of these 'mythemes' but rather to the human cultural propensity to construct special objects called texts and thereby weave narratives in the attempt to represent or communicate to itself the—often entirely quotidian—mysteries of existence.

Katabasis, Greek for "a going down, a descent", refers to an underworld journey undertaken by a hero in quest of special knowledge (Holtsmark 25). The major premodern examples are not only the *Odyssey* bk. 11 and the *Aeneid* bk. 6—not to speak of Plato's cave in the *Republic*—but also Augustine's *Confessions* and Dante's *Inferno*, a metaphorical and a literal

(and literary) katabasis, respectively, whose significance for modernity resonates across this book (Freccero 4). The katabasis narrative is a significantly persistent modernist model in the secularized, psychologized—and irreducibly *ironic*—form so familiar in European modernism's peculiar Judeo-Christian convergence: whether Beckett, re-writing Dante as much as Proust, or Kafka, extending the 'Wandering Jew' motif into the arid landscapes—modernist 'regions of unlikeness' (see Freccero 1–5)—of his short stories and novels which, like Beckett's, in a crossing of *katabasis* and *nostos* (the underworld journey and the journey home), compress the vertical axis of redemption inherited from Christianity into a decidedly 'horizontal' worldview;³⁸ or W. G. Sebald, who appropriates and transforms aspects of all of these modernists. This transition is commensurate with the fact that, since its very beginnings in myth, katabasis has always entailed "at some level a search for identity. The journey is in some central, irreducible way a journey of self-discovery, a quest for a lost self" (Holtsmark 26). Therefore, Erling Holtsmark's point that literary-mythic katabasis captures "the imagined physical orientation of the other world relative to this one" (25), is superseded in a post-mythic, ostensibly secular worldview by a journey that takes place within an underworld that is an exteriorized 'projection' of a protagonist's putative interior world, the domain especially of the unconscious, memory and dream. In the course of this transition from pre-to properly modern, the eschatological dimension of, for example, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, combining epic and confessional genres, is psychologized; not allegorized so much as *analogized*, katabasis proper eliding with a psychoanalytically charged model, yielding a 'psycho-katabasis'.³⁹ If memory can be said to offer the possibility of a sort of temporary continuity between mind and what exists beyond its limits, within it, then the underworld journey in literature and film can be read as a kind of externalization or allegory of this process and the hope implicit there. Characteristic of the transition to the modern episteme, the quest for knowledge which is the object of this journey turns inward: a quest for *self*-knowledge that takes the place of the Bergsonian, present-tense "sensory-motor situations" of Deleuze's action image (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 2).⁴⁰ Maureen Turim identifies this as the modernist cinematic adherence to the (Freudian) "unconscious as reality to be mimetically traced in fiction" (226).⁴¹ But to describe the space—the psychic 'underworld'—that the mnemic subject/protagonist is able to journey through as his 'unconscious' is far too limited—even if mimesis is abandoned in favour of some specifically cinematic allegorical mode. Even in its more radically ironic twentieth-century iterations, this vague quest structure tends to persist, with the *impossibility* of achieving such knowledge forming the negative focal point. This is psycho-katabasis as unmistakably *modern* chronotype, at the intersection of cinema, memory and modernity.

Psycho-katabasis corresponds to the 'mental journey' genre of postwar modernist art cinema elaborated by András Bálint Kovács⁴²—a category

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exemplified by Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, but also by the films of 'nouveau roman' directors Resnais, Robbe-Grillet and Duras, as well as Tarkovsky (103–105). In a sense, the psycho-katabasis subgenre incorporates features of other genres named by Kovács: the investigation film, the wandering/travel film etc. (99–102). The 'mental journey' for Kovács represents "a special variant" of the travel genre, "in which travel takes place not in the physical world but in a person's mind" (103). With its roots in modernist literary experimentation,

the basic technique of this narrative form is the extension of short periods of time to vast layers of past or imaginary time. [. . .] The modernist time-travel form differs from traditional forms of representing past memories and imagination in that the different time layers usually overlap and are difficult to distinguish from one another, which means that the connections within the narrative between the layers [are] blurred. Themes and motives rather than rational time-space relations link them together. (103)

Kovács goes on to claim that "the mental journey genre has very similar principles" to those of Freudian psychoanalysis (105). But, while it is one thing to recognize a given film's engagement in the post-WWII period with an undoubtedly fashionable and influential, "vulgar Freudianism,"⁴³ it is another to take account of the broader significance of such elements in terms of the history of film style and genre. Psychoanalytic theory—whether Freudian or Lacanian—is ineluctably visual.⁴⁴ The problem with psychoanalytic tropes in this context, therefore, is that they fail to address the radical exteriorization of subjective interiority constitutive of film as a narrative medium. To give in too quickly to a psychoanalytic interpretation is to overlook the significant self-reflexivity of such "modern mental journey films", due to the fact (as Kovács concedes) that "the ultimate narrative anchor is the film itself as narrative medium" (111). But (to make a long story short) it is equally possible to re-write this rather conventional view in terms of the modernist project of representing psychological interiority as it founders on the shoals of formalist experimentation. That is, with the most radical of modernists (Beckett and Kafka remain exemplary), the goal of interrogating the medium and of exploring the limits of language in its relative adequacy to the task of not representation or reproduction of 'reality' but *production* of meaning within an economy of signs—this goal is always combined with the seemingly contradictory purpose of exploring or interrogating individual (and collective) identity through the discursive construction—and deconstruction—of specific subject positions. How does one justify the application to certain films of this terminology of the psychological journey 'through memory' as a journey to the 'land of the dead' in these films? First, because the medium itself allows death to signify in a wholly new, so to speak, 'vital' way. To take one example, it is too easy

to claim that the past in *Wild Strawberries* “is evoked not the way it was but the way it is viewed from the perspective of the present” (Kovacs 103). *Wild Strawberries* is Bergman’s contribution (along with Kurosawa and a few others) to what Turim calls the modernist rethinking of the flashback. In a 1972 interview Tarkovsky listed his ten favourite films, which included Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and *Persona* (1966) (Lasica 29), drawing attention to the earlier film especially in its “general impact for the presentation of psyche and memory as the inspiration of a modernist practice” (Turim 205). One reason for the status of *Wild Strawberries* as a touchstone for the cinematic representation of memory in the 1950s and 60s, as Turim explains, is that “in this period, immediately preceding the dominance of cybernetic metaphors, there is a tendency to assume that mental processes are the equivalent of cinematic representations” (206). Therefore, in the art films of this period, “as well as in the larger culture (even in scientific/medical paradigms), cinema becomes an operative metaphor for the brain’s imaging capacity” (206). As noted in this Introduction, my aim here (in an extension of Turim’s ground-breaking work) is to focus even more intensively on the degree to which cinema went beyond metaphor to become *constitutive* of memory’s “imaging capacity”. It is my contention therefore that, while it is undoubtedly true (as Turim claims) that “an information-processing model has supplanted the camera-image model of memory” in contemporary scientific discourses of memory (207), in the general social-cultural sphere in which most of us live, the metaphors have been slower to catch up. Even today, twenty years after Turim’s book, cinema is still operating on the level of story and mise-en-scene largely with a visual-spatial model of memory based in an analog camera-image—even if (ironically), on the technical-stylistic level digital technology increasingly pervades the entire filmmaking process (see Willis).

Bergman’s innovation in *Wild Strawberries* is the insertion of the present-tense protagonist as unseen observer within the landscape of his own memories, which is presented as more-or-less continuous with the setting in which the reverie begins. This is a technique exploited six years earlier in Brian Desmond Hurst’s *A Christmas Carol*, but the dream-fantasy genre film qualities of this most successful Dickens adaptation allow such flights of fancy to be assimilated to the over-arching narrative of moral redemption. Unlike Isak in *Wild Strawberries*, Scrooge gets to watch himself as a young man making a mess of his own life. (In a contemporary example, Michel Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* [2004] represents the highly imaginative updating of this conceit.) In any case, Bergman’s film seems to confirm Bordwell’s auteurist definition of the art film as a narrative mode in which the realism of psychological motivation depends on the subordination of all other diegetic elements to the representation of subjective consciousness striving to understand itself. I call this sub-genre of the memory film—which intersects with the ‘dream film’; e.g. Cocteau’s *Orphee* (1949); Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life* (2001)—the

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‘psycho-katabasis’ film, insofar as it replicates the classic structure of the mythical underworld journey in which the un-dead hero travels to the land of the dead in order to acquire some special knowledge that will help him in his endeavours in life. This is of course one of the oldest narrative models in the world’s cultures, and one which, as our examples here and later demonstrate, informs countless art cinema narratives in a typically secularized, thoroughly ironic form entirely consonant with later capitalist modernity’s obsession with individual identity.

The specifically *cinematic* significance of these sequences in *Wild Strawberries* is both simpler—in the absence of familiar flashback cues, how else would the past be portrayed?—and more complicated than it might first appear: the denizens of Isak Borg’s reveries, for example, ‘live on’ as image, outside of time’s flow, eternally youthful but, for all intents and purposes, ‘dead’ with respect to the diegetic present (regardless of whether or not they are still alive within the film’s diegetic world). By the same token (as he himself admits), the elderly Isak (Swedish silent film director Victor Sjostrom) is, like Dickens’s Ebenezer Scrooge, ‘dead-within-life’. But such a metaphorically premature ‘death’ here cannot, as in *A Christmas Carol*, find redemption through a change of heart.⁴⁵ The pseudo-eschatological laws of Dickensian melodrama do not apply in the universe of the postwar art film.⁴⁶ In this light the trope of memory as afterlife or land of the dead functions figuratively to explain the relation of these scenes to Isak’s character; the ‘second-chance’ he is granted signifies only in terms of the decisions or actions he takes in what time remains to him. This statement, however, does nothing to mitigate the fact of cinema’s central role, as evidenced by the manner in which Isak’s dreams and memories are represented to the viewer; far from a metaphysical one, the only ‘higher order’ or authority against which his actions are being judged is that of *his own* memories, dreams or hallucinations—if anything, this is a metaphysics of the *self*; that is, of memory. This point is driven home in the shot of Isak’s own eye in the microscope into which he peers during the dream scene in which he is ‘tested’—an image that succinctly conflates the visual motifs of camera lens and mirror. And, after all, unlike Scrooge—who (as he learns from his late partner Jacob Marley), should he fail to change will face an eternity of wandering in self-imposed exile from the rest of humanity—the ‘punishment’ to which Isak is sentenced is simply *loneliness*, right now, not later. To this extent, *Wild Strawberries* is typically modern—and ‘Bergmanesque’—in its deep distrust of metaphysics.

In an inversion of the story of the biblical Abraham, prepared to sacrifice Isaac, his son, Bergman’s elderly Isak—as we learn in Marianne’s flashback⁷—is prepared to ‘sacrifice’ his son on the altar of debt (Isak’s son needs to repay a loan)—an ethical point which remains unresolved at the film’s conclusion, despite Isak’s apparently redemptive transformation. In a Levinasian reading, Isak remains what might be called an ‘Abrahamic’ subject, in contrast to the received narrative of consciousness, “which finds itself again

in all its adventures, returning home to itself like Ulysses, who through all his peregrinations is only on the way to his native land” (Levinas, “Other” 346), the paradigmatic *nostos*. For Levinas this is a conception that continues “to affirm being as identical with itself” (346), whereas a “*work conceived radically is a movement of the same unto the other which never returns to the same*”. To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to oppose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever for a yet unknown land” (348; emphasis in original). In other words, the ‘Greek’ *nostos* versus the ‘Jewish’ paradigm of exile: a return *within* history versus the necessary recognition of the impossibility of return and the movement out of or beyond the cycle. Therefore to call Bergman’s *Isak ‘Abrahamic’* is to read the film—and its peculiar approach to representing memory—in the most positive light possible: to redeem its conclusion by *not* seeking genuine redemption there.

EXTERIORIZED INTERIORITY

It is a critical commonplace that the nineteenth-century realist novel concerns itself with the verbal representation of psychological *interiority* as much as an objective, documentarist representation of bourgeois society. As Stephen Prince argues, the poststructuralist deconstruction of *novelistic* mimesis need not necessarily be extended to the reproduction of ‘profilmic reality’ in cinema (“Discourse” 87). Film (like photography) emphasizes *exteriority*: the visible *externality* of things as they exist in space. The temptation to invoke psychoanalytic tropes in this context is countered by the recognition of their failure to address the radical exteriorization of subjective interiority constitutive of film as a medium. In a late essay, Christian Metz clarifies why it is necessary to go beyond psychoanalytic theory in this context:

Psychoanalysis . . . is contemporary in our Western history with the technological arts (such as cinema) and with the reign of the patriarchal, nuclear, bourgeois family. Our period has invented neurosis (at least in its current form), and the remedy for it . . . It is possible to consider psychoanalysis as the founding myth of our emotional modernity. In his famous study of the Oedipus myth, Levi-Strauss has suggested that the Freudian interpretation of this myth . . . could be nothing but the last variant of the myth itself . . . [M]yths are always true, even if indirectly and by hidden ways, for the good reason that they are invented by the natives themselves, searching for a parable of their own fate. (“Photography” 89–90)

This exteriority—the ‘outside’ of appearances—is not to be confused with the ‘exteriority’ of the radically other articulated by Levinas: that

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which is radically ‘outside’.⁴⁸ Film’s seemingly irreducible *visuality*, its emphasis on visible surfaces, throws an ironic light on the emphasis, in a highly influential strain of film theory, on cinematic narration as *diegesis* rather than mere *mimesis*: as a form of *story-telling* as opposed to *showing*. This is to speak, however, of critical reception over against actual intelligible differences in narrative mode from one film [or genre] to another (see Bordwell, *Narration*). In other words, it may be possible to say that a still photograph (or painting) ‘tells a story’ (contains a narrative within its visual field), but the manner of ‘telling’ is obviously of a different order from film with its ‘naturalistic’ representation of movement: the unfolding of the narrative within *time*. In film the temporal *act* of narration is foregrounded—albeit *visually* (and also through sound, music etc.). Here, as well, one needs to consider the shift Deleuze charts from the ‘movement image’ to the ‘time image’: from a cinema of agency (*d'actant*) to a cinema of the ‘see-er’ (*de voyant*) (see *Cinema 2* 2).

I invoke here Deleuze’s distinction between the classical movement-image and the (cinematically) modern time-image alongside Bordwell’s discussion of the art film as a genre. While the movement-image, as Robert Stam puts it, “is based on cause and effect, on organic linkages and teleological development, and on protagonists plowing purposefully through the narrative space” (*Film Theory* 260), the ‘time-image’, by contrast, “conveys the mental processes of memory, dream, and the imaginary”, engendering “autonomous shots with uncertain or absent causality within a non-totalized process where the continuity bridges have broken down” (261). In Deleuze’s category of the time-image, “the panoramic organization of space loses its thrust and gives way to [what Stam calls] the screen as palimpsestic memory” (261).

ETHICALITY AND VISUALITY: TRACING MEMORY’S TRACES

In the course of the following chapters I draw in varying degree on a few specific critical-theoretical tendencies, or ‘turns’, beginning with the ‘textual turn’ embodied in certain French poststructuralist thinkers, ranging from Derrida and Levinas to Debord and Deleuze, for instance, but equally grounded in the more recent post-Marxist ‘cultural turn’ that takes full advantage of the social constructionist approach to the production of meanings, foremost of which are what we think of as ‘identity’ and ‘reality’. This basis in post-1960s ‘high theory’ and Cultural Studies is tempered throughout, however, with an emphasis on the specificity of the cinematic signifier; therefore I owe a certain debt to the kind of neo-formalist approach exemplified by David Bordwell’s work. For reasons of space I will not be able to incorporate much consideration of industrial-contextual elements in discussions of specific films: my consideration of transnational cinema, cineliteracy, globalization etc., will necessarily remain on a theoretical,

projective level, in order to leave room for another kind of argument altogether, about the (real or potential) *ethical* dimension of the memory film. This approach implies a broader privileging of the category of ethics in my reading of cinema's centrality to modernity.

To clarify: unless otherwise indicated, the 'ethicality' I invoke throughout is inflected in Levinasian terms.⁴⁹ My invocation of this most significant philosopher of alterity is motivated and justified by yet another turn—the Levinasian—in literary, film and cultural studies over the past twenty-odd years. As sketched above in relation to *Wild Strawberries*, this involves the turning away from a concept of the subject or 'self'—identity as *self*-identity—defined as unethical for its implicitly egoistic focus: in Levinas's quasi-economic discourse a self 'with return', in which all meaning—including otherness—is recuperated and nothing is lost or left over. This is the crux of Levinas's radical re-thinking of ethics as 'first philosophy' predicated on the self-other relation: for Levinas, the self remains open, untotalized, 'without return'. Most important, the other remains other, unassimilated to the self's identity with itself, not a 'meaning' as such. Levinas's highly allusive discourse draws from literature and myth, both Greek and Hebraic: to Odysseus's paradigmatic journey of recuperative returning home, is opposed the open-ended narratives of a journey without end, such as that of Abraham in Genesis (ch. 12). The latter is an 'economic' model for a self figured in terms of a movement or journey that, unlike Odysseus's, is *not* one of return "to the same" but is rather a movement *without* return; a narrative whose end is ceaselessly deferred, lacking the relatively easy consolations of a Hellenic-Christian ontotheology as the ultimate recuperative or 'restricted' economy (see Derrida, "Economy"; Levinas, "Other" 349). That these different ethical paradigms are also metaphors of subjectivity—narrative economies of the self—is significant for the various films analyzed in this book (see esp. Chapter 4), in that Levinas's approach—like Augustine's—emphasizes the grounding of identity in time, so that the 'self' is expressed as narrative (just as the identity of a nation is expressed in historical narrative), particularly those narratives we refer to in terms of 'collective memory'. Memory in this sense is the product of the long-standing centrality of narrative to a (Western) culture for which the image—especially the cinematic image—is the pre-eminent commodity form. The other salient point here is that the model of the self against which Levinas is responding is hypostatized in the psychoanalytic film theory which, although now superseded in the academy, has given us the durable notion of voyeuristic and scopophilic identification with the gaze represented onscreen. This gaze empowers the spectator on the level of fantasy, even as it disempowers its object, the 'other' to the protagonist—in classical Hollywood film typically a woman—in the end disempowering as well the spectator who must recognize his act of misrecognition in the darkened cinema: that he is not identical to the male protagonist, wielder of the gaze, and that he has therefore 'possessed' the other only in ephemeral visual terms.

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In this view, the exteriority of the subject replaces an interiority always already governed by representation. This is best illustrated in a consideration of the representation of memory in contemporary film: that aspect or faculty of mind that is at once wholly personal, integral to the self's interior field of operations, but at the same time 'transpersonal',⁵⁰ constituted in the form of socially determined signifiers; a set of largely visual images shared amongst the members of a discursive community of potentially global dimensions. To properly consider the complexities and contradictions of the representation of memory in film it is necessary to recall the notion of the 'trace' elaborated by both Derrida and Levinas, originating ultimately in Plotinus.⁵¹ In Saussurean semiotics: a 'sign' signifies in its *positivity*, the positive materiality of the signifier. In the poststructuralist re-writing of Saussure, a 'trace' signifies in its *negativity*: its materiality as such is negative insofar as it is *not* the mark of an *intentional* communicative act; the trace, properly speaking, does not signify. For Levinas:

A trace is not a sign, like any other. But every trace also plays the role of a sign; it can be taken for a sign. A detective examines everything in the area where a crime took place, as revealing signs which betoken the voluntary or involuntary work of the criminal; a hunter follows the traces of the game, which reflect the activity and movement of the animal the hunter is after. [. . .] A trace in the strict sense disturbs the order of the world. It occurs by overprinting. Its original signifyingness is sketched out in, for example, the fingerprints left by someone who wanted to wipe away his traces and omit a perfect crime. He who left traces in wiping out his traces did not mean to say or do anything by the traces he left. . . . He has passed absolutely. ("Other" 356–57)

"But in this sense every sign is a trace": for Levinas (and Derrida), the logic of the trace stands behind *every* sign, every communicative act. In this respect, the trace underscores the basic truth of sign theory: that what every sign ultimately signifies is absence, death; that is, the operation of signs is predicated on the (absolute) absence of the user (speaker or writer). Therefore (to recapitulate Derrida's argument in *Of Grammatology*) even spoken language is predicated on the logic of writing, and not the other way around: every utterance is predicated on the potential absence (death) of the speaker. This is the basis of Derrida's philosophy of language—'grammatology'—and therefore the basis of deconstruction properly speaking. How does cinema fit into this model? Assuming that a *cinematic sign* is still a viable concept, can we speak of cinematic 'traces'? Or is there only the irreducible positivity of cinema's visual signifier? How is (radical) *negativity* or *absence* represented, cinematically; a properly apotropaic cinema, which negates as it shows, negates by showing? As will be seen, the representation of the 'unrepresentable' is a significant dimension of the cinematic representation of memory.⁵²

The irony of invoking unrepresentability in a book on cinema raises a point of critique that must be addressed; after all, as Martin Jay and others have noted, Levinas's anti-ocularcentrism appears to reset the Jewish prohibition on images as a modern secular ethical model. As Sarah Cooper puts it, when one invokes Levinas in the context of visual or film culture, one is moving "away from a relation to the other based on identification in the full analytic sense of this term" (115), and therefore also, in the sense of identification proper to film theory since Laura Mulvey's ground-breaking essay:

Contrary to . . . Lacan, the image of the other can never be assumed in a Levinasian sense. [. . .] The Levinasian face—as interface—is not the mirror of Lacanian psychoanalysis or of Metz's apparatus theory . . . But nor is it the window of phenomenological film theory which explores cinema and individual films for what they allow us to see beyond them: a transcendent space, whether this be the ontological essence of the real (Andre Bazin) or a divine realm . . . While an encounter with the face accesses what lies forever beyond my sphere, the asymmetry of such a relation is one that we can find within film—an immanent approach to transcendence through the image, distance accessed through proximity. (Cooper 115)

Taken at face value (pardon the pun), the Levinasian ethical model does not apply in the context of classical Hollywood or contemporary commercial film. Nor do I intend to imply that it is generally encountered in the counter-narrative of the art film. The self-other relation is invoked here rather as a kind of impossible 'ideal': a paradoxical standard of visual representation which for the most part cannot be met. Only a few of the films discussed herein will be seen to engage in their aesthetics with this radical ethics in any direct way.

The problem with invoking Levinas in an analysis of popular visual culture, then (as Landsberg does, for example), is a problem that is, in a sense, carried over here, only (it is hoped) with a greater awareness of the fact that this is a problem and that there is still a point in doing so. First, in a general sense, the difference between a study like Landsberg's and this one is that, although ethical questions have a primacy here as well, I am not setting out to sell a particular mode of being in the world that I deem to be more ethical—or morally correct—than another. I am not trying to prescribe (or proscribe) but only to describe, and, if possible, analyze and understand. Therefore, while I recognize that to invoke Levinas here, at the outset, is to privilege his ethical 'model' over others, I also recognize that his is an impossible model, entailing an ethics that cannot be instrumentally implemented as a 'guide for living' a better life. Secondly, and more specifically, I recognize here at the outset what will be elaborated more fully in the following chapters: that Levinas's ethical theory is explicitly

anti-ocular, which means that it has little or no relationship to a visually based contemporary mass or popular culture (as defined here). Therefore to invoke Levinas in this context is in fact to invoke a ‘second-order’ Levinas; i.e. a Levinasian theory certain elements of which have been appropriated and adapted (as with Bakhtin) to a context in which his ideas (according to their *letter*) should have no place.

MEMORY AS WRITING

This study of memory in and as cinema is predicated on a complex series of assumptions about: (1) cinema as a ‘language’; (2) writing and reading; (3) ‘orality’ and literacy; (4) translation or translatability; and (5) globalization and the circulation and diasporic ‘migration’ of specific cinematic tropes and stylistic strategies—not to speak of specific genres, or more general filmic modalities, such as the ‘art film’ itself as distinct from classical or contemporary commercial Hollywood product. As noted, I begin from the assumption that post-1970s film theory was right in pointing out that cinema as medium of expression or representation is not a ‘language’ *per se vis-à-vis* ‘natural’ (verbal) language—in the sense of possessing a grammar, a “necessary structure of its own” (Carruthers 26).⁵³

As Christian Metz asserted in 1968, in coalescing very early on as a narrative medium, cinema thereby acquired in a reversal of logical order some of the attributes of a ‘language’ in the sense of *parole*, if not a language system (*langue*) (“Semiotics” 68–75).⁵⁴ In response, Stephen Prince critiques “the *linguistic turn* in contemporary film studies”, in an effort to arrive at a theory of film “more sensitive to the unique, constitutive features of pictorial . . . modes of communication” (“Discourse” 100).⁵⁵ Prince challenges Metz’s hypostatized structuralist-semiotic model of film, reminding us of what many viewers had been coerced (by film theory itself) to forget: that films consist in a fundamental sense of iconic images, whose mimetic connection to an extra-cinematic ‘reality’ should never be underestimated. Moreover, these images are occasionally of such visual power as to dissociate themselves from the signifying chain of the diegesis and burn themselves into our collective cultural consciousness (see Burgoynes 226).

Debates about cinema’s status as a language are now all but historical; superseded by the 1990s ‘cultural turn’ in film studies. But the more recent ‘visual turn’, in which film is considered within a wider frame of visual culture in general, has reawakened discussion of the filmic image in its iconic or its indexical function, leading inevitably to a questioning of the hypostatized assumptions of a structuralist approach that privileges ‘linguistic’ significance over the observation that the filmic image closely resembles what it purportedly represents—one of the best arguments, on the face of it, in favour of film as *lingua franca*. The dominance of the iconic and denotative levels

of the image has come to the fore again in a cinema culture being reconfigured by digital technologies. As Stephen Prince reminds us, in a fundamental sense films consist of iconic images, whose mimetic connection to an extra-cinematic ‘reality’ should never be underestimated (see “Discourse”).

There is a long tradition of scholarship on memory in the context of the changing relations of word and image in European culture—a political, economic and technological legacy that informs the entire history of cinema. Much of this work revolves around the so-called oral versus literate debate; the theory (promulgated by Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong and others) of cultural evolution from pre-literate ‘oral’ societies to ‘literate’ cultures of writing and books whose highpoint is reached with the invention of moveable type and the printing press and the legitimization of vernacular languages in the early-modern period. As Lina Bolzoni explains:

In the age of the printing press . . . the text is perceived as a set of places, as something that is positioned in space. The human faculties that generate the text (that is, the mind, memory) are perceived in an analogous fashion. [. . .] The text is constructed (and read) in the space of the book in the same way that one constructs in the spaces of memory a set of places to which images are assigned, and in the same way an architect erects a building in physical space. Indeed, the building is one of the classical models for systems of memory. (191)

This is followed in the late nineteenth century, in the new urban setting of the modern city, by further technological development, resulting in what Walter Benjamin famously calls the ‘age of mechanical reproducibility’ epitomized by the advent of photography and cinema. The latter in turn has given way to the present, so-called ‘post-literate’—or even hyper-literate—age in which the cinematic image and its attendant epistemology is being rapidly displaced under late capitalism by digital modalities of representation and, in a not entirely metaphorical sense, cognition. Arguably the present moment can as readily be characterized as ‘post-cinematic’—but in the most inclusive sense, signifying the total *diffusion* of cinema’s cultural impact as much as its decline.⁵⁶

In Chapter 3 we return to this old—but newly relevant—debate about cinema as language. Here the focus is on the single linguistic-grammatical element of grammatical tense: the temporality of narrative action, as expressed grammatically in natural languages, through verbal inflections. Responding to theorists like Christian Metz, Stephen Prince points out that visual images, in contrast to verbal signs,

lack tense and other aspects of syntax that can be used to establish remote temporal or spatial conditions (the dissolves, wipes, and odd music used to signal flashbacks in Hollywood narratives are a less powerful and flexible means of approximating this ability) (“Discourse” 94)⁵⁷

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In contrast, Maureen Turim nevertheless explains “the way a filmic text encodes its temporality” (15), with recourse to the same kinds of examples:

The temporal reference of a filmic segment is defined by a complex combination of visual and auditory indications, which can include: voice-over narration, filmic punctuations such as dissolves, changes in *mise-en-scene* such as costumes indicating an earlier time period or make-up differences that indicate younger periods in a character’s life, and changes in non-diegetic music. (Turim 15–16)

Turim accedes that the filmic image lacks

the semantic fluidity and precision of verbal expression when it comes to articulating temporal reference; language provides a subtle delineation of different modalities of temporal reference that are only available to film through the use of language either in the form of voice-over or written intertitles or subtitles. (16)

Turim returns us to Metz, reminding us that there are certain paradigmatic elements in some narrative films for which there is a *finite* number of possible choices: those optical devices, not always shots properly speaking, which enact transitions between shots (“Denotation” 75). For example: not the shot of a woman’s face, which happens to be that of a particular actress (and which contains an entire narrative in itself [“Denotation” 79]), but the specific *fade* that precedes (or follows) this image. Such apparently grammatical codes and conventions are themselves susceptible to context, even such a local one as genre or mode: the mere shift from classical to non- or post-classical style, or from classical realist to modernist art film narrative, entails often radical differences in codes of representing the operation of subjective memory, and therefore, in theory, the conventions of viewing and making sense of these signifiers (See Prince, “Discourse”; Dayan).

The other major, poststructuralist, assumption operating in this study is that of the precedence of the signifier over the signified in any example; that there is (to paraphrase Derrida again) no meaning as such prior to or outside of the materiality of the filmic image. To this extent I articulate here a distinctly anti-metaphysical approach to ‘reading’ certain kinds of films. My focus therefore is the unit of cinematic style (e.g. the shot, scene, stylistic technique, special effect or other identifiable onscreen element) that is always susceptible to appropriation, repetition, recontextualization, resignification, transvaluation. I interpret these elements not merely in terms of their functionality in context (in a specific film or oeuvre, for example), but also—more importantly—as instances of the visual-cinematic equivalent of what Bakhtin calls ‘speech-genres’,⁵⁸ or what Max Black calls ‘cognitive archetypes’ (qtd. in Carruthers 16)—which really means something more like cognitive *stereotypes*, as the irreducibly socially constructed nature of

such structures is now recognized, alongside their social value as shorthand for talking and thinking about, even imagining (if not understanding) specific, complex phenomena—whether a historical event, an emotional response, or a visual-spatial object.

Mary Carruthers invokes Black's phrase in her elaboration of the metaphor of memory as "written surface": a metaphor "so ancient and so persistent in all Western cultures that it must . . . be seen as a governing model or 'cognitive archetype'" (16). This in part at least justifies my emphasis here on cinema as a species of writing (as literally *cinemato-graphy*⁵⁹), and to extend this line of influence back to its origins in the mnemotechnics of classical antiquity and ahead to Augustine's naturalization of the internal 'spaces' of artificial memory and finally to film as a contemporary 'art of memory'.⁶⁰ My project here is also justified by John Frow's essay, "*Toute la Memoire du Monde: Repetition and Forgetting*," which is one of the few texts in which a certain continuity between pre- and postmodern modalities of memory is seriously argued.⁶¹ Frow's argument centres around the all-important issue of "the role of the material mediation of memory" (Frow 222), which, I would add, must also include the role of memory as mediation. In trying to frame an "alternative"—i.e. poststructuralist—"conception of memory," Frow asks the question: "how can memory be thought as *tekhnē*, as mediation, as writing?" (224). To make this argument Frow turns to the work of Mary Carruthers on medieval memory:

The salient fact [Carruthers] points to in medieval thought is that it draws no distinction in kind 'between writing on the memory and writing on some other surface. Rather than being an external support or implement in relation to memory, the activity of writing is a kind of memorization itself, or at least is intimately bound up with it. Thus, on the one hand, 'the symbolic representations that we call writing are no more than cues or triggers for the memorial "representations" . . . upon which human cognition is based'; and, on the other, 'anything that encodes information is "writing", whether it be alphabet, hieroglyph, ideogram, American Indian picture writing, or Incan knot-writing. (224)

Or, as Frow adds, "medieval mnemotechnic systems"; or even (I would add) cinema itself. Frow astutely concludes that "it is only by working out the implications of 'writing' (in these senses) for memory that we can avoid the nostalgic essentialism that affirms the reality of an origin by proclaiming its loss" (225).

CONCLUSION: INTERTEXTUALITY AND ETHICS

In her recent book on adaptation theory, Linda Hutcheon re-defines intertextuality in terms of its frequently "palimpsestuous" quality, referring to

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the fact that “part of the pleasure and frustration of experiencing an adaptation is the familiarity bred through repetition and memory” (20). Even a few years ago, it would not have been necessary to define—or, for that matter, justify—‘intertextuality’ in this context. As Robert Stam reminds us, the term was first introduced in the 1960s “as Julia Kristeva’s translation of Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘dialogism’, coined in the 1930s, a translation which loses some of the philosophical and, dare I say, human overtones of Bakhtin’s term” (*Film Theory* 201). I invoke the Bakhtinian usage as much as possible over the more conventional sense of some glib and superficial feature of a postmodern culture that is constantly recycling or cannibalizing itself (although these metaphors are always present as well). ‘Dialogism’, as Stam defines it, “refers to the necessary relation of any utterance to other utterances. (An utterance, for Bakhtin, can refer to any ‘complex of signs,’ from a spoken phrase, to a poem, or song, or play, or [novel].)” (201). Stam’s definition of dialogism is as good as any introduction to intertextuality in this context:

The concept of dialogism suggests that every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces. All texts are tissues of anonymous formulae embedded in the language, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, conflations and inversions of other texts. In the broadest sense, dialogism [hence, intertextuality] refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, and which reach the text not only through recognizable influences but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (*Film Theory* 202)

Stam succeeds in capturing in this definition the dialogic potential of intertextuality as a universe of texts and textual practices, a kind of Babelian library, representing the sum total of its ‘utterances’ (texts) as the ‘memory’ of a specific culture. On the other hand—as the Babelian-Borgesian intertext suggests—there is always a danger in this kind of formulation of implicitly romanticizing an ideal of social-cultural ‘community’—a kind of utopia achieved through texts or representations if not through lived social reality. Contemporary cultural theory has by and large bought into a distortion of what Bakhtin meant by ‘speech’, ‘word’ or ‘discourse’ at the root of every ‘utterance’ (201)—the discursive practices of a specific people (and the aesthetic stylization of these practices by the novelist or other artist). By the same token, it is too easy to accept uncritically the utopian cultural theories that proliferate today, predicated on vague notions of ‘social justice’ (such as Landsberg’s formulation of prosthetic memory [as noted above]). The challenge is to avoid falling into too complacent or non-critical ways of thinking while simultaneously acknowledging not merely the political but the ethical aspects of any theory of the relation of cinema and memory.

In a fundamental sense every narrative fiction film is invested in memory, and this includes those films that neither thematize nor represent memory (in the form of the flashback, for example). This claim obviously requires clarification, since it points in the direction of rendering ‘memory’ a virtually meaningless, catch-all term. I will conclude, then, by categorizing four distinct (but interconnected) ways in which film engages with memory. First, there is memory represented via specific formal-stylistic features, a specific cinematic vocabulary or set of codes, typified by such temporally disjunctive strategies as the ‘flashback’. As discussed previously, this level has been dealt with exhaustively by Turim and somewhat idiosyncratically by Deleuze, for example. Second, there is memory as (cinematic) intertextuality, in which cinema’s own past (and ever-present present) constitutes an archive potentially accessible within or through *any* film, but which tends to operate in specific, motivated instances of intertextual appropriation and recontextualization. Much Cultural Studies inflected film criticism focuses on this aspect, without necessarily engaging with film in its specificity as a medium. Third, there is memory as cultural context within which individual films signify as objects within a larger cultural matrix (Alison Landsberg’s notion of cinema as ‘prosthetic memory’ fits here). And fourth, there is cinema itself as memory, or ‘meta-archive’; ‘prosthetic memory’ writ large; collective cultural memory: the totality of signs and meanings that make up a given culture. As noted earlier, to broach an understanding of this last category especially is my ultimate goal in these pages.

1 No Escape from Time

Memory and Redemption in the International Postwar Art Film

Memory implies a certain act of redemption.

—John Berger

[T]hrough memory *the* world becomes *my* world.

—Alain Resnais

INTRODUCTION: IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME

In what can be called, for lack of a better term, the contemporary art film, Deleuze's 'time-image' is revisited, inflected in certain ways with the 'movement-image' as we move from a "cinema of the see-er" (*de voyant*) to a cinema of agency (*d'actant*) and beyond (*Cinema 2 2*). Spectatorial identification and distanciation are curiously imbricated in the new model emerging in the 1960s and after. For Deleuze,

[I]dentification is actually inverted: the character has become a kind of viewer. He shifts, runs and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action. He records rather than reacts. He is prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than engaged in an action. (*Cinema 2 3*)

It is not simply that the "Newtonian" time of the classical montage has given way to the phenomenological temporality of the long take and elliptical editing of the art film; rather, the two different approaches to the representation—and *valuation*—of time, memory, death and redemption are combined or juxtaposed within the same film. A tension emerges between the meaning implicit in this chapter's title ("no escape from time") of "the present as prisoner of the past"¹—a modernist sentiment characteristic of the postwar international art film (especially French)—and the more contemporary, postmodern, notion of the present as a 'work-in-progress' with the past as malleable fiction.

Crystallized in Chris Marker's landmark *La Jetée* (1962), the theme that there is no escape from time resonates across the history of the European art film and its international counterpart. This becomes a sort of cinematic meta-theme, connecting as it does narratives of individual desire, death, mourning and, above all, memory, with the fictional cinematic accommodation of capital *h* History. In other words: the problem of temporally conditioned *identity*, individual or collective, at the heart of a visually hegemonic culture for which political and aesthetic questions—questions of *representation*—are mutually constitutive. This chapter examines the production of identity out of the intersection of individual memory and modern history as represented cinematically in the postwar art film in dialectical relation to the dominant cinematic mode of a broader commercial culture. As noted in the Introduction, I read the 'art film' as characterized by formal discontinuity, semantic ambiguity and anti-Oedipal visual pleasures. I therefore invoke here David Bordwell's classification of the art film as not a genre so much as a style or mode, embodying Bazin's valorization of the long take and deep space, Tarkovsky's privileging of the individual shot over montage, as well as Deleuze's comparable distinction between the movement-image and the time-image. Again, I invoke these various and differing definitions in order to emphasize their intersection in the historical art film's production of meaning out of a specific approach to the presentation and manipulation of uniquely cinematic spaces and temporalities. The focus is on the conjunction of the subjective level—the representation of an individual's perception of time, the structural and thematic role of desire, and a reified relation to death—with the objective level of 'realism' (both iconic and ideological) epitomized in the modern city in which cinema as the paradigmatic late-modern cultural form finds its ideal setting. The twentieth-century city is the literal 'city of the dead' for the modern katabasis narrative; the spatial locus for the journey whose ultimate goal is to ironically 'redeem' life by escaping time. This chapter compares a cross-section of European postwar and contemporary art films within the self-reflexive and -reflective context of cinema as a time-based medium. Beyond the 'memory-film' category, these films are connected in their representation of built space, their production of spatial form, and their manipulation of volume, light, shadow; visual-architectural allegories of the modern metropolis as it gives way to the urban spaces of the global postmodern.

In the shift from a modernist to a postmodernist cinema the seemingly positive desire to escape time, at bottom a function of the erotic drive, the desire to escape death, ironically inverts into its complement: *thanatos*, the desire *for* death. How better to transcend time's exigencies, to find 'deliverance' from desire, from (in a Levinasian phrase) responsibility to the other? As Andras Balint Kovacs says of the representation of time in *Last Year at Marienbad*: "Without a past, desires of the present, hence acts of the future, have no legitimacy" (106). Without a shared sense of pastness, desires and actions have no moral legitimacy. At issue, though, is the fictional—and,

ultimately, literal—status of *death*: the reality principle whose cultural valuation in the late-modern period is always at odds with the problem of its representation. Contemporary popular culture encourages us to see in representations of death a metaphor for an implicit ‘salvation’ through consumption. There is a correlative of this in much classical film narrative (the metaphorical redemptive function of un-ironic narrative closure²), whereas in the modernist tradition from which the art film emerges, death signifies as a purgatorial or even infernal space within which any redemptive or eroto-salvific potential has only an ironic or ambiguous value. More generally, the metaphysical category of redemption has been long since revalued in the gradual shift to a so-called secular late modernity: the Western world’s semi-conscious disavowal of its abiding allegiance to categories like God or an afterlife. As Stewart Martin puts it, modernity has “kill[ed] off God without giving up the [messianic] temporality that anticipates his coming” (20). The messianic avatar in the late capitalist paradigm is epitomized in the pop-cultural action hero, especially the protagonist with super-human abilities or powers (the ‘superhero’ as Nietzschean *Übermensch* redux). The messianic function, in this secular context, however, is typically translated into apocalyptic violence, through which narrative closure is guaranteed: the only terms that make sense to an audience for whom the ‘next world’ is comprehensible only as a reflection of this one.³ The character of Jason Bourne (in the eponymous trilogy, discussed in the second chapter) presents an interesting critique of this paradigm through the merging of a kind of ‘existential’ action genre and the popularized memory film.

THE CINEMATIC CITY: *TEMPS MORT* AND THE “ANY-SPACE-WHATEVER”

That the art film’s protagonist’s journey often turns into a quest for self-knowledge that takes the place of the “sensory-motor mechanism” of Deleuze’s classical cinema means that such an interior journey unfolds in the landscape of dream or memory, which in some cases corresponds to the spatial equivalent of ‘white noise’: Deleuze’s “any-space-whatever”, signifying at once as the concrete (albeit empty, banal or vague) location of the action as such and an allegorical mental chronotope of psychic ‘action’ or inaction (*Cinema 1* 208).⁴ Or rather, the primary action, as Deleuze emphasizes, is now that of *looking*—even more overtly, perhaps, than in classical Hollywood. This is the space (or spaces) in which become visible “subjective images, memories of childhood, sound and visual dreams or fantasies, where the character does not act without seeing himself acting, complicit viewer of the role he himself is playing” (*Cinema 2* 6). Taken on its own, this may sound like a reading of the art film through a feminist-psychanalytic lens, which threatens to reduce the typical classical Hollywood product to an Oedipal allegory of the gaze. But the larger context of transformation,

together with the diversity of the individual films, precludes this reductive reading. The specific films discussed here were chosen because they do not simply thematize but visually instantiate memory. Apart from other differences—of production context and/or stylistic register—they are all examples of what I call ‘memory-films’.

Modern and postmodern notions of personal and social identity are elaborated within the largely visually determined subjective and objective spaces of what Frederic Jameson calls the postmodern cultural dominant. And these spaces become the contemporary *hypomnesic*—artificial or prosthetic—equivalent of classical mnemonic *loci* (locations or spaces); the *milieux de memoire* (environments of memory) or cinematic cityscapes comprised of specific *topoi*, the conventional onscreen ‘topics’ or places, the urban settings—streets, buildings, rooms; exteriors, interiors, often corresponding to conventional shots or shot-sequences, specific formal-stylistic devices and strategies—the specific *lieux de memoire* (to appropriate Nora’s phrase) which provide the context for the figural *content* of memory, and thus the ground of identity itself. These films show how, in a more than metaphorical sense, both the structure of memory and processes of remembering and forgetting are provided for us now by cinema, just as they were by other technologies in past eras. What interests me here are the specific differences in the midst of this general continuity of a spatially-visually determined model of memory, which has reached a certain apogee in film as a time-based narrative medium. And if this sounds like a case of euro-ethno-patriarcho-centrism, this is entirely intentional. In subsequent chapters I discuss Asian or Latin American films, for instance, not in order to reductively assimilate them to a neo-colonialist master-narrative, but rather because they are symptomatic in the best sense, offering excellent illustrations of cinema’s seemingly universalizing tendencies, where local-regional stories are treated in the same medium, masquerading as a ‘global language’, as in more overtly commercial fare.

The city in cinema is the imaginary urban three-dimensional space constructed onscreen that provides a shared mental streetscape; the illusory architectural framework in which meanings are stored and retrieved, social practices legitimized and naturalized, identities produced and consumed, desire satisfied and renewed⁵—all at one remove. This is the cinematic city as simulacral locus of a public, ‘social’ memory and therefore of specific, historically sedimented, collective identities: “[c]ities constitute virtual mnemonic zones where a continual activity produces a collective mental life with its own histories” (McNeil 206). According to Henry Jenkins:

We are encouraged to read the urban landscape symptomatically—for signs of similarity and difference from cities we encounter in our everyday lives. These imaginary cities . . . ‘are also constructed as space for the film’s spectator to enter, to map, and to explore’ . . . Finally we are invited to read these cities as allusions, which reference and remediate

earlier works in the genre. Some of the earliest science fiction films—Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926 [sic]) and William Cameron Menzies' *Things to Come* (1936)—offered such vivid images of the urban experience that filmmakers have returned again and again to a shared database—a matrix—of previous representations. (177)

As argued in the Introduction, the connections between memory and built space so relevant for current film scholarship are connectible to classical theories of artificial memory. Cities are comprised in large part of built space—both public and private—and “the building is one of the classical models for systems of memory” (191). Lina Bolzoni traces the history of thinking about memory back to the Greeks and the significance of memory “in a society where writing has not yet been introduced” (xviii). It is revealing to extend this account of the technologizing impact of writing upon memory to the subsequent transformations of memory in the age of cinema:

With the introduction of writing memory comes down from Olympus and enters the world of the city and its human professions: it becomes an art, something that can be taught and practiced. Writing, moreover, removes words from the unrepeatable temporal flux of oral communication and transforms them into objects positioned in space, into things that can be seen and analysed. [...] Writing influences even the way in which the mind is perceived: thought takes on a spatial dimension, and thus intellectual processes are described in terms of movement. We can see how this is essential for memory. It appears as a space divided into places, in which are deposited perceptible images that may be preserved or vanish away. The moment that memory becomes an art, writing remodels it in its own image and likeness.⁶ (xviii)

The classical art of memory to which Bolzoni refers is a mnemonic system predicated on highly developed visual-spatial faculties in a culture (like that which dominates today) that privileged *sight* over the other senses. According to the anonymous *Ad Herrenium* (ca. 82 BCE)—the first classical Latin treatise on the art of memory, often attributed to Cicero—there are two kinds of memory: ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’, where the latter is the product of close observation of what were thought to be “the mind’s natural functions” (Bolzoni xvi). The underlying irony here, vastly amplified in cinema’s scopic regime, is that “techniques of memory reach their greatest development in a world in which their meaning and importance are gradually stripped away from them” by ongoing technological developments (xviii).

The idea of an artificial memory implies memory as ‘technology’, technique or ‘art’ (Gk. *techne*); hence an aid to memory (*aide-de-memoire*), a *mnemotechnic* that all but takes the place of a ‘natural’ memory by supplementing and augmenting it, prosthetically. The key components of the

classical art of memory as essential tool for the rhetorician are as follows: (1) the *locus*: the imaginary space constructed within memory, typically a large architectural edifice; (2) various *topoi*: the specific ‘topics’ or places located within the larger space; (3) the *images agentes*: the objects, images or simulacra contained within each topoi, to which a specific intelligible or sensual meaning is attached; and finally, (4) the specific *order* or sequence in which the *topoi* are to be visited when recollecting the first-order meanings, which may be individual semantic elements or more complex parts of a larger rhetorical discourse or narrative.

We have here the origins of the still pervasive visual-spatial model of memory as vast palace or storehouse: a kind of mental archive, where the analogy is not reducible to metaphor. The line of development from classical rhetorical mnemotechnics to Christian Neo-Platonism is relatively unimpeded. In Augustine’s *Confessions* (397–398 CE), for example, this model acquires “a new and extraordinary vitality” (Bolzoni 239; see also Yates 4–49). In Book 10 (ch. 8 ff.) the visual-spatial tropes of the classical art of memory have been internalized (‘naturalized’) in Augustine’s autobiography as a means of describing memory as an *inner* place or space: the vast internal landscape or architectural edifice of memory, “which is like a great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds which are conveyed to it by the senses” (10.8 214). Augustine, like the classical rhetoricians, follows Aristotle in his emphasis on mnemonic *images* as second-order phenomena:⁷ “The things which we sense do not enter the memory themselves, but their images are there ready to present themselves to our thoughts when we recall them” (10.8 215). As noted in the Introduction, Augustine thus lays the foundation for a conceptual bridge between a classical rhetorical mnemonic topology and a late- or postmodern phenomenology of memory predicated on a premodern approach to the representability and ‘exteriority’ of this aspect of individual subjectivity. This is the transition, in other words, from memory as ‘art’ of retaining and recollecting a specific mnemonic content, to a *re*-‘naturalized’ memory as locus of non-Oedipal identity shaped by desire, loss, mourning and melancholia.

IN LOVE WITH DEATH: ORPHEUS

The Princess: ‘Waiting must be frightful for men’.
Cégeste: ‘I no longer remember’.

—*Orpheus*

Cocteau’s *Orpheus* (1950) is a paradigmatic example of the modern psycho-katabasis, not least because it is an overt, if idiosyncratic, adaptation of one of the most famous underworld descents.⁸ How is the Orphic myth

altered in the film's re-setting? The opening voiceover (rendered in English subtitles) offers a brief comparison:

The legend of Orpheus is well known. In Greek mythology Orpheus was a troubadour from Thrace. He charmed even the animals. His songs diverted his attention from his wife, Eurydice. Death took her away from him. He descended to the netherworld [*l'enfer*: 'hell'] and used his charm to win permission to return with Eurydice to the world of the living on the condition that he never look at her. But he looked at her, and was torn away from her by the Bacchantes. Where does our story take place . . . and when? A legend is entitled to be beyond time and place. Interpret it as you wish. (*Orpheus*)

In a signature scene, Orpheus and his mercurial guide, Heurtebise, pass through a mirror via Cocteau's signature in-camera special effects⁹ combined with a masterful exploitation of the Kuleshov effect, in which a close-up of the actor's hands in surgical gloves plunging into a vat of *mercury* is inserted sideways to make it appear as though the character is passing *into* the mirror's transparent surface (Williams 124). Orpheus and his 'Mercury' (Hermes: Heurtebise) journey into the timeless 'zone' or underworld of death and/or dream; the other side of the looking glass: a no-man's land filled with "men's memories and the ruins of their beliefs" (*Orpheus*). In this mid-century example, intertextuality becomes the second-order 'memory' of the film itself. In adapting the myth of Orpheus, Cocteau's film re-creates and satirizes it (see Williams 111); the myth is its back story, its 'history', and yet the diegesis manages, however obliquely, to engage as well with an extra-filmic 'History'.

Orpheus is very much concerned with the narcissistic, utterly masculine identity of Orpheus 'the poet', who is allowed to travel to the necropolis on the other side of the mirror to reclaim his wife Eurydice, despite the fact that he has fallen in love with death in the person of a Gauloises-smoking, wasp-waisted 'Princess'¹⁰—Cocteau's literalization of the *femme fatale* but also a version of the woman whose act of self-sacrifice/effacement delivers Orpheus from death *per se* by granting him a 'second death' within the 'Zone'.¹¹ Is this 'zone'—of dream, amnesia and death—equivalent to the "any-space-whatever" of the postwar 'time-image'? Or is it rather 'determined', motivated, by the story or, as Deleuze puts it, by the 'sensory-motor mechanism' of the movement-image? Perhaps it is no coincidence that Cocteau's films are so conspicuously absent from Deleuze's two-volume philosophy of film. Ostensibly taking place outside of time's flow—or rather, in the time it takes the minute hand to move one increment, or for a letter to drop into the mailbox—Orpheus's mythical journey is unavoidably rendered in the distended duration of cinematic montage. Moreover, these scenes were partly shot in the bombed-out ruins of the Saint Cyr military academy outside Paris (Williams 110), lending them an oddly



Figure 1.1 *Orpheus* (Jean Cocteau, 1950).

concrete quality, and obliquely connecting the quasi-mythical dimension of Orpheus's journey with the historical context of occupied France and the air raids that brought the war to an end (Williams 124). The contrast could not be much starker in this respect to *Casablanca*'s exploitation of archival footage in its re-creation of wartime France in Rick's flashback-'memories'. To what degree, then, does *Orpheus* represent the postwar art film as the intersection or conflation of Deleuze's 'movement-' and 'time-image'—if we are to retain these categories at all? For James S. Williams, "[t]he ruins of St. Cyr present . . . a direct image of historical time, and it is entirely appropriate that they provide the setting for the periodic breakdown in the plot's linear narration" (128). Jacques Aumont views the Zone in more negative terms, arguing that it is a "space where time escapes time, memory is frozen and history is abolished. As such, it represents the recent Holocaust, the Lager of death, amnesia and forgetting" (Williams 128). But, complicating the general diagnosis of cultural amnesia, the Zone in Aumont's salutary reading is thereby representative of "the sudden anamnesis performed by so many films in the immediate post-war period, films that often depicted a journey through ruins associated with the theme of memory" (Williams 128). In this view, then, *Orpheus* becomes a strange hybrid of poetic fantasy, updated myth and postwar 'Rubble film'.

Williams's gloss on the film's penultimate scene is instructive: the Princess "sacrifice[s] her love for Orpheus and cancel[s] herself out" as his death (131).¹² Here *Orpheus* ironically intertextualizes the Red King's dream in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1871):

'He's dreaming now' said Tweedledee: 'and what do you think he's dreaming about?' Alice said 'Nobody can guess that'. 'Why, about you!' Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?' 'Where I am now of course,' said Alice. 'Not you!' Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. 'You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!' 'If that there King was to wake,' added Tweedledum, 'you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!' (223–24)

As the Princess explains to Orpheus, this greater Death, that cannot be cancelled out, is a "transcendent and elusive entity" existing "nowhere". "Some say that he thinks of us [*il nous pense*], others that we are his thoughts. Others say that he sleeps and that we are his dream . . . his bad dream" (qtd. in Williams 132). This Death, then, is one that cannot be undone, cannot be 'killed', like Orpheus's individual death, the Princess herself: in resurrecting Orpheus she is after all committing suicide. This other, bigger, Death is the Other in the most negative terms, the unrepresentable principle of negation writ large for a modern world still emerging from the ruins of catastrophe.

In its ambivalent statement on memory, or rather the benefits of amnesia (cf. Williams 129), *Orpheus*'s penultimate scene shows the results of the 'second chance' granted Orpheus by the Princess's self-sacrifice: Orpheus and Eurydice, their deaths undone, are together again, cozily embracing in a regained connubial happiness that we have not actually witnessed before,¹³ the bourgeois institutions of heterosexual marriage and nuclear family ironically reaffirmed (Eurydice has had not only her life but her pregnancy restored): "There is only one love that counts: ours" proclaims Orpheus (*Orpheus*; see Williams 133); Heurtebise to the Princess: "We had to send them back to their swamp" (*Orpheus*). This ironic 'paradise regained' represents a kind of fulfillment of Nietzsche's sardonic precept from *Beyond Good and Evil* (quoted, ironically, in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*): "Blessed are the Forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders." As Williams points out, the viewer is unavoidably distanced from this concluding scene if only because, while Orpheus has been granted the gift of oblivion, having forgotten his journey to the Zone because it has been erased from memory through the Princess's re-winding of time, the viewer cannot forget those scenes so easily (129)—not least because of their sheer cinematic artistry. In fact, far from simply 're-winding' the film, Cocteau takes the trouble to stage the sequence of Orpheus and Heurtebise re-tracing their journey,

travelling back through the no-man's-land to re-emerge on the proper side of the mirror.

[J]ust like Orpheus's highly paradoxical—though not literal—act of turning around to see Eurydice (an act both of love and non-love, memory and forgetting), so Cocteau's film as a whole turns towards the ruins to preserve the memory of the camps yet in so doing abolishes it. (128)

Here one might interpose Walter Benjamin's famous reading of Paul Klee's angelus novus, turned toward the past while being swept inexorably on toward the future by a storm "blowing from Paradise ("Theses" 257–58)."¹⁴ The final line of Benjamin's parable, "[t]his storm is what we call progress"), acquires, in light of Cocteau's version of the Orpheus myth, an even deeper resonance *vis-a-vis* the Holocaust which, from the film's perspective, is already a part of the "single catastrophe", the "pile of debris growing skyward" as the angel looks helplessly on. In terms of the film specifically, this concluding scene with Orpheus and Eurydice contentedly home again is heavily ironic if only in relation to the story's status as re-writing of the Orphic katabasis: not only is *this* Orpheus not made wiser by his journey; in the end he is completely oblivious to everything that has transpired (Williams 133).

IT IS ALWAYS LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD

More radically modernist than Cocteau's *Orpheus*, Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) eschews the latter's ironically metaphysical structure in favour of a diegetic world in which past, present and future co-exist in the same plane, their relations determined through mise-en-scene, dialogue and editing. According to Maureen Turim, *Last Year at Marienbad*

poses all its narrative elements as somewhat hypothetical occurrences in a formal universe in which design and pattern tend to dominate reference, but somehow, despite the rigorous beauty of the game board, elements of reference and narrative take hold. Thus the repeated vague references to the past that punctuate the film, to events from last year, could be entirely without story behind them, no last year, no event, just an imaginary, fictive reference with no referent. Or last year could mean the time in which the film itself unfolds, frozen in time, repeating and interrogating itself. Or there could be a last year imbued with fictive density, that haunts the memory of the fiction in the present and it is this tease of a possible temporal map to the fiction, a posited reality that establishes one year and the next and a movement of diegetic memory between them. The pseudo-flashbacks augment this tease within the film's unfolding. (217)

Last Year at Marienbad, in contrast to postwar fare like *Orpheus*, unfolds within what appears to be a contextual vacuum, bearing out Christian Metz's contention that film differs from a medium like photography precisely on the point of its referent: where the referent of photography is the real, film's referent is the imaginary ("Photography" 82). *Marienbad* does not exploit the flashback, for which a clear present is required, but rather what Turim calls the "temporally disjunct insert" (217). In *Marienbad* Henri Bergson's concepts of 'pure time' and 'pure duration' are conjoined with a kind of post-Augustinian spatialized temporality:¹⁵ the film stages in repeating variations the endless, circular quest for the truth of the past within a planar model of time.¹⁶ (While staying at an opulent, unnamed Baroque chateau, a man, 'X', tries repeatedly to convince a married woman, 'A', that they met once before, and perhaps had an affair, 'last year at Marienbad'—and, as her husband, 'M', grows suspicious, she persists in not remembering.) But the giant chessboard on which human lives are played out or played—determined, according to forces unseen and unknowable—this virtual chronotope remains just that; irreducibly a construct of Resnais's sinuously extended tracking shots and counter-logical jump cuts. The enigmatic interior architectural and exterior garden spaces of the non-place in which the characters repeat their lines and gestures comprise a fragmentary cinematic allegory of memory's elusive operations: the lover, 'X', is like an ironic Orpheus whose underworld journey is a 'psycho-katabasis' without clear beginning or ending. *Last Year at Marienbad* is thus not a narrative properly speaking but a kind of endless commentary upon a vaguely familiar story that remains only partially recounted.

More generally, in *Marienbad* "Resnais contemplates the difficulties of living in time, with the past hovering over us when we want to forget and receding into the shadows when we need to remember" (Ward 14). Hence the Bergson-Proust dichotomy: "Time the destroyer" versus "Memory the preserver". For Resnais, memory also always *creates*: "through memory *the* world becomes *my* world" (qtd. in Ward 15). Contrast here the protagonist of classical film narrative (sanctioned by capitalism) who seeks to bend the world to his will, whether through violence or power in less naked form: in this counter-example of the art film we have a protagonist whose engagement with the present tends to be much less direct, while his relative degree of 'empowerment' emerges in his engagement with *other* temporalities and 'realities', via fantasy, dream and memory. *Marienbad* is thus the cinematic extension of the 'Copernican shift' with which modernity began: the revelation that the earth, and therefore humankind, is not at the centre of the universe. But this very triumph of Reason (dubbed 'Humanism') puts humankind into a new kind of central 'godlike' position of intellectual mastery with respect to nature, physical laws and even (to a certain degree) space and time. Therefore a major component of the modernist shift to a more de-centred subject (beginning in the late nineteenth century) is the precarious,

anti-humanist perspective epitomized in a film like *Marienbad*: ‘the world is *my* world’, not because I am a solipsistic egoist, but because part of what it means to be ‘modern’ (in the sense of early twentieth-century modernism) is the realization that whatever totalizing mastery we once held over time and space is irrelevant from the limited perspective of the singular subjective observer, the one whose very identity is directly shaped by his/her experience of living within space and time conceived along rational, Cartesian lines. In this view *memory* is always an effect of the combination of the ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious, etc. Memory in this sense is a kind of representation system or mode of narrating or mediating experience: a structure over which individual agency only ever has partial control. But, as Ward rightly asks,

how can we be sure that our memory will serve us correctly? Might not our memory be forced to serve our desires and needs, even though—indeed because—it is involuntary? Might we not remember the past not as it is, but as we would like it to be? (Ward 16)

The danger in this Bergsonian approach is made evident in *Marienbad*: If in actual experience “our memory *deceives* us about the past, and our memory of the past forges our present, then not only will our past be an illusion but our present also” (Ward 16). For most of us, Bergson’s two kinds of time/memory are always operating together, in conflict or complementarity; this, in a sense, is modern subjectivity: consciousness trapped within memory and therefore time; within time *because of* memory.¹⁷

For Bergson there are two kinds of time: first, ‘clock time’: linear time as a series of discrete, homogeneous uni-directional points—‘duration’ in the conventional sense. This conception of time emphasizes *experience* but also implies the possibility of *retrospective* rational analysis from a point of view constituted ‘after the end’—past and present are discrete; past is past but understandable *in retrospect*. Second, ‘pure time’: a truly *spatial* model of multi-directional time in which past, present and future are fused and continuous. Here duration is ‘pure’ or ‘real’ in the sense that the subject (of time) is afforded a degree of self-awareness or consciousness much deeper and less solipsistic or egocentric than in the linear model.

Through the mode of pure time, intuition creates (or perceives) the essence of life which is duration, the basis of self-identity. ‘Pure duration is the form which our conscious states assume when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states.’[. . .] [Pure] duration, then, is that state in which our present and our past are one: in which our lives are a continuous stream of becoming and never something made or finished. (qtd. in Ward 10)

58 Cinema, Memory, Modernity

On this basis Bergson theorizes two kinds of memory: (1) voluntary memory: intellectual memory *à la* Proust—also the type of memory which shades into the classical art of memory as learned habit or aide to ‘natural’ memory (*mnemotechnic*); and: (2) ‘pure’ memory: imaginative remembering where the past is re-created in its authenticity, as in Proust’s *madeleine* episode.

Through involuntary memory, the past is brought into the present and the passage of clock time is suspended in an awareness of the duration of inner psychological time. ‘With pure memory the totality of our past is continually pressing forward so as to insert the largest possible part of itself into the present action.’ (Ward 11)

Through pure (involuntary) memory the past as a *whole* is remembered. According to Bertrand Russell, in his account of Bergson’s philosophy of time and memory:

In memory the past lives on into the present and interpenetrates it. Apart from mind the world would be perpetually dying and being born again; the past would have no reality and therefore there would be no past. It is memory, with its correlative desire, that makes the past and the future real and therefore creates true duration and true time. (qtd. in Ward 11)

“You cannot go to Marienbad,” remarked screenwriter Alain Robbe-Grillet. In *Marienbad*, the past is always *here* and *now*, yet you cannot go (back) to Marienbad; the past is simultaneously present and absent: ‘last year’ is *this* year, but ‘Marienbad’ is always somewhere—or some *when*—else (Turim 217). Therefore one could also read *Marienbad* in terms of Bergson’s claim that “practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future” (Charney 279). As Stephen Prince reminds us, however, everything in a filmic narrative happens *now*, in the *present*; there is no equivalent in cinema to a literary-grammatical ‘past tense’, which obviously has serious consequences for the representation of the past (“Discourse”). The photograph, on the other hand, is always a representation of something past, over, done: “Roland Barthes distinguished between the referentiality of the photograph as a record of ‘having been there’ and the prime illusion of cinema as an impression of ‘being there’” (Lupton 93). Film, in its *iconicity*, represents or reproduces ‘life’; photography, in its *indexicality*, gestures toward ‘death’—but it should not be forgotten that the invisible basis of the (pre-digital) filmic narrative is the photographic image.¹⁸

From across the second half of the twentieth century, many of the films discussed in this chapter—*La Jetée*, *Mirror*, *Europa* etc.—repeat the pattern consolidated in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* of a man obsessed with an image:

not the ‘real thing’ but a visual representation, not the referent but the sign. The difference comes in with the question of the ontology of this image and its relation to the referent or reality of which it is derivative. In the most radical cases the protagonist is forced to confront the realization that there is no ‘real thing’ behind the image; that this image (of the woman) is all there is, and that perhaps (again, depending on the example) this image is standing in the way of that which we can refer to only in shorthand as a more ‘proper’ object of a different order of desire.

THE ‘REDEMPTIVE’ IMAGE

In his 1946 essay, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”, Andre Bazin offered the now famous formulation of the idea of the ‘redemption’ of reality through the photographic—and therefore cinematic—image:

No one believes any longer in the ontological identity of model and image, but all are agreed that the image helps us to remember the subject and to preserve him from a second spiritual death. [. . .] The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. [. . .] [F]or photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption. (14)

With a striking eschatological metaphor, Bazin champions the inherent *iconicity* of the photographic image in its reproduction of ‘reality’. Iconicity and indexicality are the two poles of what has been termed “the myth of photographic truth,” in which a photograph is . . . perceived to be an unmediated copy of the real world, a trace of reality skimmed off the surface of life” (Sturken and Cartwright 17). In Peircean semiotics, iconicity describes “those signs in which there is a relatively convincing or believable”—visual-structural—“*resemblance* between the signifier (word/image) and the thing signified” (Sturken and Cartwright 357). Therefore any sign or text that operates within a mimetic or realist aesthetic ideology qualifies as iconic in this sense, whether drawing, painting or photograph. Indexicality, on the other hand, indicates “those signs in which there is a physical causal connection between the signifier (word/image) and the thing signified, because both existed at some point within the same physical space” (Sturken and Cartwright 358). A photograph, therefore, is in this sense like a finger- or footprint, left behind at the scene of a crime, indices or traces heralding the actual presence of someone who was there and is now passed on. “A photograph is an index of its subject because it was taken in its presence” (358), where the subject is now necessarily absent, whereas the same photo can also be an icon of its subject

also because it was taken in its presence, where the image always works to ‘restore’ that presence to the viewer. The iconic photo always expresses a positivity, and is therefore potentially mendacious: she is gone but she is still here, in this photo. The indexical photo, by contrast, is always negative—she is no longer here and will never return but she *was* here, and this photo exists as a reminder; or, as a replacement for the memory *itself*. Susan Sontag famously describes every photograph as a *memento mori*: “[to] take a photograph is to participate in another person’s . . . mortality, vulnerability, mutability” (Sontag, *Photography* 15). More recently, she contends that “to remember is, more and more, not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture” (Sontag, *Pain* 89). Implicit in this contention is the fact that, in late modernity, the process of remembering and forgetting, the subject’s relation to and constitution by memory, cannot be accounted for merely by a psychological or cognitive theory. For, as suggested by our discussion of Benjamin’s ‘angelus novus’ in the context of *Orpheus*, there is a potential negative ‘messianicity’ in the cinematic image: its heralding of the failure of the past’s redemption as anything *but* image; a potential which some of the films discussed here deliberately exploit. Quoting Thomas Elsaesser, Robert Burgoyne describes this potential, characteristic of “contemporary media culture”, as “a particular kind of postmodern hubris . . . expressed most powerfully in the widespread faith that film . . . can ‘redeem the past, rescue the real, and even rescue that which was never real’” (226).

THE ‘MADELEINE-IMAGE’: INTERTEXTUALIZING VERTIGO

The still photographic image and cinema meet most famously in Chris Marker’s landmark *La Jetée*, which appeared the same year as *Marienbad* (1961). In *La Jetée* a man is sent back into his own memories from a post-apocalyptic future. There he is reunited with a woman he once loved. After visiting the far future, he is sent permanently to the past where he meets himself as a child watching his older self die. As the voiceover narration states, “This is the story of a man marked by an *image* from his childhood.” In this sense, the film “recounts the tragic destiny of an individual hero” (Lupton 87). The voiceover continues: “Nothing sorts out memories from ordinary moments; it is only later that they show themselves to us, on account of their scars”; that is, the *traces* such moments leave behind—but *where?* And what *else* is implied in the metaphor of the ‘scar’? As Catherine Lupton observes, at the end, “the man finally realizes that there is no escape from time, and that the image that had haunted him since childhood was that of the moment of his own death. [. . .] There is no way to escape time and return to the past as if it could be lived over again” (89–93). The film’s plot bears out Tarkovsky’s observation that “[c]ause and effect are mutually dependent . . . One begets the other by an inexorably ordained necessity, which would be fatal for us if we were able to discover all of the

connections at once" (58). The protagonist's *subjective* past (*his* childhood) becomes the *objective* present of the surviving human race via the medium of film. After all, how is 'memory' represented here? *Whose* memory? Anticipating films to come (from Resnais's *Muriel* to Haneke's *Cache*), 'History' itself lurks in the near background: the Cuban missile crisis (1962) and the threat of nuclear annihilation; the Algerian War (1954–62) and revelations of systematic use of torture by French authorities; WWII (1939–45) and the memory of Nazi concentration camps.

In Blackwell Press's updated *New Keywords* the entry on 'memory' gives precedence to the first volume of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, whose opening chapter presents one of the key theories of modern memory (214–17). Here Proust distinguishes between "the memory of the intellect,' or what he called voluntary memory, and involuntary memory, which exists 'beyond the reach of the intellect,' but can enter consciousness as a result of a contingent sensuous association" (215).

In the famous passage from *Swann's Way* the narrator-protagonist invokes Dantean imagery in his markedly Augustinian reflections on the paradox of the mind reflecting upon itself: "What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing . . ." (Proust 52).¹⁹ He recounts the experience of recognizing the operation of 'involuntary memory':

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to this taste [of lime tea and petite madeleine cake], is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings . . . my Aunt Leonie used to give me. . . . (53–54)

The sensory and sensuous flavour of tea and cake contains within itself what Proust calls "the vast structure of recollection" (54). For Proust, as for Bergson, memory is immaterial: the memory as such is not contained 'within' the cake or its flavour; the madeleine is the precipitant or prompter of what for Proust is memory's complete and authentic unfolding.

Through involuntary memory, the past is brought into the present and the passage of clock time is suspended in an awareness of the duration of inner psychological time. With pure memory the totality of our past is continually pressing forward so as to insert the largest possible part of itself into the present action. (Ward 11)

The sheer vivacity of Proust's resolutely discursive 'image' gets re-connected, in the age of cinema (in which he already lived), to the visual, the filmic image

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fulfilling the function of the madeleine: the ‘madeleine-image.’ There is an echo here, too, of the Christian sacrament of holy communion, secularized in the metaphor of cake and tea as ‘body’ and ‘blood’ of memory: memory’s transubstantiation. In one of modernity’s greatest refutations of memory’s failure, the authentic (visual) memory is ‘resurrected’ through consumption of the cake which prompts recollection of the past in its authentic wholeness. This is memory’s ‘redemptive’ potential: as Jeffrey Pence puts it, the capacity to “make good” real or imagined losses (243). This potential of involuntary memory can be brought alongside Freud’s concept of cathexis, which, on the level of the individual psyche, means to charge an object with ‘psychic value’; to invest something with metaphorical significance; to displace the value inherent in one thing into or onto another thing that does not actually possess that value: the very condition of metaphor *per se* (“Mourning” 247–68). To this constellation we can also add Marx’s political-economic notion of *reification*, which, in the exchange relation (on the social-economic level), refers to the transformation of a human being into an object (thing) and/or the attribution of human (subjective; affective) qualities to an inanimate object (commodity). Reification is

a process by which abstract ideas are assumed to be real and concrete. [...] Objects (commodities) acquire *human* qualities (are perceived as sexy, romantic, or cool, for instance), and human relations can become increasingly *objectified* and devoid of emotional meaning. (Sturken and Cartwright 201)

In psychoanalytic discourse, too, the emphasis is on the *object*: the object that is lost, and/or the object that is consciously or unconsciously appropriated as a replacement or substitution. In Freud’s theory of mourning, the lost ‘object’ is the *other* in the most meaningfully positive sense of loved one or beloved, whether human being, animal or . . . other (actual object, abstraction, ideal or value etc.). Freud uses ‘object’ as a general category for the quantity or quality that occupies a particular position (negative) and fulfills a particular role (absence) *vis-à-vis* the subject of mourning. This feature of mourning (properly speaking) also points to its difference from melancholia: for Freud, “mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction . . . such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning” (“Mourning” 251–52). In comparison to acute melancholia,

profound mourning . . . contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest in the outside world—insofar as it does not recall [the lost loved one]—the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him. (252)

Therefore the major difference between mourning and melancholia (according to Freud) is the presence or absence of an actual object to be actually lost: with mourning there is such an object (i.e. person), and the process of mourning is about the gradual overcoming of resistance to the accepting of substitute or compensatory objects, where for Freud to turn away from the lost object toward a new, existing object is to turn back toward ‘reality’, and therefore psychic ‘health’. Melancholia, however, is seen by Freud as ‘pathological’ because, while it is very similar to mourning, the ‘loss’ in question may occur on a purely ideal level: i.e. there may be a real object (person, loved one) but that object may not cease to exist—the loved one may not literally die. Therefore melancholia in this sense is tantamount to a kind of false or ‘pathological’ mourning for an object that is not really lost; a mourning for the ‘lost’ but still existing object, still living person (253). To make matters worse, this ‘loss’ is as often as not ‘unconscious’; i.e. the melancholic subject is not necessarily aware of what it is that has *really* been lost, even though it is recognized that someone or something is no longer present—an ex-lover, for example (254).

Eric L. Santner’s Lacanian reading of the “Mourning and Melancholia” essay emphasizes the dialogic dimension of Freud’s theory of the constitution of the self, “*beyond the pleasure principle* . . . around its first confrontations with death and loss” (20). This approach aligns with my overall argument in these pages insofar as it points toward the radical alterity at the heart of selfhood and signification alike; an alterity which therefore determines both aesthetic and ‘psychological’ events as fundamentally *ethical* in meaning and function. For Santner, then, melancholia, as a more “primitive” mode of grieving, addresses the fundamental or ‘primal’ relation with the other: “What melancholy must work through is not so much the loss of a particular object . . . but rather the loss of a fantasy of omnipotence” (3). As Freud puts it: “In mourning it is the *world* which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the *ego itself*"; whereas ‘true’ mourning is not ego- (or ‘I-) centred, melancholia is truly *narcissistic* (“Mourning” 254). In mourning the *other* is absent from the world which is consequently impoverished; in melancholia the other’s absence from the self signals the impoverishment of *self*:alone. “The melancholic grieves not so much for the loss of the other as for the fact of otherness and all that it entails” (Santner 3).²⁰

Furthermore, where in mourning it is a matter of the ego overcoming its resistance to accepting *alternative* ‘objects’ of libidinal desire, what is so remarkable about melancholia (for Freud) is that it can lead to the “overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life” (“Mourning” 254). In the melancholic the drive for self-destruction (*thanatos*: death-drive) overpowers the instinct for self-preservation (*eros*: sex-drive). Narcissism—the “narcissistic libido”—names “the ego’s self-love . . . the primal state from which instinctual life proceeds . . . [. . .] The ego can kill itself only if, owing to the return of the object-cathexis, it can treat itself as an object . . . ” (261). Ethically speaking, this is as good a

description as any of the very opposite of the model here, in which the ethical self-other relation extends to the other ‘within’ the self, which is to be neither objectified nor treated as known, as part of the self. “Melancholia, therefore, borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism.” In this view: melancholia = mourning + narcissism (259). Going beyond Freud, this ‘regression’ into infantile narcissism becomes the ‘vertigo of memory’: to be trapped in the mirror-phase indefinitely, the only escape from which is suicide.²¹

I should make clear that I invoke the term ‘madeleine-image’ in a much more inclusive sense than Turim’s use of “the flash memory image, the involuntary intrusive brief flashback that gradually leads to a more expansive recall” (208). In Freudian terms, the latter “enhance[s] the mimetic aspect of the representation”: “the isolation of a brief instance of recall serves to augment the coding of an unconscious recall breaking through repressive forces” (208). What the filmic examples illustrate is that the memory image may be either ‘conscious’ or ‘unconscious’ in its operation; that it may in other words give rise to ‘voluntary’ or ‘involuntary’ memory, as the case may be. Correspondingly, image and voice (or other sense faculty or filmic ‘track’) may be at odds, functioning in the film in terms of a dialectic of memory and forgetting, memory and counter-memory, etc.—what Turim calls “a surging of a memory image outside of the control of the voice” (213).

This kind of “surging memory image” does not necessarily operate like the classical flashback, which, as Turim points out, typically represents a focalized, subjective vision of a specific past (221, 229). *La Jetée* again provides the paradigm: before ultimately focusing on the woman, the time traveller is able to recall a set of images which Turim reads as “conceptual categories”; the past represented in terms of generic or paradigmatic images, not similar to but precisely an ensemble of snapshots of the past—“a peacetime morning. A peacetime bedroom, a real bedroom. [...] Sometimes he reaches a day of happiness, but another one . . .” (*La Jetée*)—from which he needs to select the singular image, in a literalization of voluntary, even forced remembering. In this view the sequence of the woman waking up in bed, which incorporates the only actual movement in the film, “could be understood as a personal memory image of the experimental subject” (221). The past he eventually enters into, however, is “not presented as his personal past but as a romance he is experiencing for the first time” (221). As Turim concludes, this distinction between authentic and inauthentic, true and fictive memory collapses when, as a boy, the protagonist “witnesses the death of his adult time-traveler self . . . on the ‘jetee’ . . . at Orly” (221).

The ‘madeleine effect’ I am isolating here is usually an image or other visual element within the film that triggers a specific memory for the protagonist, whether in the mode of properly Proustian involuntary memory

or not. (I note this in the awareness that Proust's 'involuntary memory', prompted by the madeleine and tea, is a much more holistically synaesthetic phenomenon than this notion of 'madeleine-image' suggests. As Jay and others point out, in fact, throughout *Remembrance of Things Past* Proust demonstrates a notable distrust of the photographic image. Sooner or later, therefore, it will be necessary to say *adieu* to Proust [see Jay 182–83].)²² Alternatively, the madeleine-image may be another sensual or signifying element (e.g. the wild strawberries in Bergman's film, although these are still represented for the viewer in a close-up shot). Moreover, the madeleine-image has its correlative for the viewer in the total image on screen in these particular moments: the visual (and auditory) markers of the shift into memory; the trigger for the appropriate corresponding interpretative practices. More importantly, the madeleine-image as narrative element in a given film concentrates and, indeed, conflates the primary attributes of the Freudian (sexual) fetish and the process of cathexis, on the one hand, with Marxian reification and the commodity-fetish as "social hieroglyphic" at the heart of the exchange relation, on the other. (This will be explored more fully in Chapter 3, in relation to the specific contemporary example of Gore Verbinski's re-make of the Japanese horror film *Ringu*.)

THE VERTIGO OF MEMORY

Much has been implied in the foregoing about the significance of gender in these memory films. In my reading of *Vertigo*,²³ Scottie's (James Stewart) acrophobia—the fear of heights (hence dizziness or vertigo)—is a metaphor for the operation of memory, in a particular, pathologically melancholic masculine subject. In the film's post-expressionist aesthetic, Scottie's subjective experience founds the objective index for the gradual parcelling-out of narrative information. The vertical visuality of vertigo—instantiated in the much-quoted opening chase scene,²⁴ as well as the Mission Tower scenes, with the iconic 'vertigo shot'—is contrasted throughout with more orthodox, objective notions of time built out of the horizontal, linear 'flow' of classical montage. The middle of the film is also punctuated with the temporal stasis of Scottie's 'acute melancholia': a hiatus in his experience of time brought on by Madeleine's (Kim Novak) first, illusory, death. These temporalities converge in the vertiginous figure of the spiral: the vertigo of memory, focused in the *masculine* protagonist. In Robert Kolker's view,

Vertigo is an unusual affirmation of the disintegration of both the family and the self in modernity. [...] . . . it is mainly concerned with the coming apart of the modern male [...] Scottie is the man of the postwar age, without power, without a sense of self and able only to re-create his desires in other people, who are not who he thinks they are. (201)



Figure 1.2 *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

This reading must be folded together, however, with Deleuze's contention (in the early 1980s) that *Vertigo* is one of only three films "which show how we inhabit time, how we move in it" (*Cinema* 2 82). Scottie's identity crisis is focused in the character of Madeleine/Judy, even though his point-of-view dominates for most of the film. Her name—Madeleine—tells all: in a signature Hitchcock joke she is herself the 'madeleine-object or -image' as key via 'involuntary memory' to unlocking a past unavailable to conscious memory: the recovery of a lost past in its wholeness and authenticity via memory through the mediation of specific objects: *aides de memoire*, souvenirs, *mementi mori* (or *vivi*). This returns us to the question: does Scottie desire Madeleine, the woman 'in herself', or something *else* that she represents to him? Within the terms of the diegesis, this is really a moot question, of course, given that her name is a pseudonym and her entire personality as 'Madeleine' a fiction contrived by Gavin Elster—the other man in this phantasmatic triangle, whose greatest wish is to return to the patriarchal heyday of nineteenth-century San Francisco, when (as the bookstore owner explains) men had "power and freedom" and women were objects men could use and discard when they were finished with them (*Vertigo*). Scottie is set up by Elster in a manner that bears comparison to the way the protagonist in *La Jetée* is used by the Camp scientists in their time-travel experiments. But where the woman in Marker's film remains, ironically, an image from his past (ironically because her scene of awakening is the closest in the film to a moment of conventional cinematic realism), in *Vertigo* Madeleine/Judy bears her own subjectivity—albeit one qualified by mid-century Hollywood's conventions for the representation of gender. According to Catherine Lupton, what the intertextual references to *Vertigo* in *La Jetée* "cumulatively

conjure up is another story of a man who, like Scottie . . . seeks to turn back time by recreating the image of a lost woman and who fails" (95). One or two of these intertextual moments have become iconic—and not just for arthouse aficionados. For example, the *Vertigo* intertext in *La Jetée*, in which the cross-section of a giant sequoia becomes a spatial-material literalization of time: "I come from here", says the protagonist of *La Jetée*, pointing; "This is when I was born, and this is when I died," indicates Judy-as-Madeleine. This iconic scene or memory chronotope also makes its way into the mainstream in Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) in a sequence set in a cinema screening Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, even as the plot of Gilliam's film is an over-extended expansion of the near-perfect narrative of *La Jetée*.

THROUGH MEMORY'S LOOKING-GLASS: TARKOVSKY'S MIRROR

Orpheus's literalized foregrounding of identity and self-reflection in its recurrent mirrors is well-documented. Cocteau's real contribution, however, is in the crossing of mirrors and memory in a thoroughly self-reflexive film narrative. It is only in the context of memory in fact that one of the most enigmatic speeches in *Orpheus* becomes intelligible as more than an instance of literary surrealism. Heurtebise to Orphée: "I'll give you the secret of secrets: Mirrors are the doors through which death comes and goes. Look at yourself in a mirror all your life . . . and you'll see death at work, like bees in a hive of glass." The beehive as metaphor for memory dates to classical times (Carruthers 37–38), and is picked up by Walter Benjamin in his essay, "On the Image of Proust": "Proust conquered the hopeless sadness within him . . . and from the honeycombs of memory he built a house for the swarm of his thoughts" (121). It is not until the post-Romantic period, therefore, that the connection with death is established; even in the fourteenth century, as Carruthers shows, the image of bees gathering and collecting honey is a positive metaphor for the storage of wisdom through study (38). The conjunction in the twentieth century of mirrors and memory, among other things, underscores *Orpheus*'s pronounced self-reflexivity, especially on the level of optical special effects, drawing the viewer into the production of meaning (see Williams 117–23).

Earlier in the film is a scene in the Princess's car, in which the Princess instructs the driver, Heurtebise, to "take the usual route" (*Orpheus*). Cocteau exploits the most common use of the rear-screen effect in classical cinema: the view from the window of a moving automobile (Galt 12). In stark contrast to *Casablanca*'s 'realist' use of this process shot in Rick's flashback to Paris, the rear-screen projection of the road ahead flips to negative, as if undergoing the development process in reverse.²⁵

The car enters the zone of death and/or dream; the other side of the looking glass: a ‘no-man’s-land’ filled with “men’s memories and the ruins of their beliefs.” As the Princess later remarks to Orpheus: “Sleeping or dreaming, the sleeper must accept his dreams” (*Orpheus*). Here, death, like dream—or, for that matter, love (see Coates, *Double* 1–5)—is the land of doubles and doubling (e.g. The Princess’s two motorcycle-riding fetish-gear angels of death). The doubling motif is focused in the film’s use and thematization of *mirrors*. Voice on Radio: “The Mirrors would do well to reflect further.” When he awakens on the mirrored pond, at the end of this opening sequence, Orpheus is uncertain whether he is sleeping or waking, dreaming or not. After this he is never sure again which side of the mirror he is on, which is to say, his experience in ‘the Zone’ has permanently changed his view of ‘reality’, of waking life—just as, on the level of reception, the viewer’s adventures through Cocteau’s looking-glass place him or her in a permanently destabilized condition; truly *Orpheus’s semblabe, son frere*. Orpheus has been to the land of the dead and been permitted to return, but he is irrevocably changed, driven by his desire for a mysterious woman who also happens to be the personification of death. In the film’s conceit, every mirror in the world leads to the land of the dead, the no-man’s-land of memory and forgetting. *Orpheus* is therefore ultimately about *identity*: Orpheus’s specific, gendered identity, and identity *per se*, for which dream, memory and death are conflated as a literal space of ‘unconscious’ desire. And the ‘laws’ of this Zone are ultimately neither eschatological nor metaphorical but cinematic and intertextual.

The recurring mirrors in these memory films tend to signify as the site of an ambivalent or doubled logic. On the one hand, the mirror is a neutral metaphor for self-reflective thought; on the other hand the self-objectification this entails can signify in the negative sense of the possibility or presence of death-in-life. The literary double or ‘doppelganger’ is the epitome of the latter (thus, with one major exception,²⁶ *The Double Life of Veronique* needs no mirrors, given the psychoanalytic myth that the ‘uncanny encounter’ of the self with its double is to meet or foresee one’s death [Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 39; see also Coates, *Double* 3]). *Orpheus’s* mirrors encompass both of these meanings as well as that of the mirror-as-door to another spatio-temporal dimension. Andre Tarkovsky’s *Mirror* (1975)—for Kovacs, the “most complex” example of self-reflexivity in the “mental journey genre” (111)—offers a very different, yet comparably complex exploration of the various literal and poetic permutations of its title.

The theme of the double features in a very complex manner in *Mirror*²⁷—most obviously in terms of the subject confronting his/her reflected image. As in *Orpheus*, the mirrors in *Mirror* are portals to alternate spatio-temporalities. Even more insistently than Cocteau’s mirrors, they also

reflect, self-reflexively, on the film's rarified status as aesthetic object—that is to say: on its persistent, formal and semantic, resistance to commodification. According to Petrie and Johnson, “[I]n *Mirror* the documentary footage ‘objectivizes’ and provides a foil for the inner reality, where a personal history becomes the story of a generation, of a people, and raises questions about the survival of humanity” (256). There is an explicit commentary on the film's title in the first poem (“First Meetings”, by Tarkovsky's father) recited in voiceover in the film. The poem's final line names “The other side of the mirror”—the space of a love untouched by time; but also, in a sense, the place from which the entire film is narrated—depending on the degree of narrative authority granted the penultimate scene of the protagonist on his death bed.

The final poem by Tarkovsky's father used in the film is titled “Eurydice”. As Petrie and Johnson point out, the film “shares the poem's idea of a soul imprisoned in a body it cannot live without” (259; see also Tarkovsky 157). The mythical Eurydice has become the archetype of woman as object of (impossible) desire; prototype of madeleine-image *par excellence*, visible but ‘untouchable’, unreachable—a situation complicated by the loss inherent in the dimension of time. Look back and she disappears again, this time for good, the ‘second death’ (of the ‘spirit’) the permanent loss of the *image*. This can be balanced against death as only *partial* loss: absence of the real thing with image as fetish-object substitute. In other words, what



Figure 1.3 *Orpheus* (Jean Cocteau, 1950).

these modern iterations of the Orpheus myth (*La Jetée*; *Orpheus*; *Vertigo* etc.) can be said to conceal beneath their masculinist-patriarchist ideological superstructure is a basic story of the overcoming of ‘false’, melancholic, narcissistic mourning through the final disappearance of the illusory, compensatory image and the other’s long-deferred absence. Whether this re-writing of Orpheus is on par with the violence done by Freud to the Oedipal triangle is the subject of another book. Suffice it to say that in *Mirror*, at least, Tarkovsky is more interested in exploring his own version of such received ideas, and that the film is as much a radical re-working of Orpheus as it is an example of a peculiarly Russian take on Oedipus, a reading obviously encouraged by the fact that the same actress (Margarita Terekhova) plays both the protagonist’s wife in the present and his young-again mother in the 1930s dream-memory sequences.

Tarkovsky complicates any straightforward psychoanalytic reading from the film’s opening sequence, a Soviet television program about a young man cured of a bad stutter through hypnosis. The scene seems to possess no narrative significance as the young man never reappears. On par with the mirrors in *Orpheus*, Tarkovsky here establishes hypnosis as a cinematic trope for not memory but forgetting—the sloughing-off of one’s former, undesirable identity—also the focus in subsequent memory films as diverse as Lars von Trier’s *Europa* (1991) and Guy Maddin’s *My Winnipeg* (2007). But note the young man’s last words: “I can *speak!*” Far from being a hermetically sealed, overly personal autobiographical confession, *Mirror* reveals itself as a highly ‘dialogic’ film, challenging the viewer “to a higher level of *dialogue* than had been demanded before in Soviet film” (Petrie and Johnson 133)—not to mention art cinema or Hollywood. As Petrie and Johnson concede, there are moments in *Sculpting in Time* when Tarkovsky’s neo-Romantic “stress on individual artistic genius and his claims for the universality of art” give way to an appreciation of what they suggest is a kind of Bakhtinian polyphony:

[o]nly through the diversity of personal interpretations does some sort of relatively objective assessments emerge. [. . .] [In] the multiplicity of judgments passed upon it, the work of art in its turn takes on a kind of inconstant and many-faceted life of its own, its existence enhanced and widened. (Tarkovsky 46)

This attitude, claim Petrie and Johnson, is in marked contrast in Russian cinematic terms to Eisenstein’s call for a film construction that ‘interpellates’ the viewer to the same degree (albeit for diametrically opposed ideological reasons) as, say, Hollywood classical style (34). In Bakhtinian terms, classical Hollywood film is by and large ‘monologic’: the ‘work’ is mostly done *for you*, whereas in an ‘art film’ like *Mirror* the viewer is engaged by the film dialogically. How is this achieved? The first-person

narrator (voiceover) is never properly visible; therefore there is a lack of a consistent, conventionally identifiable perspective (i.e. a face and body in which to locate the voice and optical point of view); in conventional psychoanalytic parlance, the viewer is confused about who to identify with (of course, this may only ever be an ‘unconscious’ concern for most). Being placed in the first-person narrating position is vertiginous and confusing, rather than empowering or comforting. The film’s intratextual “pattern of ‘retrospective understanding’” also means that many events, characters and objects make sense only afterwards, when additional information has been presented, or in subsequent viewings. This of course contributes to the uncannily subjective, dialogic, quality of much of the narrative: its apparently *oneiric* logic (Petrie and Johnson 134, 192–93). Unlike a real dream, however, *Mirror* is one the viewer can and must revisit in order to achieve some measure of understanding.

Petrie and Johnson assert that the only real “problem” in an analysis of the spatio-temporal logic of *Mirror*’s disparate scenes is “to identify who is ‘remembering’” when the narrator-protagonist’s youthful self (‘Alyosha’) is either not present or asleep (236), and this is a point whose significance is still unfolding. For to ask this question of Tarkovsky’s film may now be seen as equivalent to asking the question of Haneke’s *Cache*: Who made or sent the videotapes that terrorize the protagonist and his family? This question is explored in detail in Chapter 4, but one possible answer, in reference to both examples, is: no one in particular and therefore, in a sense, everyone. In these specific scenes (when we watch the tapes with Georges in *Cache*, or see a dream or memory that could not ‘belong’ to the protagonist in *Mirror*), we are witnessing the recognition in specific films of cinema’s status as manifestation of an always already exteriorized ‘collective unconscious’—provided the ‘un-’ prefix be taken, as these films demonstrate, as the marker of a paradoxically requisite blindness to what is right before our eyes.

With respect to *Mirror*, this irreducible ambiguity mitigates the film’s “relatively conventional handling of the flashbacks” in order to foreground “the intermingling of memory, dream, and present and past historical reality in ways that begin to question the borderlines between them” (237). One can identify four distinct levels of time in *Mirror*: (1) the narrator’s dreams (ca. 1935); (2) the narrator’s memories of wartime (the 1940s; these occasionally elide with his mother’s memories); (3) the present (the 1970s); (4) ‘objective’ history presented via actual newsreel footage: major events in Soviet history (such as the Soviet army’s disastrous crossing of Lake Sivash in 1943 [Tarkovsky 130]). Therefore it can be said that there are at least four levels of ‘dialogue’: (1) temporally, between the invisible protagonist’s (and his mother’s) present and different stages in the past; (2) characterologically, between the protagonist and his mother; (3) metafictionally, between narrator and viewer; (4) metanarratively, between memory and ‘History’. In the end the film offers not the recovery of the ‘authentic’ past so much

as the *reconciliation* of past and present, both subjective and objective: not a *merging* of self and the other but their contiguity ‘within’ the self, in a kind of cinematic approximation of ‘eternity’. (It is worth comparing here the final shot of *Nostalghia* [1983], in which the present [death] and past [life] as it were co-exist within the frame, owing to purely cinematic special effects.) Petrie and Johnson propose that *Mirror*’s chronological ambiguities may be resolved by reading the entire narrative as unfolding within the protagonist’s “interior chronology”, which becomes clear only in the final scene, in which his body is inferred behind a screen, mirrors covering the back wall, as he lies ill and perhaps dying. In this reading the entire film becomes one long and complex ‘flashback’, in a rationalization of the (originally literary) trope of time’s radical distension or collapsing in death or dream (cf. *Orpheus*; Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life* [2001])—although this reading is challenged by the fact that the penultimate scene of the not-quite-visible protagonist is not a repetition of the film’s opening, in the manner of a conventional frame-narrative.

CINEMA AS LAND OF THE DEAD (REVISITED)

In contrast to classical style, art cinema (up to the 1970s) is characterized by the *long take*, which, unlike a more conventional shot length, disrupts the ‘invisibility’ of continuity editing, emphasizing *time* (duration) as much as space, and encouraging *looking* (at the mise-en-scene, acting etc.). In the postwar period as well as in contemporary instances of the art film, the



Figure 1.4 *Nostalghia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983).

long take is also often accompanied by greater *mobility* of the frame. But in Tarkovsky the long take affects *time*, especially the viewer's perception and experience of time: the duration of the diegesis; the duration of the viewing experience. Speaking of the static long take, Michael Haneke makes the point that “[u]sing a fixed shot means there's one less form of manipulation—the manipulation of time” (*Cache*). Tarkovsky, in *Sculpting in Time*, rejects outright “the notion that editing is the main formative element of a film, as the [proponents] of ‘montage cinema,’ following Kuleshov and Eisenstein, maintained in the ’20s, as if film was made on the editing table” (114). His justification is more philosophical than Haneke's:

Time is a condition for the existence of our ‘I.’ it is like a kind of culture medium that is destroyed when it is no longer needed, once the links are severed between the individual personality and the conditions of existence. [. . .] When scholars and critics study time as it appears in literature, music or painting, they speak of the methods of recording it. [. . .] They will study the forms used in art to fix time, whereas I am interested here in the inner, moral qualities essentially inherent in time itself. (57–58)

For Tarkovsky, the psycho-katabasis ('mental journey') is the visual instantiation of memory-as-epistemology: there is no 'self' outside of memory. In *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky combines the medieval notion of memory as the basis of the virtue of prudence (see e.g. Carruthers 9) with a more modern, Nietzschean notion of eternal recurrence as moral-ethical model:

The human conscience is dependent upon time for its existence. [. . .] We could be said to be turning time back through conscience. Cause and effect may, in a moral sense, be linked retroactively; and then a person does, as it were, return to his past. (58–59)

One of the most interesting arguments for the qualitative difference between the European postwar art film and classical Hollywood is the degree to which a post-Mulveyan psychoanalytic reading of the former is rendered moot by the absence of the conventions of continuity editing, and the failure of the subject's 'suturing' into the narrative's syntagmatic chain. This observation has to be tempered, though, with the recognition of the constitutive patriarchist and masculinist predilections of much modernist art cinema; its re-envisioning of the scopophilic and voyeuristic tropes upon which the identificatory mechanism is predicated—a potentially duplicitous or (in a certain view) hypocritical position well-negotiated by a filmmaker like Hitchcock, who in a number of films pursued a stylistic and tonal line consistently in between the two traditions. In this context, then, it should be noted that, besides *La Jetée*, *Mirror* also intertextualizes Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, given the sheer ubiquity of visual echoes of the

famous shot of Madeleine's hair from behind—also an important motif in *La Jetée*: the swirly bun at the back of the head emblematising woman as 'eternal mystery' for male kind—a sort of cinematic translation of Goethe's *Ewige Weibliche*. This visual 'quotation' appears in the recurrent shot of the young mother's hair from behind in the opening country house scene.²⁸ It recurs again, close to the end, in a dream-memory return to the wartime country house setting of the opening, only this time the mother is played by the older actress, the protagonist's mother in the film's contemporary sections. This shot also has its internal analogue in the close-up on the Leonardo portrait of Ginevra de' Benci ("A Young Lady with a Juniper"):

In *Mirror* we needed the portrait in order to introduce a timeless element into the moments that are succeeding each other before our eyes, and at the same time to juxtapose the portrait with the heroine, to emphasize in her and in the actress, Margarita Terekhova, the same capacity to at once enchant and to repel.... (108)

Although this is not their object, Petrie and Johnson clearly articulate the complex relation to memory borne by these 'quotations' from art history in Tarkovsky's films: functioning on

different levels . . . they serve (like his use of classical music) to associate film with older more established arts; they make specific allusions and contrasts that (as with similar effects in Godard's films of the 1960s) provide a moral and social commentary on past and present; and they also link the images of particular art works to individual characters or settings in the films, and connect the films with each other. (254)



Figure 1.5 *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

The same central significance of collective or cultural memory is detected in Tarkovsky's comparably complex relation to literature, his films' high degree of intertextuality:

Tarkovsky's dialogue with primarily Russian literature and, through literature, with the 'roots' of his culture, with its moral and religious foundations, lies at the heart of his artistic creativity: 'In all my pictures the theme of roots was always of great importance: links with family house, childhood, country, Earth. I always felt it important to establish that I myself belong to a particular tradition, culture, circle of people or ideas.' (qtd. in Petrie and Johnson 255)

Consistently interpreting Tarkovsky's films in light of his own claims about them, and about his 'worldview' as film artist in general, Petrie and Johnson miss the opportunity to place a film like *Mirror* into the broader inter- or trans-textual context the film's polyphonic richness demands (Petrie and Johnson 255). Such a reading allows for an appreciation of the opening country house scene's 'realist' overtones as 'document' of a specific moment in the protagonist's (and Russia's) past. In this light the comparison with the analogous flashback scene in *Wild Strawberries* yields a richer understanding of Bergman's film, as well as a portrait of a specific *haute-bourgeois* lifestyle that could not be much more different, in the details of story and mise-en-scene alike, from the world of the initial dream-memory sequence in *Mirror*—despite the points of graphic visual similarity.



Figure 1.6 *Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983).



Figure 1.7 *Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957).

A broader comparison of the two films readily reveals the two directors' difference on the point of (relatively overt) political filmmaking. While a film like *Mirror*, given its conditions of production, cannot help but manifest, however indirectly, a politically critical dimension (despite Tarkovsky's avowedly apolitical stance [Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History* 593]), the same cannot be said of *Wild Strawberries*, whose nostalgically critical depiction of Isak's idyllic childhood summers says as much about the ex-nominative self-image of the late nineteenth-century Swedish bourgeoisie as it does about a larger historical canvas. In one example from *Mirror*: at the conclusion of the Printing House scene, Lisa, Natalya's friend, quotes the famous opening of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "When I had journeyed half our life's way, / I found myself within a shadowed forest, / For I had lost the path that does not stray" (*Inferno* 1–3). With this 'possessive of human solidarity'—"our life"—Dante-poet ('I') links the particularity of the wayfarer-pilgrim to the universality of 'everyman'. In *Il Convivio*, "Dante fixes 35 years as the midpoint of man's life, following Psalm 89:10 ... which sets 70 years as the length of man's days" (*Inferno* 344).²⁹ In the well-known gloss of the *Commedia*'s opening,

the 'shadowed' or dark forest is our way-station to many images of darkness, blindness, and obscurity. [...] The forest precedes the

journey through Hell. It is the dark wood of life on earth when lived in sin; it is Dante's interior wood; and it is the wood of political darkness. (*Inferno* 344)

This particular scene is set in Stalinist Russia, in 1935. Dante's lines resonate in this context by directing our attention to *Mirror*'s place in the lineage of modernist memory films: the 'spiritual crisis' Tarkovsky's protagonist undergoes is another name for the psycho-katabasis that structures all of the films under discussion here in diverse ways (Petrie and Johnson 256).³⁰ Tarkovsky's depiction of his characters' Soviet-era past is not without its own complex nostalgia, albeit tempered by an intertextual reference system that tends to alienate the spectator from the concrete 'documentarist' detail, directing attention toward the meta-cinematic level of meaning.

Narratively speaking, the initial shot of the country house in *Wild Strawberries* functions very differently from its intertextual analogue in *Mirror*—despite the virtual 'graphic match' between them. A shot of Isak's look of recognition, the abandoned country house behind him, yields to the reverse angle of him seating himself on the patch of ground beside the wild strawberries. A brief sequence of shots of his hands caressing the plant, his face in thought, ends in a point-of-view reverse angle on the house, which, during the following voiceover, dissolves into its former, late nineteenth-century self:

... I began to think of this and that, associated with places where I played as a child. I don't know how it happened, but the day's clear reality dissolved into the even clearer images of memory that appeared before my eyes with the strength of a true stream of events. (*Wild Strawberries*)

The counter-shots of Isak in this sequence, recumbent amidst the strawberries, suggest another link to the meticulous composition with which Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* ends. The film's title in Swedish, *Smultronstallet*, means 'the place where wild strawberries grow'. Tarkovsky reproduces and complicates Bergman's emphasis on the concrete spaces of memory, not set apart through a defamiliarizing montage but continuous with the present-tense setting. In Petrie and Johnson's reading, *Nostalgia* takes us into its protagonist's

internal world where past and present, Russia and Italy, literally coexist and infringe on one another . . . and our only means of judging the passing of time is to see the characters in different spaces. Time and space are abolished as distinct entities. (238)

But to suggest as Petrie and Johnson do that this technique is exemplified in "the sequence in which Andrei, in St. Catherine's Pool, 'continues' and completes the action begun by Domenico miles away in Rome" (238) is to suggest Tarkovsky's slow-motion 'translation' into an art film idiom of the potentially 'metaphysical' dimension of the species of cross-cutting and



Figure 1.8 *Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957).

(false) match-on-action perfected by, for example, Fritz Lang in his Weimar period as a means for advancing action without slackening the narrative pace (see *M* [1931] for example).

To better understand the spatialization of memory in all of these art film examples, it is useful to return to an example from classical style: the 1951 *A Christmas Carol* is paradigmatic of the kind of story in which a “sense of irony and the uncanny [is] produced by the incongruity of seeing an adult actant in the world of his childhood”, into which he enters “as an outside observer to a scene in which his younger self is present” (Turim 229).³¹ In the ‘Ghost from Christmas past’ sequence (Scrooge’s first spectral visitation after Marley’s annunciatory appearance) specific thematic and stylistic elements—fantasy genre-conventions; the motif of the Ghost as guide to past as land of the dead; etc.—conspire to reinforce the film’s exploitation of the katabasis structure. In addition, the film upholds the epic’s use (since the *Aeneid*) of katabasis as a radical means of justifying proleptic narration. In other words, Scrooge’s ‘descent’ into his own past mirrors the thematic function of Aeneas’s underworld descent in book 6, which plays into the political-ideological dimension of Virgil’s poem, predicting and justifying Aeneas’s future actions—already Rome’s mytho-historical past. The psycho-katabasis of the modernist art film, by contrast, generally lacks a comparable extra-diegetic context or justification. On the other hand, the

fact that many of these films (even *Mirror*) are ‘narrated’ from a viewpoint in the present, looking back (and ranging around) retrospectively upon different past moments—imparts to these memory films their own internal logic and justification. That is, the fact that the protagonist is a mature, or even elderly, adult means that he already knows—or rather the viewer suspects that he knows—how things are going to turn out.

A Christmas Carol, as example of classical style, foregrounds the artificiality of the flashback through the fantasy-narrative device of time-travel. Accompanied by the ‘Ghost of Christmas Past’, Scrooge meets his younger self in a kind of uncanny doubling, his reaction to which is at least partly the cause of his redemptive conversion, even as this is largely mitigated by the narrative’s drive toward precisely this formally and (for the viewer) emotionally satisfying closure. There is a significant difference here in the representation of memory and the use of the flashback and other techniques in the art film counter-tradition, in which the hero never seems to meet his double in memory, but either plays the part of himself in his own past, or else finds an absence, where others speak of his younger self even though he never appears in the frame. In *Wild Strawberries* we see a combination of these approaches. Like the protagonists of, to name only two more recent examples, *Annie Hall* (1977; Woody Allen) or *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*—Isak enters into his childhood world “as the displaced representation of his younger self”, what Turim calls “an impossible subjectivity” (229). Thus the substitution of the “child actant” with the adult protagonist lays bare the “doubled subjectivity” inherent in the traditional



Figure 1.9 *A Christmas Carol* (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1951).

flashback, drawing attention to the question of representing subjective interiority via the embodied self-as-other: “[t]he substitution of the adult for the child in the image of the past . . . marks the barrier of exteriorization of one’s past self in such a memory” (229). In *Mirror*, by contrast, the decision to never show the protagonist (except indirectly, in the penultimate scene), but to force a strong identification between camera and the protagonist’s point-of-view (and therefore the viewer’s as well), reduces the ‘chamber drama’ aspect of the Bergman model and increases the scene’s hallucinatory qualities, as dream and memory, subjective and objective, present and past, are juxtaposed in the film’s extraordinarily elliptical structure.

One approach to understanding *Mirror*’s unique structure and style is through art historical intertextuality. For example, the flashback to the shooting range in winter during WWII, which in its scenic compositions references Pieter Brueghel the Elder’s “Winter Landscape with Bird Trap” and “Hunters in the Snow” (both 1565).³² A life-size reproduction of the latter painting also features prominently in the levitation scene in *Solaris* (1972), where it is “explored in great detail”:

Apart from containing many of Tarkovsky’s own favourite images—trees, birds, dogs and snow among them—the filming of this sequence demonstrates Tarkovsky’s, perhaps instinctive, sensitivity to what Anne Hollander identifies as the specifically ‘movielike’ quality of Brueghel’s art: ‘These pictures have another unity, a sweep and coherence or motion that is like the movie camera’s kind of scan. [. . .] We are primed to respond to those . . . landscapes that offer the shifting, subjective point of view of central events that only movies now employ’. (Petrie and Johnson 251)

As Petrie and Johnson note, in *Mirror* the same Brueghel painting is intertextualized in a more organized fashion, incorporated into the mise-en-scene of one of the extended flashbacks to the protagonist’s wartime childhood. For these critics, “*Mirror* is the pivotal film which marks Tarkovsky’s growing interest in the subjective point-of-view, attempting a kind of first-person narration which exposes the inner world of the hero” (256)—an ‘inner world’ however that is communicable only via the external forms of visual culture.

Like Isak in *Wild Strawberries*, the all-but-invisible protagonist of *Mirror* remarks to his elderly mother (in voiceover, on the telephone) that “I keep having the same dream”. The ‘message’ of *Mirror* seems to be that to stop dreaming is to die—but to return to one’s childhood in dream and/or memory, where the *difference* between the past and an image of the past is effaced or collapsed, is to travel to the land of the dead, in a sense that is neither entirely nor straightforwardly metaphorical. And, like Bergman’s film, *Mirror* ends with an idyllic image of the past: three different time-frames arranged across the different planes of a single space, the protagonist



Figure 1.10 *Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1975).

present as a child *and* not-yet-born, his mother present as both her past younger and present older self, together with his father, with everything—all the pain and happiness, the complexity and innocence—still ahead. Thus the medium close-up of the back of the young mother's head in this scene, even as it echoes the film's opening, signifies in an entirely different way, transcending the clichéd *Vertigo* intertext but still evoking a feminine ideal whose closest analogue might well be in those sections in fellow Russian Vladimir Nabokov's memoir, *Speak, Memory*, in which he recalls his beloved mother.

Central to Nabokov's poetics in *Speak, Memory* is the self-conscious thematization of memory: Nabokov's mother is associated throughout with Mnemosyne as mother of the muses, ultimate source here not of 'inspiration' so much as a means or method of *voluntary* recollection; the conscious retention in the present of vivid mnemonic images to console one's future self cut off irremediably from the past:³³

To love with all one's soul and leave the rest to fate, was the simple rule she heeded. 'Vot zapomni [now remember]', she would say in conspiratorial tones as she drew my attention to this or that loved thing in Vyra—a lark ascending the curds-and-whey sky of a dull spring day,

heat lightning taking pictures of a distant line of trees in the night, the palette of maple leaves on brown sand, a small bird's cuneate footprints on new snow. As if feeling that in a few years the tangible part of her world would perish, she cultivated an extraordinary consciousness of the various time marks distributed throughout our country place. *She cherished her own past with the same retrospective fervour that I now do her image and my past. Thus, in a way, I inherited an exquisite simulacrum—the beauty of intangible property, unreal estate—and this proved a splendid training for the endurance of later losses.* (40, emphasis mine)

In the Introduction I invoked the distinction between the *representation* of memory and the idea of memory *as* representation: the argument that the modes, media and technologies of representation in every period condition consensual understandings of 'memory'. Memory therefore becomes a mode/medium/technology of representation in itself. Inevitably, perhaps, the *content* of memory, and the *process* of remembering or recollecting, become detached from 'truth-value' in the conventional, objective sense of 'truth' accorded to a prior, authentic 'reality' that is or was there to be experienced and then reconstituted via memory. In this 'postmodern,' simulacral view, memory itself (like cinema) is the source of what we call 'reality', grounded and focused in individual identity. There is always a danger in this approach of projecting an anachronistic template over past cultural-historical periods (epistemes); of tacitly denying the otherness of the past by insistently viewing it through a contemporary lens. But this is in fact not a problem so much as another, negative way of stating the central thesis of this book: How *else* can we understand the past except by viewing it through cinema's hegemonic optic? Rather than rejecting this ideologically biased frame outright, I aim here instead to self-reflexively foreground my own consciousness of what is less a methodological aporia than a parabolic instance of the very phenomenon I am endeavouring to describe.

Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, like the other films discussed here, is a symptomatic and instructive example of this very productive problem: in the course of its narrative other art forms, other discourses and histories are invoked, in often highly complex ways, but all are assimilated in the end to the 'language' of film as it struggles (like all memory films) to grasp the elusive character of 'memory' between the poles of individual subjective and collective social identity. In *Mirror* memory is not simply a 'theme' or narrative device but the very *form* of the narrative. The film is not just *about* memory; it is an *enactment* of memory, of the act/action of remembering, whether consciously or unconsciously, 'voluntarily' or 'involuntarily', 'naturally' or artificially—whether on an individual or collective-historical scale, or both at once, in dialogic relation. *Mirror* is a watershed memory film in that memory and filmic representation become indistinguishable;

cinema is not simply the best available metaphor or analogue for memory's mysterious operation: cinema *is* memory.

**FROM HER TO ETERNITY / FROM ETERNITY
TO HER: WINGS OF DESIRE**

Because the sky is maybe the only thing,
That unites these two cities
Apart from their past
of course.

—Wim Wenders

Emblematic of the 'return to the (beautiful) *image*' in 1980s cinema, in both Europe and Hollywood, exemplified by the *cinema du look* in France (Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History* 582–84), *Wings of Desire* presents the intersection of an attention to visual style and a serious consideration of history and the individual's place in it. In the terms of the diegesis, to be 'human' means to be in the 'flux of time': *becoming* as opposed to pure 'being'—the condition of the angels, who live in eternity, "experts without experience" as they are referred to by the actor, Otto Sanders, who plays Cassiel (*Wings of Desire*). A film like *The Double Life of Veronique* addresses metaphysical questions through Kieslowski's unique brand of art film metaphor-made-literal in the impossible doubling of the main character as two women who are the same but not the same. *Wings of Desire* takes a very different, more blatant, approach, outdoing Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* in its conceit of angels literally coming down to earth to offer spiritual-moral consolation to the beleaguered human population of pre-1989 Berlin. Again, like *Veronique*, however, the resort to other-worldly diegetic elements occurs within a thoroughly, if ironically, secular framework. After all, the metaphysical travel is all one-way, from eternity to time, and not the other way around. In this respect the film does not present an eschatology or view of the afterlife, as in Hirokazu Koreeda's *After Life* (1998). But, like the Japanese film, the concrete representation of an alternate dimension of being (in *Wings of Desire* co-existing with the world of human being-in-time) exists to shed a poignantly, if ironically, revealing light upon the moral-ethical minutiae of human life. And, even more pointedly than the peculiarly Japanese character of the 'afterlife' in Koreeda's film,³⁴ the angelic dimension in *Wings of Desire*, like the microcosmic Berlin on which it depends for meaning, is emphatically German.

Wings of Desire seems to follow in the anti-realist line from *Orpheus*, with its fantasy plot involving angels for millennia watching over prelapsarian Berlin as a highly specific human microcosmos. The German title, 'Der Himmel über Berlin,' emphasizes *setting*, in contrast to the English

title, which emphasizes (human) *desire*—but both are central to the film. The metaphysical narrative device justifies the incorporation of frequent angel's-eye-view shots of East and West Berlin, self-reflexively motivating the quality of quasi-objective voyeuristic surveillance typical of narrative film. Finally one angel, Damiel (Bruno Ganz), makes the decision to become human, to fall into time, desire, love and mortality—in short, human life. In an inversion of the Nick Cave song from the film's penultimate scene, Damiel goes not 'From Her to Eternity' but from 'eternity' to *her*. Thus this eternity turns out to be susceptible to desire after all: a meta-desire; the desire to desire (Lacan, *Concepts* 235).

What is it, exactly, that Damiel *chooses*? What is it, exactly, that he gives up? In the pre-credit sequence, a hand in close-up (possibly Damiel's) writes with a fountain pen: "Als das Kind Kind war": 'When the child was a child'. Who is the 'child'? It remains unclear whose voice we hear in voiceover; just as it is not clear if this framing scene is actually subsequent chronologically to the rest of the film, which would then be one long flashback, or if it has a more symbolic function in terms of the angels' principal role in the story as witness-observers who keep detailed but highly subjective notes of random occurrences in the human world. This scene is balanced at the end by the shot of the hand again writing and voiceover again speaking: "Ich weiss was kein Engel weiss": 'I know what no angel knows.' Although the precise nature of this knowledge—gained through a kind of anti-Orphic, ironic one-way katabasis—is never stated, this closing scene complements the first to book-end the narrative with these moments of non-narrative reflection on its major themes. In question here is the status of writing, books, textuality etc. in terms of the angels' function in relation to the humans in the film, and their role in the narrative as a whole: *How* (if at all) do the angels affect the unfolding of events? Why do they congregate at the Berlin Staatsbibliotek? To address these questions it is necessary to attend to what for lack of a better term I call the film's allegorical dimension, focused in the figures of the angels, while not forgetting the narrative's grounding in historical fact and collective remembrance.

In the library at the heart of the film we meet the character of 'Homer', 'our storyteller': "Tell me, muse of the storyteller", like the first Homer invoking none other than Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses. It is fitting that this film should have an epic poet named Homer, given its metaphysical structure of 'heaven' laid atop of earthly Berlin—extending the Homeric intertext to an ironic epic structure of quasi-godlike beings over against the world of human mortals. In this reading the first half of the film is 'Iliadic' while the second depicts Damiel's odyssey. *This* Homer, however, is self-aware in a wholly modern sense. Embodied by actor Curt Bois (whose career, beginning in the Berlin cabarets of the 1920s and '30s, spanned the twentieth century), he muses upon his own imminent obsolescence in the face of a new age that has already arrived: "If I . . . give up then mankind will lose its storyteller; and once mankind loses its storyteller

then it will lose its childhood”; without a ‘childhood’ humankind has no ‘innocence’, but also no past. (The title of a book studied by a reader in the library is Hans Werner Henze’s ‘Das Ende einer Welt’ [1953]: the end of a world.) *This Homer*’s immediate quest is to find the pre-war Potsdamerplatz, an enormous tract of no-man’s-land in the middle of Berlin, bisected by the graffiti-festooned wall. Cut into this scene without preface is archival colour footage of destroyed Berlin houses, only their facades still standing as the camera glides past. As will be seen later, this interpolation of historical footage in the midst of the narrative is fundamentally different in effect from the otherwise comparable use of archival WWII newsreel images in *Casablanca*—even though one may be tempted at first to read this sequence according to classical codes the earlier film invokes. In *Wings of Desire* the effect is defamiliarizing as much as familiar, not least because Wenders makes no attempt to integrate the rare old colour footage with the present film’s retro black-and-white.³⁵ In a sense the effect is to draw attention to the convention of representing the past as an unproblematic conflation of ‘history’ and collective memory in one eternally present cinematic moment—even as the objective specificity of the images seems to speak directly to historical awareness facilitated by the unmediated reproduction of the past on film.

Homer articulates—as he embodies—the shift from an ‘analog’ age of knowledge (the book) to the information age: the contemporary era of *forgetting* (in which people have ‘forgotten how to remember’).³⁶ This is the ‘bad’ sort of forgetting, the ‘amnesia’ of which Andrew Hoskins speaks (5) and which is embodied at the end of *Cache* in the figure of Georges, taking a sleeping pill and pulling the curtains on the light, in order to find *oblivion* in sleep. But *this Homer* is an ‘epic poet’ who—unlike the angels—did not simply witness but *experienced* history himself, and therefore seems to embody a kind of ‘oral’ culture that is *collective memory*.³⁷ Hence Homer’s remark that his listeners used to “sit in a circle but now sit apart”; that is, those who once *listened* face-to-face in the same space became his *readers*, reading his story each alone, separated in time and space (Graf 129). (There is no small irony in the fact that, in these library scenes, we watch some of these together-but-separate readers ‘silently’ reading, even as we listen to them on the multi-track soundtrack, each of them together in her or his own world—a sentiment reiterated in the antique limo driver’s monologue, in which he laments the alienated insularity of the contemporary world, each person living alone in his own private space behind his own personal wall: “Are there still borders? More than ever. [. . .] The German people has divided into as many states as there are individuals” [*Wings of Desire*]). In the library scene the soundtrack is used in conjunction with the image to underscore the relation between internal diegetic and non-diegetic sound; between the readers’ ‘thoughts’ and the quasi-abstract choral music. The result is neither harmonious nor cacophonous but polyphonic: layers of discretely audible voices speaking or singing in unison.

In Peter Handke's broad strokes, this fundamental separation or alienation of modern life is the result not merely of the invention of print or books but of writing itself, in a hearkening back to the myth in Plato's *Phaedrus*. (The film's potentially nostalgic thematization of writing as technology seems to be emphasized in Damiel's picking up of a pencil—but of course, as with the stone in Marion's trailer, he picks up not the stone or pencil 'in itself' but its superimposed *image*, emphasizing the fact that the angels themselves [as a function of the film's self-reflexivity] are of the order of the image. In a different example, the opening poem, "Als das Kind Kind War", is presented in voiceover while a hand in extreme close-up writes with an old-fashioned fountain pen the words we simultaneously read: this child is no infant, existing in a pre-linguistic Eden; or rather, for the adult, looking back on childhood—or, for that matter, the former angel looking back on his one-time angelhood—there is no 'before', but not because it didn't happen.) As David Caldwell and Paul Rea note, the film seems to present "image and word as opposite modes of experiencing, transcribing, and narrating knowledge and history" (qtd. in Graf 114). This model is complicated, of course, depending on whether one considers the angels' relation to these modalities on the diegetic or the formal level: in the first case, Damiel and Cassiel keep track of their daily 'witnessings' in little notebooks they carry around with them; in the other (as Graf acknowledges) the angel's point-of-view in the first half of the film is almost constantly identified with that of the film camera (115–16), again emphasizing the subtle self-reflexivity of the angels as narrative device. For Graf, who privileges the image over the word, these angels personify "a cinematic ideal: a cinema based on the undiscriminating observation of all kinds of phenomena, in the world of physical appearance, the capturing of the secret of existence in photographic images, and the preservation of these images for the future" (116). This interpretation is justified with reference to Wenders's own description of cinema as an "archival activity", echoing Kracauer's notion of the 'redemption of physical reality' via the photographic image:

Film has the same capability as the angels to hold a record of past events and of objects that change or disappear over time, and to make their appearance available for viewing in the future. The fact that film images are restricted to recording an illusion of reality is also mirrored in the angels. Like the camera in a film, the angels are invisible observers, and like a photographic image, they do not come into actual contact with the world, but, in their black and white vision, can only capture images of the physical appearance of things, seeing things and people like shadows on a cinema screen, or they physically handle ghostly outlines of objects, not the objects themselves. (Graf 118)

Not the objects, in other words, but their images. What the difference between word and image establishes, then, is the film's dialectic engagement

with the image as both ‘material’ and ‘ideal’—a paradox underlined by the angel’s status as messenger, or “bearer of meaning: the signifier” (Graf 114). These wholly ‘spiritual’ beings, invisible to all but children, at the same time embody the paradoxical quality of the image as at once material object and ephemeral entity united around its fundamental quality of *visibility*. In other words, Wenders’s film in the end is saying less about the redemption of physical reality and more about the ‘redemption’ of the cinematic image itself, within a thoroughly modern, post-Platonic world-view in which any ‘ideal’ or transcendent object or entity is always already determined by being and representation (Graf 126).

In an extension of this reading, we can see the angels as a species of the Benjaminian *flâneur*-type: Anke Gleber links the *flâneur* with Kracauer’s theory of film to identify a

way of seeing . . . to which flanerie belongs—consist[ing] in a passionate effort to redeem the infinite phenomena of reality, to preserve their presence permanently within the act of perception. What *flanerie* projects into the mind as a film of reality is nothing less than what Hoffmannsthal has called a ‘replacement for dream’ in the era of modernity. (165)

It must be stressed, however, that the angels in Wenders’s film preserve only the *image* of a thing, not the thing itself. As long as they remain angels they necessarily maintain the requisite distance from the physical reality which they daily observe and record—a distance which, like Benjamin’s close-but-faraway auratic relation, remains asymptotic. As angel-*flâneurs*, they are always over there, never here. In this respect Wenders’s film embodies as it allegorizes a visual trope endemic to twentieth-century modernity: the omni-voyeuristic gaze that is the cinematic extension of what Mary-Louise Pratt (in its original post-colonial context) labels the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” perspective of godlike mastery and control (qtd. in Zilcosky 27) which, in these examples, shades quickly into something less stable or totalizing: the point-of-view of the subject confronted by the limitations of such vision, and the knowledge that what Michel De Certeau calls “the lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more”, to disappear into the act of seeing, is a “fiction of knowledge” at the very basis of late-modern society (92). This privileged, if vertiginous, perspective manifests in the katabatic memory film (from at least *Vertigo* onwards) in terms of the ontological gap between the ‘living’ and the ‘dead’ (the shades of past selves, to use Dante’s Virgilian language), translated in cinematic terms from an absolute temporal to a relative spatial distance, whereby the ‘dead’ first appear at a distance from the viewing subject—a distance which appears to be uncrossable, irreducible, absolute. Yet it can be bridged, Orphically, via the passive activity of seeing. This inherently spatialized perspective, a kind of ‘Pisgah-view’³⁸ upon the past, whose origins lie in films as diverse as *Marienbad* and, again,

Citizen Kane, is well described in W. G. Sebald's highly cinematic formulation: what he calls “the synoptic view”, whether across space, as a way of looking at and understanding the world, or across time, as a way of gazing “across the barrier of death” (*Campo Santo* 205)—where death is to life what oblivion is to memory, which makes it sound as though death is therefore ‘redeemable’ in the same sense that things forgotten can be brought back to conscious light, as image. This analogy depends on a second-order oblivion: the necessary disavowal of the knowledge that both death and the past ‘in themselves’ are irreducibly mediated by representations, and that the visually inflected nature of these representations sustains the illusion of the knowability or visibility of what is, in any direct sense (to maintain the visual metaphor), always just beyond the range of apprehension.

In the transitional scene with Damiel and Cassiel in the no-man’s-land between East and West, the former’s footprints suddenly become visible in the sand. These marks of his physical presence, of his having passed, indicate that Benjamin’s *flâneur* comes together with De Certeau’s urban walker in the figure of the angel in Wenders’s film, whose book-ended close-ups of a pen in hand, writing, seem to suggest that Damiel will have his desire satisfied to become not just a ‘reader’ but a ‘writer’ of the city, of life, of the world in microcosm (93). In the film’s second part Damiel becomes a walking subject of experience, revisiting the topography of his time as an angel; the Berlin locations which he now sees through wholly other eyes. In this ‘second chance’ Damiel is another radical re-writing of Scottie in *Vertigo*—and of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ he embodies—only in this case the protagonist’s vertiginous fall is not the symptom of his emasculate passivity but his first agential act in a wilful trajectory toward the object of his desire.

The even more obvious Benjaminian intertext in *Wings of Desire*, however (noted by many), is with the ‘angel of history’ in his “Ninth Thesis on the Concept of History” (see also Graf 120). In a letter to Gershom Scholem, Benjamin addresses the question of how to think the unthinkable introduction of something properly transcendent, outside time, into the human experience of time:

[You raise] the question of how one has to imagine, in Kafka’s sense, the Last Judgment’s projection into world history. Does this projection turn the judge into the accused? And the proceedings into the punishment? Is it devoted to raising up the Law on high, or to burying it? (Benjamin and Scholem 128)

‘The Last Judgment’s projection into world history’ is a classic Kafkan move, in its impossible conflation of complementary but incommensurable orders. Benjamin is responding in this text to a ‘theological didactic’ poem by Scholem that accompanied a copy of Kafka’s *The Trial* (Benjamin and Scholem 123). Benjamin’s “Ninth Thesis” is also written in dialogue with

another Scholem poem, titled “Gruss vom Angelus”, like Benjamin’s text also a response to Paul Klee’s 1920 painting “Angelus Novus”. Benjamin’s parable is his most famous response to the question of how to imagine “the projection of the Last Judgment into World History”. He begins with a quote from Scholem’s poem:

My wing is ready for flight,
I would like to turn back.
If I stayed [in] timeless time,
I would have little luck.³⁹

—Gershom Scholem, “Gruss vom Angelus”

A Klee painting named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. While we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin, “Theses” 257–58)

In an essay on W. G. Sebald, Julia Hell notes Benjamin’s emphasis in this text on the angel’s eyes, and their witnessing gaze. The Ninth Thesis famously describes “an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread” (Hell 2). Hell’s reading, which intersects with mine on this point, focuses on what Benjamin’s parable contributes to a critique of modernity’s modes of representing its own history. The focus here is on the marked absence from such images of any but the most ironic redemptive potential.

In *Wings of Desire*, we see Homer not only in the library, leafing through old books, including a collection of August Sanders’ famous photographs of ‘ordinary’ Weimar-era Germans, into which Wenders cuts archival wartime footage of dead bodies lined up by the roadside in freshly bombed Berlin, either connecting or contrasting these pre-war Germans—potential perpetrators—with their wartime counterparts as victims.⁴⁰ We also see Homer traversing with difficulty the weed- and garbage-strewn ‘non-space’ of the former Potzdamer Platz, in the mid-1980s still a no-man’s-land between east and west (Here I do not mean to invoke Marc Augé’s postmodern

‘non-places’, but rather the older, thoroughly modern, spaces reduced by war to rubble and ruin, epitomized by certain cities in the former Eastern Germany, but also applicable to what became known as ‘Ground Zero’ in lower Manhattan in the days after September 11, 2001. The archival footage inserted into this film also represents this other category of non-place whose absences are invariably charged with moral-allegorical meaning). The question Wenders poses is: what is the status of *cinema* within this paradigm, *vis-à-vis* a ‘literary’, book-based culture of knowledge (represented in the utopian Babel of the *Staatsbibliothek*)? The dialectic of word and image here makes palpable the irony of Wenders’s love of the latter.⁴¹

Wings of Desire thematizes Robert Burgoynes contention that “film has played an extraordinarily powerful role in shaping our conception of the history of the twentieth century” (221). Wenders’s film offers an interesting variation on classical realist conventions for the representation of ‘history’ (including the time *before*—or a space *beyond*—history), making use of the city of Berlin as a specific *location* in this account. What is the relation, then, between memory and history as comparably *collective* or ‘public’ cultural categories? In Pierre Nora’s optimistic extension of a point of view traceable to Proust,

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting. [...] History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. [...] Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds—which is to say, as . . . Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups . . . [...] History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. (237)

Wenders’s insertion of archival footage of a bombed-out postwar Berlin emphasizes the city’s specificity as a *place*. In a telling scene, Cassiel, Damiel’s angelic sidekick, rides through Berlin’s 1988 streets in the back of a vintage Mercedes sedan. As he gazes out the window, in a neat elision of different film stocks, the street scene suddenly changes to 1945, as filmed through the window of a passing Mercedes sedan. Then, in an equally subtle shift back to the present, historical German soldiers become their contemporary fictional counterparts, as the car pulls up to an actual WWII bunker where a crew and cast are making a film set in wartime Berlin. (That the film-within-the-film stars Peter Falk, star of the 1970s American television show *Columbo*, playing himself, introduces another layer of

global pop-cultural prosthetic memory on top of the specifically *German* collective memory of the war that the film addresses.) The question is again foregrounded as to the status of *cinema vis-à-vis* a ‘literary’, book-based culture of knowledge. For Nora:

[m]odern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. [. . .] The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs. (237)

For Nora, in a conclusion reminiscent of Plato, ‘modern memory’ delegates “to the archive the *responsibility* of remembering” (237). The difference from the *Phaedrus*, though, is that this is less a judgment than a description. Of course this also imputes to the archive a subjectivity capable of sustaining such a responsibility. It is therefore possible to see in Wenders’s angels the personification or embodiment of such an ‘archival subject’—a verdict strengthened by the film camera’s subtle alignment with their perspective, especially evident in the library scenes in the film’s first half. In this view, the angels represent ambulatory archival avatars, ‘messengers’ (in the lineage of the *psychopompos* Hermes/Mercury⁴²) who do not deliver a message so much as embody a point of view or perspective on present events from an ‘outside of time’ within time (see Graf 116).⁴³ That is, on the diegetic level the angels exist outside the flow of events in an atemporal dimension; on the level of the image itself, they occupy the same temporality as everyone else in the film. What sounds like a self-evident observation about the exigencies of cinematic representation is in fact an important point about the nature of the representation of memory in the contemporary art film. Unlike Benjamin’s angel of history, Wenders’s angels are just human enough as characters to exist simultaneously in both realms at once, as both detached observers and immersed, if passive, participants, for whom past and present have much the same ontological value because for them there is no death to set limits upon experience and to determine the contingent meanings of things in their finitude.

A principal motivation for Damiel’s ‘fall’ into embodiment, life and mortality is his love for Marion, who, in this reading, becomes the unwitting ‘temptress’ largely responsible for his exchange of angelic for human identity. The characters of Marion and Peter Falk’s ironically Mephistophelian ex-angel “entice Damiel into his decision to surrender his armour and become human” (Graf 123). As Graf observes, Marion’s desire mirrors as much as fuels Damiel’s desire, which is there from the beginning (125), as she goes from being ‘object of desire’ in the first half to desiring subject in the second, with a conflicted ‘interior life’ to which both Damiel and the viewer have access. And, like Kim Novak’s Madeleine in *Vertigo*, Solveig Dommartin’s Marion comes close to being an almost parodic illustration of



Figure 1.11 Wings of Desire (Wim Wenders, 1987).

the Mulveyan thesis of the woman as object of the male gaze. On one level, then, *Wings of Desire* is the story of an uncanny and impossible, relationship, born of ‘otherworldly’ but all-too-human desire, which transforms into an all-too-familiar, eminently representable, even ‘archetypal’ relationship between ‘man’ and ‘woman’: “There is no greater story than ours [says Marion, in the penultimate scene], that of man and woman.”

As Ingeborg Hoesterey argues, the translation of ‘einsam’ in Marion’s monologue in the final nightclub scene as ‘lonely’ is inaccurate—although it depends on *context*: ‘Einsam’ can mean lonely, solitary, single, etc. Marion also says that she has ‘often been alone’ [*allein*]), although, for her, “[I] oneliness [*Einsamkeit*] means I’m finally whole.” According to Hoesterey, Marion’s

enthusiastic embrace of this state is to be read [to refer] to the ‘oneness’ she experiences with regard to her own identity in the new, shared bliss [she will soon share with Damiel]. A dictum attributed to Hegel, ‘Liebe ist Selbstsein im Anderen’ (Love means to be oneself in the other), might serve to explain Marion’s stance (56).

—what Hoesterey calls “the labyrinth of shared happiness” (Hoesterey 56). Of course Marion, even more than Damiel, is a particularized example of

the limo driver's previously quoted observation that "the German people has divided into as many states as there are people". If she should join with Damiel, then, will they comprise a single entity, or remain two halves of a perpetually divided whole?

Damiel's 'fall' obviously plays on the history (since 1961) of East Berliners attempting to escape over the Wall to the west side and 'freedom'. What does this film have to say, then, about the possibility and/or desirability of an 'escape from time'? As noted, Damiel's trajectory inverts the title of the Nick Cave song in the penultimate scene, going from 'eternity' to *her*. What does it mean when Marion says "I must put an end to coincidence"? The inverse of Cocteau's Princess, who "dares to substitute herself for destiny and decide how things may be instead of accepting them as they already are" (Williams 134),⁴⁴ Marion says that, although she does not know if there is any 'destiny', there is nevertheless a *decision* that can be made. Was it a 'coincidence' that she and Damiel met? Clearly, the conclusion of the film re-writes the meaning of coincidence, insofar as Marion *chooses* to be with the man/angel of her dreams who, for his part, has *already* chosen her. (Damiel's literal appearance in her dreams is subtended by the trick shot in her trailer when he appears in her mirror, as if looking through the tain, invisible to her as she gazes upon her own reflection, in a literal infiltration of her psyche-as-reflective consciousness.) Here, in a crystallization of the narrative logic of many much more conventional films (not to speak of novels), destiny and decision are two sides of the same coin.

Wings of Desire marks a moment of overt narcissistic fascination with the intersection of memory and 'history'. The film is almost like a test case for Thomas Elsaesser's claim (after Nora) that

memory, especially when contrasted with history, has gained in value as a subject of public interest and interpretation, [while] history has become the very signifier of the inauthentic . . . the false and falsifiable . . . merely designating what is left when the site of memory has been vacated by the living. (qtd. in Burgoyne 222)

Increasingly, 'history' means *personal* history; in short, the narrative content of individual memory. Capital *h* 'history' is relegated in popular discourse to banal idioms of Hollywood and videogame destruction and death: 'you're history, sucker'.⁴⁵ Who has time for redemption when you need only press 'reload'? So much for the past.

CONCLUSION

The cinematic city is a repository of memory: subjective interiority objectified, exteriorized, projected onto the cityscape onscreen. Barbara Mennel identifies the affinity between the modern city and cinema: "Like cities, films engage in processes of production and reproduction of social relations

in spatial configurations” (15). It should be clear from the foregoing, therefore, that onscreen space signifies far beyond the confines of the ‘city film’ genre. In his analysis of spatial representation in *film noir* Edward Dimen-berg describes the genre as a form of “social memory” (10); I have sought through specific examples to explore and expand this notion in relation to the postwar European art film as it had emerged by the late 1980s.

We can see the ongoing significance of architecture and cinema—the latter following historically and conceptually upon the former—as more than mere metaphors of memory as an exteriorized, visually constituted phenomenon. The emphasis here on memory’s culturally constructed status through historically determined modes of representation does not so much override an overtly psychoanalytic model as it implicitly demonstrates the irreducibly metaphorical or topological nature of a psychological or psychoanalytic account of memory. This is particularly true for a Freudian spatial-topographical model (the conscious/unconscious binary), for example.

What is memory, for us, today? How is it constituted? What does it *look* like? How does it work? What are its modalities, its media, its technologies? In these films *memory* is an effect of the combination or confusion of the ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious, etc.—memory as a kind of ‘representation system’ or mode of narrating or mediating our experience of living: a structure or process over which individual agency only ever exercises partial control.

2 The ‘Crisis’ of Memory

‘Traumatic Identity’ in the Contemporary Memory Film

Dorrie: ‘That aftershave. It just made my whole childhood come back with a sudden Proustian rush’. Sandy: ‘Yeah? That’s ‘cause I’m wearing ‘Proustian Rush’ by Chanel. It’s . . . reduced. I got a vat of it’.

—*Stardust Memories*

Remembering is so much more a psychotic activity than forgetting.

—*Waking Life*

INTRODUCTION: ‘REDEMPTION’ THROUGH INTENSIFICATION

This chapter considers the formal and thematic exchange between a mainstream memory film and the ‘art film’ counter-tradition as a repertoire of stylistic strategies persisting equally through resistance to and assimilation by more commercial fare. The former typically centres around the protagonist’s fraught relationship with his or her identity, particularly in terms of a loss of and attempt to regain authentic memory, the past in its wholeness, and therefore a redemptive understanding of a present continuous with a past self. A major focus here therefore is on classical film style and its transformation—redemption?—in contemporary popular cinema: not anti- or post-classical but what David Bordwell has labelled ‘intensified continuity’ as a new baseline international style. The global legibility of this cinematic vernacular is considered in light of its exploitation in a genre (and in the Hollywood industry generally) driven by the spectator’s expectations of narrative closure and totalized meaning. Such expectations are founded on the idealist-Romantic discourse of (the ever-present possibility of) redemption that persists—in classical and contemporary Hollywood film—as a vague but tenacious source of ‘hope’. As noted in the preceding chapter, the opposing question of the conspicuous *absence* of redemption is historically relegated to the realm of modernist high culture—literature and the traditional visual arts, and also postwar art cinema. ‘Redemption’ retains its general cultural significance but is translated within a mass-cultural context into the narrative of a recovery of authentic identity. The

filmic examples in this chapter illustrate the theme of redemption through memory; i.e. the redemption from time—whether through death or metaphorical transcendence or ‘salvation’—which is analogous to closure on the diegetic level, and with historical redemption on the metanarrative level. The latter in turn is often thematized within the diegesis, on the micro-level of the protagonist’s trajectory through the chronotopes of cinematic narrative. In the postwar art film, as we have seen, such closure is complicated, rendered ambiguous (Bergman), or, in the contemporary art film, conspicuously withheld (Haneke).

As in the other chapters, the films analyzed here present narratives that thematize memory and/or memory loss and the consequent effects upon identity. Even more than in the previous chapter’s memory films, the focus here is on the key sequence in each of the examples in which we witness the protagonist experiencing a memory, or in which we see what s/he remembers, or *imagines* s/he remembers. Different techniques, conventional and not, are exploited in each film for the staging of interior subjective spaces in which the otherness of the past is made visible, familiar, knowable. For the purposes of critical contrast, certain post-1980s ‘art’ or independent ‘art house’ films—Lars Von Trier’s *Europa* (1991), Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *The Double Life of Veronique* (1991), Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica* (1994), Wong Kar-Wai’s *2046* (2004), Michel Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)—are contrasted with more mainstream fare, such as Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show* (1998) and the ‘Jason Bourne’ action series (2002; Doug Liman; 2004 and 2007; Paul Greengrass). (The division here between pre- and post-1980s films is justified for reasons given in the Introduction [see Grainge 9].) In their collective reimagining of a *Manchurian Candidate* premise¹ within a new action-thriller stylistic paradigm, the latter three films are particularly representative of contemporary popular cinema’s merging of the art film’s disjunctive editing and *verite* aesthetic with what Deleuze calls the ‘sensory-motor mechanism’, producing Bordwell’s quasi-universal intensified continuity style. The telling contrast comes between this tendency and the persistence of the art film that upholds the long take, slower pace and elliptical editing of the preceding generation, translating these (and other) techniques into a ‘language’ resistant to the current cinematic vernacular.

Initially, it might seem as though I am extending a chronological discussion of the art film’s ‘evolution’ from one chapter to the next, with the mid-1970s to mid-1980s as the historical-epistemic turning point. After all, there is a certain degree of stylistic-thematic continuity between Tarkovsky’s last films and *Wings of Desire*, or *Europa* and *The Double Life of Veronique*, as well as Kieslowski’s final *Three Colours* trilogy. And a comparable continuity has been observed between this (in the 1980s) still flourishing tradition and American ‘Renaissance’ productions, such as Francis Ford Coppola’s *Godfather Part II* or *The Conversation* (both 1974).² In a sense, Deleuze’s reading of classical film style in terms of the

movement-image makes an ‘action movie’ of every film that embraces fast cutting and eschews long takes, regardless of genre. As observed in the Introduction, the difference between the time- and movement-image lies in the crucial question of action represented, on the one hand, through the long take and deep space, and, on the other, the fragmentation of montage: expanses of time in its phenomenological ‘purity’ as duration versus spatialized ‘Newtonian’ time, divided into ever-smaller chunks (Bordwell, *Narration* 209) That this reductive and highly artificial distinction breaks down with close analyses of specific films is only the first problem; the more significant realization, of course, is that for some time now most films have partaken of aspects of both types of Deleuzian image; the cross-fertilization of art cinema and classical styles continuing apace in the later twentieth and into the twenty-first century, resulting in a cinematic landscape for which these categories cannot fully account. I stress this perhaps self-evident feature of contemporary narrative cinema because of what is at stake for the ongoing transformation of a consensual understanding of memory in a visually based culture: on the one hand, the commodification of the image (and all that implies) versus counter-hegemonic resistance to this tendency. No longer is it the case that a high degree of formal self-reflexivity is a guide to a given film’s progressively political, which is to say ethical, position on this spectrum.

‘Redemption’, like ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ (to paraphrase Vladimir Nabokov), is one of those words that demands to be placed in quotation marks (even invisible ones). This is true if only in the instrumental sense conditioned by the role of repetition in many of the post-1970s memory films considered here, whether in the ‘art’ cinema or more mainstream commercial traditions, whether European, Hollywood or international. ‘Redemption’ as cinematic theme or structuring principle is both ubiquitous and highly problematic. In a postmodern ‘cinema of simulation’³ redemption—or its equivalent—is neither transcendent nor unique; nor does it tend to get represented as a literal fact or possibility, but rather in metaphorical and generally ironic form. The characteristically ironic value of redemption in the narratives of many contemporary memory films reveals it to be a hollow promise, a myth, a fiction. It is a function of the vague reward offered to the hero/ine in exchange for her/his efforts, often as part of her/his struggle to discover or recover an identity framed in terms of authenticity and uniqueness. One of two ironic scenarios tends to prevail, depending on the genre or industrial origins of the film in question: either (a) the protagonist gains this knowledge and yet remains dissatisfied at the end, acquiring no ‘closure’; or (b) s/he fails utterly in this quest and yet (therefore?) acquires a kind of negative knowledge that grants the narrative an ironically negative closure. The first conclusion is typical of what I call the post-9/11 paranoid conspiracy thriller, whereas the second is not so much typical of the contemporary ‘art’, ‘indie’ or ‘smart’ film, as it is a recurrent, transgeneric trend (see Sconce; Sereda).

The characters in Hirokazu Koreeda's *After Life* (1998), for example—a Japanese film discussed at length in Chapter 4—experience the enriching defamiliarization of memory in a shared, objective sense through the re-creation of specific, subjective memories. In the film's governing conceit, in which these subjects reside temporarily in a post-death waystation, a week-long hiatus in their journey to 'eternity', they are shown as blithely self-conscious about the *process* of remembering and then literally reconstructing a specific memory as an amateur short film, which is a prerequisite for 'passing on'. *After Life* raises the question of the *difference* between remembering/recollecting and *thinking* self-consciously and 'publically' about the process of remembering. In Koreeda's film we see a quiet anticipation of what becomes the central action in Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, which does not simply unfold at a much faster pace (the two films are utterly stylistically distinct), but also does so for the most part backwards, in a depiction of the destructive action of memory collapsed into the (paradoxically) productive action of forgetting (see below). At the same time the film presents a highly convincing portrait of the reverse-evolution of a postmodern dysfunctional relationship.

Both *After Life* and *Eternal Sunshine*, as different as they are, explicitly challenge Maureen Turim's contention (in the mid-1980s) that

few films acknowledge the fictional aspect inherent in memory, residing at the core of its process of storage and retrieval . . . substitut[ing] the image-as-truth for the reconstructed memory and hav[ing] us believe that while memory is subjective, it is not fractured and recombined intra-subjectively. (209)

One common narrative element, in *Eternal Sunshine* as in *After Life*, after all, is the fact that the protagonist is offered an opportunity to repeat the past; to revisit the scene or site of a memory through its recreation and/or its deconstruction, in which they participate. S/he is granted a version of the 'second chance' which—since *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) at least—is the hallmark of the fantasy genre, whether metaphysical (*A Christmas Carol*; *After Life*) or science fiction (*Eternal Sunshine*). In a postmodern echo of a mythic or epic hero, the protagonist receives special dispensation by an authority (whether visible or not) to re-traverse his/her memories as the psycho-emotional land of the dead; like a postmodern Wordsworth recollecting in tranquillity an initially emotional (traumatic?) experience, s/he acquires in the re-experience some kind of knowledge not granted the first time—repetition with a difference. This redoubled narrative structure is crystallized in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, in which Scottie gets a second chance to climb the Mission tower in order to do things differently, and try to 'redeem' Madeleine's initial, illusory death. His mistake, ultimately, is not in succumbing to acrophobia, but to have believed Gavin Elster in the first place, and to have fallen in love with 'Madeleine', and finally to so firmly

and fatally chain his identity and fate to hers that, upon her apparent death, he too falls into ‘acute melancholia’. This is a condition so removed from the ordinary temporal order (even in a Hitchcock film) that the whole episode of a year or so is rendered in a major ellipsis which is also the narrative’s turning point. In this respect *Vertigo* is far more radical than a recent ‘art film’ like *After Life*, which, for all the subtlety of its treatment of the relations among death, mourning, memory and ethical responsibility it still offers its subjects the chance to move on, to transcend, to escape time, space, body and mind altogether—a condition, not surprisingly, that goes unrepresented. *Vertigo*’s final shot of Scottie, poised at the edge of the abyss, too disempowered even to fall, is one of the darker moments in postwar Hollywood cinema.

In a visual foreshadowing of this very image, just prior to his collapse midway through the film, is a dream sequence in which Scottie is confronted by a combination of elements from both memory and fantasy, in a wordless juxtaposition that draws stylistically upon German Expressionist film.⁴ As a result, in *Vertigo*’s second half, the city of San Francisco becomes for Scottie a giant mnemonic palimpsest, as he, in ironically Augustinian fashion, compulsively revisits all the sites in the itinerary of his earlier surveillance and ‘courting’ of Madeleine, seeing in other women from a distance Madeleine’s imaginary *revenant*. Eventually, his obsession is rewarded when he recognizes in Judy (also played by Kim Novak) the woman he lost, at which point Scottie’s past and present, memory and conscious waking life, become one.

Vertigo thus requires no flashback scenes in its investigation of Scottie’s troubled masculine subjectivity (there is only one such scene, when Judy tries unsuccessfully to write a letter confessing her role in Elster’s plot to dupe Scottie and kill his wife). There is, rather, by the film’s conclusion, a kind of radical narcissism in place that again hearkens back to Expressionism (see the iconic ‘dangling man’ image) while looking ahead to the scenarios of films as diverse as *The Truman Show* and, even more recently, the ‘Jason Bourne’ Trilogy. In brief, this entails a protagonist who has ‘lost’ and must regain his identity, moving through a world that seems somehow, uncannily, to be reflecting his own desires back to him.

THE BOURNE TRILOGY

In the 1990s what David Bordwell calls ‘intensified continuity’ became “the baseline style for both international mass-market cinema and a sizeable fraction of exportable ‘art cinema’” (Bordwell, “Continuity” 22). In Bordwell’s view ‘intensified continuity’ has become the dominant style of contemporary American mass-market film: “Far from rejecting traditional continuity in the name of fragmentation and incoherence, the new style amounts to an *intensification* of established techniques. Intensified continuity is

traditional continuity amped up, raised to a higher pitch of emphasis” (16). Intensified continuity is characterized by four stylistic tactics: rapid editing; bipolar extremes of lens focal length (wide-angle vs. telephoto/zoom lens); close framings in dialogue scenes; free-ranging (i.e. ‘un-motivated’) camera movement (16–21). This style in the *Bourne* series, for example, is characterized by rapid editing (especially in action sequences⁵), frequent jump cuts, close framings (especially in dialogue scenes), free-ranging, handheld camerawork (especially in action sequences). If classical Hollywood continuity style is the necessary precondition historically for cinematic ‘realism’, then intensified continuity produces the *new* ‘realism’ and the heightened mode of spectatorship this implies:

Intensified continuity represents a significant shift within the history of moviemaking. Most evidently, the style aims to generate a keen moment-by-moment anticipation. [. . .] Close-ups and singles make the shots very legible. Rapid editing obliges the viewer to assemble discrete pieces of information, and it sets a commanding pace: look away and you might miss a key point. [. . .] Television-friendly, *the style tries to rivet the viewer to the screen*. [. . .] [E]ven ordinary scenes are heightened to compel attention and sharpen emotional resonance. (24)

The broader, transnational, implications of intensified continuity style will be explored in detail in the final chapter, which takes the Brazilian film *City of God* (2002; Fernando Meirelles) as its focus.

The three ‘Jason Bourne’ films have been characterized as “a brand the *New York Times* styles as ‘unusually smart works of industrial entertainment’” (Thorpe 37). In John Patterson’s view, *The Bourne Ultimatum* in particular

draws many of its themes and images directly from the headlines and from our paranoid zeitgeist, including waterboarding (Bourne gets dunked), black ops, rogue intelligence outfits with sinister agendas, CIA snatch-squads operating on foreign soil, extraordinary renditions and state-sanctioned murder . . . And instead of the usual boringly indestructible, mindless right-wing macho man in the lead, the left-leaning Matt Damon plays the isolated and existentially solitary Bourne as a man whose memory may have been erased, but not his sense of morality or his essentially liberal strain of patriotism. It’s all subtly embedded within a framework of thrills and violence, but it’s there none the less. (4)

Quoting Manohla Dargis, David Denby characterizes the drama of *The Bourne Identity* as “existential (Who am I?), and the drama of *Supremacy*

[as] moral (What did I do?). I would say that the drama of *Ultimatum* is redemptive: How can I escape what I am?” (76). The first film’s title establishes the trilogy’s status as action film psycho-katabasis. Rescued by Italian fishermen as he floats embryonically in the sea off the coast of Marseille, Bourne (Matt Damon) is introduced as already a tabula rasa, as the ‘traumatic’ events leading up to his amnesic state are revealed only later, in a fragmentary, but conventional, flashback sequence. He converses with his own post-recovery reflection in the mirror: (in French) “Do you know who I am?”; “I do not know who I am.” In Dutch: “Tell me who I am. If you know who I am, please stop messing around, and tell me” (*Bourne Identity*). The problem, of course, is that the ‘I’ here knows no better than the ‘you’ who it really is.

As it approaches port, only the last part of the name of the Italian fishing boat is visible: “ . . . *avventura*”. Although it is probably short for ‘buonaventura’ (an old form of ‘buonviaggio’: to wish a good journey), this also alludes inevitably to Antonioni’s *L’Avventura* (1960),⁶ in which the characters move through land- and cityscapes in which “something transcendental is felt to be missing” (Easthope 133); Often cited as the classic example of a modernist art film, *L’Avventura* resonates as a potential ironic intertext for the *Bourne* series as symptomatic of postmodern commercial genre film. Although more atmospheric and thoughtful than the average contemporary studio picture, the *Bourne* films remain typical in that their ‘postmodernity’ inheres mainly on the level of style. Where Antonioni’s film reverses the standard plot of the detective ‘whodunit’ genre, the *Bourne* trilogy reinstates a logical cause-effect order while introducing innovations of its own, most notably on the visual level, in the establishment of an intriguing relationship between violence, on the one hand, and memory, on the other. And, while *L’Avventura* in 1960 is already heading toward a radical modernist view, where ‘authentic identity’, like the possibility of transcendence, is felt to be irrecoverable, a present and therefore meaningful absence ‘represented’ as it were in the desolate spaces of late modernity (Easthope 133), the *Bourne* series, on the other hand, posits ‘authentic identity’ as an absent presence; what was lost (by Bourne) is recoverable in a positive and far more conventionally meaningful sense, in that the heretofore unseen and therefore forgotten past is made visible and therefore knowable. In this respect the film is classical—even Platonic—in its treatment of identity. In other words, it is not a matter of Bourne’s forging a new identity out of the materials at hand; rather, Bourne’s quest is ultimately an anamnesic task of revealing or ‘un-forgetting’ the identity that is always there as a substratum. In the examples that follow, we will see that the contemporary art film continues to thrive if only as a space or structure in which even this relatively dark or ambiguous brand of consolation or resolution is complicated or denied outright.

COMMODIFICATION AND REFLEXIVITY: THE
'POLITICS' OF THE CONTEMPORARY ART FILM

András Bálint Kovács makes an obvious but important point when he reminds us that “[c]inema as a cultural tradition was first invented by the auteurs of the French New Wave” (16). For its first sixty-odd years cinema lacked a history to reference or intertextualize, and therefore while European postwar art cinema was marked by its own brand of self-reflexivity, its intertextual and intermedial dimension was characterized as much by references to *non-filmic* codes and aesthetic systems. (In a telling example, a recent essay on Matteo Garrone's neo-neo-realist *Gomorrah* [2008] points out that, unlike Pasolini's *Accatone* [1961], which incorporates references to Italian Renaissance paintings [Masaccio, Giotto etc.], the new Italian gangster film contains exclusively pop culture references to television and Hollywood movies like Brian DePalma's *Scarface* [Ratner, “*Gomorrah*” 79].⁷)

In their *Film History: An Introduction*, Bordwell and Thompson emphasize the distinction between ‘aesthetic’ and ‘political’ strains of art cinema modernism, both of which crystallize as tendencies by the 1960s, persisting afterward in an often far more self-conscious form (556–78). The appearance, in 1980, of a film like Woody Allen’s *Stardust Memories*, suggests that it makes sense to limit the European art cinema, as Kovács does, to the 30-odd years between the end of World War II and the early 1980s. A rich intertextual palimpsest of famous postwar art films, notably Bergman’s *Persona* and Fellini’s 8½, *Stardust Memories* at the same time extends and parodies the postwar art film’s emphasis on ‘psychological realism’ (Bordwell, *Narration* 208–9). Along with a high degree of self-reflexivity there is in this type of art film also a self-conscious and parodic incorporation of psychoanalytic tropes—epitomized in Allen’s ultra-narcissistic comedies of the mid- to late 1970s. At the risk of obviousness, it might be said that after the 1960s there is a general film-cultural assimilation of the lessons learned from Hitchcock’s paradigmatic exploitation and parodying of Freudian ideas in many of his films. (e.g. *Vertigo*’s dream sequence, as well as the Dali-designed sequence in *Spellbound* [1945]). With its background blown-up news photos and film stills—from the famously shocking image of a South Vietnamese policeman executing a Vietcong officer in Saigon in 1968, to a Marx Brothers’ publicity still—*Stardust Memories* can also be seen as ironic commentary on Bergman’s inclusion in *Persona* of iconic televisual images of a Vietnamese monk’s self-immolation as political protest and the famous Warsaw ghetto photo of a Jewish boy, arms upraised in fear (see Ohlin). This is ‘History’ as prosthetic collective memory subordinated to the individual subject’s narcissistic identity. *Stardust Memories*, a highly underrated film, nevertheless marks the watershed moment when the efflorescence of home-grown American modernist art film (the ‘Hollywood Renaissance’) gave way to a postmodern parodic art cinema characterized by radical self-reflexivity and ironic distanciation.

It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the international art cinema has always had its own commercial dimension as a special, rarified commodity-form (see Kovács 20–27). Art cinema is “a mode of discourse which differentiates itself in limited modernist directions from the dominant mode of classical narrative, but which nevertheless is produced and consumed largely within the commodity relations of advanced capitalist societies” (Wilinsky 11). This is one response to Alison Landsberg’s overly utopian theory of commercial cinema as source of ethically empowering prosthetic memories (or as itself a form of prosthetic memory). Here I re-invoke two ideas that are elaborated more fully in the following chapter: Marx’s notion of reification (on the social-economic level of commodity as exchange relation) and Freudian cathexis (on the level of individual psychic processes). As Laura Mulvey points out, these two come together in the notion of fetishism, a complex nexus of visuality, narcissism, pleasure, fantasy and objectification/commodification (Mulvey 8).

As will be explored in detail in Chapter 4: on the one hand, late twentieth-century global image-based culture is described (or critiqued) as simulacral and *spectacular*. On the other hand, it is also characterized by ever-more pervasive *surveillance*, and the perpetual ‘panoptic paranoia’ to which this gives rise. Arguably, postmodern subjectivity is characterized by this panoptic paranoia in the experience of viewing: the fear of being seen and/or of being able to see, *all the time*, where one is *both* object and subject of the gaze—the epistemological position *par excellence* for members of a society determined by transnational capitalism and its visual-spatial structures of dominance and control. This theme links the *Bourne* series to films as generically, stylistically and tonally diverse as *The Truman Show*, *After Life*, *Lost Highway*, *The Ring* and *Cache*. The (hidden) danger here is the serious ethical threat such a ‘postmodern condition’ poses: in their reading of *Cache*, for example, Elizabeth Ezra and Jane Sillars refer to “the post-spectacular, media-saturated society of surveillance, in which ‘onlookers’ routinely overlook their own responsibility as witnesses” (220). The latter may be evidence of a great irony, given the concomitant proliferation in late modernity of irony and self-reflexivity as a double formal principle in texts and as the basis for the self-consciously split subject of postmodernity (Elsaesser, *Weimar* 50–51).

Michael Haneke’s *Cache* is a recent example of the contemporary art film, marked by self-reflexivity and ironic distanciation as cinematic and epistemological strategies rooted in the proto-society of the spectacle that was 1920s Weimar Germany (Elsaesser 50–51; see also Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction”). In what sense can we speak of *Cache* as a post- or quasi- or outright ‘Brechtian’ film? Overt distanciation techniques include an emphasis on filmic ‘opacity’ over narrative ‘transparency’⁸ and its manifestation of a “deliberate desire to stress the role of the camera” (Grosvogel 41). This “deliberate assertion of [the] camera” is achieved by: consciously stressing its vantage point (as in separate moments shot from the same unusual angle);

the overly long and utterly static takes; the seeming irrelevancy and randomness of individual scenes. In *Cache* Haneke exploits the Tarkovskyian static long take in a manner that is highly innovative on both narrative and formal-structural levels. In an early scene (and in its reproduction in the second videotape within the film) the traces of the means of the film's own production are laid bare, revealing a self-reflexivity more radical than in much recent cinema. In a night-time repetition of the opening establishing shot-cum-surveillance tape, Georges, the main character, arrives home, parks his car on the street and enters his house. As his car approaches off-screen, clearly visible on one side of the frame is the shadow cast by the actual film camera, as the headlights sweep by (Grossvogel 41). As D. I. Grossvogel points out, the shadow is again clearly visible when Georges re-winds and re-watches the tape, a detail upon which neither Georges nor Anne make comment. That Haneke chose to leave in this apparent "technical lapse", which functions as a gross instance of self-reflexivity by default is a clear sign of the film's position between a modernist-epistemological and a postmodernist-ontological critique of the image.⁹ Self-reflexivity, of course, is

[t]he practice of making viewers aware of the material and technical means of production by featuring those aspects as the 'content' of a [text]. Reflexivity is both a part of the tradition of modernism, with its emphasis on form, and of postmodernism, with its array of intertextual references and ironic marking of the [margins of the text] and its status as a cultural product. [...] Reflexivity functions to prevent viewers from being completely absorbed in the illusion of an experience of a film or image, hence it is thought of as a means to distance viewers from that experience. (Sturken and Cartwright 364)

An example of a different sort of cinematic self-awareness in *Cache* occurs after Majid's suicide, when it is implied that the overwrought Georges visits the cinema. We only see him exiting the multiplex, however, in which a number of real films are playing, as advertised on the marquee outside, visible in the rear of the long static shot—Almodovar's *La Mauvaise Education* (Bad Education); Christopher Honore's *Ma Mère*; Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Deux Frères*; *La Grande Seduction*—all of which appeared in France in the period just prior to *Cache*'s release. Here *Cache* does not thematize the act of film viewing, as do so many films, but rather the very institution of cinema, in the form of specific contemporaneous releases whose titles on the marquee nevertheless represent a kind of uncannily cryptic commentary on the narrative at hand.

A film characterized by self-reflexivity is meta-filmic/-cinematic; a fictional film narrative whose ultimate purpose is the interrogation of the limits of cinematic representation as well as the limits of the fictional—and by *implication*—the limits of 'reality'. Such a film-text

self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its own status as an *artifact* in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. [. . .] In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such [texts] . . . examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction. (Waugh 2)

In this respect, a filmmaker like Haneke explores “a *theory* of fiction through the *practice*” of making fiction films—a theory that is in its own way highly *political* (see Waugh 2).¹⁰ Metafictions “explore the relationship between the world of the fiction and the world *outside* the fiction”—albeit in a manner radically *different* from traditional notions of mimetic realism (Waugh 3). In the case of *Cache*, we see a radical and innovative exploration and critique of the relationship between: (1) the camera (optical subject position) and the represented objective world of the film’s narrative; (2) camera and viewer; (3) viewer and film’s diegetic world; (4) viewer and ‘real’, extra-cinematic world. In *Cache* the appearance of ‘realism’ is upheld, although the boundaries between fiction and ‘reality’, between diegetic and extra-filmic worlds, are strained to the breaking point. As was implicit in the foregoing chapters—and will become increasingly explicit in subsequent chapters—the category of memory film is meta-filmic almost by default. The thematization of memory goes hand-in-hand with the incorporation of a self-reflexive critique of cinema as a medium, of the filmic image as commodity *par excellence*. *Cache*’s radical post-Brechtian critique owes a debt, however, to Lars von Trier’s *Europa* (1991), whose ground-breaking style depends on a much more overtly ‘postmodern’ pastiche of mid-century black-and-white genres, from *film noir* to the Rubble film.

EUROPA: THE RETURN OF HISTORY AS FILM

To include Lars von Trier’s *Europa* in the category of ‘memory-film’ is on the face of things paradoxical, because the protagonist, Leopold Kessler, dies at the end, which means, as Rosalind Galt points out, that “there is no future time when he could be hypnotized to recall his time in Germany” (6). In other words (according to classical convention), no flashback as such is possible; rather, ‘memory’ signifies here on the collective-cultural level (see Greenberg 45–52),¹¹ as ‘History’, on the one hand (the diegesis), and as cinematic intertextuality, on the other (visual style). As Galt emphasizes, for *Europa* “the relationship of past to present is figured primarily as a problem of *vision*: how do you *see* 1945 from the point of view of 1991?” (11; emphasis mine).¹² For that matter, how does the past *ever* get represented cinematically by and in the present?

A film addressed (in voiceover narration) to the second-person, either singular or plural, is unusual,¹³ as the unconventional mode of address confuses any clear line between the film’s representation of a ‘historical’ versus

an individual unconscious; what Udi Greenberg calls the “subjective psychological drama” of Kessler’s journey through the German night cannot be said to supersede that story’s status as an allegory of Europe at ‘Ground Zero’ (50). The second-person pronoun—‘you’—may be either singular or plural, or both, addressed at once to Kessler and to the viewer. After all, if it is an axiom of the modernist literary psycho-katabasis genre that the ‘journey’ takes place within the *protagonist*’s unconscious or interior landscape, it is clear that Kessler’s psycho-katabasis is a journey through someone *else*’s underworld. What the film presents on a formal, self-reflexive level, however, is an instantiation of what Greenberg calls “the collective memory of film” (50), which refers to the displacement or replacement of ‘natural’ or more authentic historical memory by a cultural memory comprised of cinematic images—not a *real* but a ‘reel’ history (see AlSayyad). But this formulation raises what Rosalind Galt identifies as problems of “enunciation and address”: *whose* story is this film recounting, and to whom is it speaking? (4).¹⁴

Like Tarkovsky’s *Mirror*, *Europa* begins with hypnosis. Here, however, the connection is much more clearly made between the existential value of the hypnotic state *vis-à-vis* sleeping, dreaming and (as in Cocteau’s *Orpheus* as well) the confusion of all of these states compounded by the difficulty or impossibility of ever waking up; in other words, death.¹⁵ The prospect of never awakening can be seen to stand allegorically for a kind of living death (condemnation to ‘Hell’) over against the prospect or possibility of waking up, which (in these terms) stands for a kind of redemption from such a living death¹⁶ (accession to ‘Paradise’)—even though, as a form of release or ‘deliverance’, it is itself a form of death, but in the sense of a secular extension of the medieval notion (in Dante, for example) of the ‘second death’ of the soul. Here, of course, the ‘first death’ is not literally that of the body at the end of one’s allotted time on earth, but rather (in general) the modernist *topos* of the ‘Hell’, or rather Purgatory, of alienated life in the modern world—a literary *topos* that postwar art cinema very quickly made its own. That in some of the films discussed here (e.g. *After Life*) the action is displaced entirely into a literal ‘afterlife’ does not change this general reading.

Apart from its debts to Eisenstein, Welles, Tarkovsky or Wilder (see Greenberg 45),¹⁷ in many ways *Europa* is Von Trier’s homage to Cocteau’s *Orpheus*—although it is difficult to say whether its intertextualization of the latter slips into pastiche. Comparisons on the stylistic level—most notably in such effects as rear-screen projection—lead directly to the diegesis itself. The significant action in both films takes place in an extraterritorial space called ‘the zone’: ¹⁸ the American occupation zone in *Europa* and the extra-temporal realm of dream, memory and death in *Orpheus*—although, as others have pointed out, Cocteau’s more obviously allegorical ‘zone’ owes a direct debt to the “division of France during the war into two administrative zones: the *Zone Libre* and the *Zone Occupée*” (Williams

124–25).¹⁹ For example, the scene of Max Hartmann’s funeral, where Kessler speaks with the Werewolf leader in the latter’s car, repeats Cocteau’s self-reflexive use of the rear-screen projection through the car window, giving the “appearance of an internally framed movie” (Galt 12).

Unlike *Orpheus*, however, *Europa* comes too late (1990) to be shot in authentic postwar locations, representing instead the “deterritorialization of space” and avoiding (in Mennel’s view) any real engagement with the politics or trauma of “the immediate postwar moment” (116–17). Unlike *Wings of Desire*, Von Trier’s film does not incorporate archival footage of destroyed German cities. The rear-projected exteriors are shot in Poland, while the foregrounded actors are filmed in a Danish studio (Greenberg 45). Furthermore, as Galt points out, while *Europa* intertextualizes several films, both Hollywood and European, shot in postwar Germany immediately after the end of the war—e.g. Rossellini’s *Germany Year Zero*, Billy Wilder’s *A Foreign Affair* and Jacques Tourneur’s *Berlin Express*, all from 1948—Von Trier’s film completely eschews “the documentary force of the mise-en-scene which all of these films acquire through the authenticity of the ruinous German city (Galt 7–8). If anything, *Europa* represents the very opposite approach to representing ‘Europe’ in the immediate aftermath of total war. What Galt calls the film’s “derealized space” of postwar Germany signifies simultaneously as a kind of psycho-allegory of Kessler’s hypnagogic journey through the European night—an ironic (postmodern) katabasis in that it ends in ambiguity, oblivion and death.

Greenberg (in another Dantean echo) cites anti-Americanist readings of Leopold Kessler’s “pathetic and naive attempts to find his way in the dark forest of Europe of 1945” (46). After the opening ‘tracking shot’—literally an extended travelling shot along train tracks at night—and hypnotic voiceover, “the spectator quickly realizes that [Kessler] is the hypnotized subject and Europa is the location of the narrative” (Galt 5–6). But it must be said that the ‘hypnotized subject’ is also the viewer, and ‘Europa’ is also—and perhaps most emphatically—the *film* that the viewer is ‘entering’; the opening allegorizes (via the hypnosis *topos*) the process or effect of spectatorial identification—even as it parodies 1970s film theories of same. Hence this invocation of hypnosis at the outset functions very differently from that in the prelude to *Mirror*: where the opening of *Europa* is, well, *hypnotic* in effect, drawing the viewer in, the latter film’s opening has the opposite effect, distancing the viewer, who remains outside, ‘unsutured’, emotionally detached.

Echoing Anton Kaes, Greenberg argues that *Europa* “seeks . . . to undermine the one-sided moral judgments that became rooted over the years largely as a result of cinematic images” (46); “[t]his confrontation between form and content reveals that our memory of the period, through films, comes from an artificial reconstructed wholeness of it as a cinematic image. The images in *Europa*, however, remind us of that constructedness” (Greenberg 48). This radical or ‘meta-’ self-reflexivity—the directing

of attention to the fact of mediation—in fact, underscores the film’s peculiar relation to a kind of postmodern cinematic ‘nostalgia’ as the obverse of a ‘cinematic collective memory’: the retro special effects, exemplified (as Galt points out) by the liberal use of rear-screen projection and superimposition,²⁰ “inevitably [signify] a nostalgic historicizing of a lost classical form”, an “element of referentiality . . . in which formal and textual references to films of the 1940s abound” (15). The effect, it goes without saying, is far more ‘Brechtian’ than anything in a classical Hollywood film like *Casablanca*:

[A]longside the history of Europe, [*Europa*] thematizes the postmodern narrative of cinematic loss, in which conceiving of the real and the indexical in relation to a digital age of spectacular effects is difficult. [...] While the classical use of [rear-screen projection] minimizes its disjunctive effects, the back-projected images in [*Europa*] draw attention to their manipulation, reprojection, and distance from the proto-filmic. Yet, in the moment of this distance, these images simultaneously remind us of that which is absent, drawing attention to the indexical precisely by pointing out its attenuation. [...] Like Walter Benjamin’s description of the momentary effect of the auratic in the image of a mountain seen from afar, the moments of indexicality in [*Europa*] arouse both the pleasure of the spectacular and the shiver of loss. (Galt 15–16)

This effect is exemplified in a much-commented scene that could be said to combine in *Europa* aspects of both ‘prosthetic memory’ and ‘post-memory’ (after Landsberg and Hirsch, respectively). This is the scene in which Kessler follows Larry Hartmann through the train, from the first-class compartment where he works back through various other, unfamiliar cars—“compartments you had no idea existed”, as the voiceover remarks—moving from second-class to baggage to cars fitted out with bunk beds filled with the emaciated figures of what appear to be concentration camp prisoners. Even though this veritable horizontal rendering of the wartime German social hierarchy is, as Galt points out, impossible in terms of historical or even spatio-temporal ‘accuracy’ (10), it is visually powerful and, on the symbolic level, ‘true’, given the German railways’ central role in the infrastructure of the Final Solution. This is of course the face of Nazism that had been largely ‘invisible’ to an American like Kessler for much of the war. The scene is also significant in terms of what it says about the film’s approach to something like collective cultural memory always already constituted in visual images. More than this, the sequence exploits the *topos* of spatialized memory: not a storehouse or palace but a linear track of physically contiguous but otherwise unconnected ‘compartments’, through which the subject, in a kind of micro-katabasis, is able to move, confronting images of the familiar, the not-so-familiar, the forgotten, the never-known. Thus the

film problematizes popularized notions of the unconscious as some kind of separate psychic space or locus, representing such ‘repressed’ material in a manner analogous to the Charlie Kaufmann-penned films *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, in which the protagonists pursue the truth of individual postmodern identity through the literalized interior spaces of the mind and memory—including the unconscious, which, as a physical space, looks more-or-less the same as everywhere else.

REMEMBERING THE UNKNOWN OTHER: *THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VERONIQUE*

Like much of his work, Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *The Double Life of Veronique* (1991) has not been widely discussed in terms of the representation of memory.²¹ *Veronique* depicts a barely intuited, uncanny and ‘unrepresentable’ relation that transforms into a *different* but equivalently uncanny (equally ‘unrepresentable’) relation, constituted not around desire so much as *mourning*: ‘mourning’ someone almost met but never known, except intuitively. What if this *other*, this entity, somehow left ‘traces’ of its-*never-having-been-present*? Traces of an impossible (unrepresentable) past (or present); of the other’s having ‘passed’—traces which are nevertheless somehow indirectly ‘legible’ to the self in the present. This is the film’s metaphysics of memory: the dialectic of presence and absence, representability and unrepresentability. I invoke again in this context Proust’s ‘faith’ in the recuperability of the ‘authentic’ past of childhood via the catalyzing madeleine-object set against photography’s, and therefore cinema’s, indexicality versus its iconicity: the dialectic of presence and absence in the photographic signifier’s uncanny resemblance to a now-absent referent. In what becomes in retrospect the film’s pivotal scene, we see through Weronika’s eyes the French Veronique unknowingly taking a photograph of her Polish counterpart while on a bus tour of Krakow, as a populist demonstration in the main square is broken up by riot police. In a passage that provides a useful gloss on the uncanny relationship between the two women in the film, Christian Metz contrasts the photographic and cinematographic images in terms of the thematization of this ontological difference: “the snapshot, like death, is an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world, into another kind of time—unlike cinema which replaces the object, after the appropriation, in an unfolding time similar to that of life” (“Photography” 84). Metz reiterates here the dominant theory of the photograph’s ontology in which the cinematic image is aligned with life, the photograph with death. But there is always the complication—brought home in the context of Kieslowski’s film—that the ‘death’ inherent in the photograph be read as a ‘gift’ of eternity; a movement out of time and thus (not without a certain violence) an ‘escape’ from the absolute death that

is at once the annihilation *and* the ‘redemption’ of the image itself: “with each photograph, a tiny piece of time brutally and forever escapes its ordinary fate, and thus is protected against its own loss” (84). This fragmentary image may then remain unchanged, as if waiting its own pre-destined return, “like . . . the constitution of the fetish in the unconscious, fixed by a glance in childhood, unchanged and always active later . . .” (84); or, like the ‘authentic’ childhood image as it were concealed behind or beneath the ‘false’ image of the woman-as-object-of-desire in *La Jetee*—the former the ‘memory-trace’ of the protagonist’s own death as a man. In *Veronique*, however, the snapshot of Weronika on the contact sheet could only be discovered too late, after her death, serving a very different purpose in this film’s narrative. Here, then, an approach utilizing the dialogic theories of Derrida and Levinas supersedes a psychoanalytic one.

On the level of the image, in a subtle self-reflexivity, Kieslowski’s film references the two-fold nature of the photographic sign in its pre-digital phase. According to the Peircian semiotics that inform the approach epitomized in *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes’s last book, the photo always says two things, potentially: (1) that the referent (object; person) *was* there and is still here, will *always* ‘be here’ in the photograph; and (2) that the referent was there and is now forever gone, passed, absent. The first, *iconicity*, is a reminder of presence-even-in-absence (an *absent* presence); the second, *indexicality*, a reminder of absence despite the *illusion* of presence (a *present* absence). At the centre of this question (a metaphysical versus an *a-* or *non-*-metaphysical understanding of memory), and at the centre of *The Double Life of Veronique*, is the *self-other* relation: also the basis of a *dialogic* ethical model, in which the other is never assimilated to the self in its illusion of self-identity. This is the opposite of what is generally implied by filmic *identification*, with its connotation of the (temporary) collapsing of difference(s). Therefore the film’s metaphysics of memory—as a function of what many insist is the film’s (and Kieslowski’s) generally metaphysical inclination (see e.g. Kickasola)—exists to support an *ethics* and an *eschatology* of memory whose meta-cinematic obverse complicates any over-hasty reading of Kieslowski as a filmmaker out to capture a transcendent order of being.

The Romantic concept of the ‘uncanny’, elaborated in Freud’s 1925 essay, translates into English the notion of *das Unheimlich*: literally ‘unhomely’; unfamiliar (‘un-homelike’)—the negation of the Middle High German *heimlich*: ‘homely’; familiar, in an intimate sense; ‘close to home’. Therefore ‘uncanny’ names what is unfamiliar or strange about that which is most familiar or ‘homely’: the uncanniness of what is closest to us, most intimate; the ‘exoticism’ of the everyday (exemplified in the final shot of Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica*). The model in Freud of the uncanny is the Double: in modern (post-Romantic) literary terms, the Double is by definition different from the ‘original’: “Doubling—like all repetition—is always ‘repetition’ with a difference” (Coates, “Egoyan” 24; see also *The Double and*

Its Other). The loss of this difference, the collapsing of the original and double/image into the *same*, is tantamount to the disappearance or *death* of one or the other, as this contravenes the physical (and metaphysical) laws of a logical, rationally conceived (Euclidean, Newtonian, Kantian) universe (see Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 40). In a literary perspective, the Double is also “the emissary of death” (Coates, *Double* 3; see also Kickasola 245). But the fear the Double precipitates in the self, as Paul Coates explains, is also “fear of self-knowledge” (3). Veronique represents the conflation of these two aspects of the Double, in that Weronika’s image in the photo represents for Veronique the latter’s death forestalled just as it ensures the former’s death as unwitting ‘self-sacrifice’. This is the core of the katabatic knowledge Veronique is granted, and which she needs Alexandre’s help to recognize—even as she goes on to mis-recognize the true nature of her relationship with him—a mis-recognition redoubled in the uncritical viewer, who sees in the penultimate scene only the closure of Romantic fulfillment. The core of Veronique’s self-knowledge is the truth that her identity is inextricably bound up with the death of another whom she has never met or known. In order to pursue this reading of Kieslowski’s film it is necessary to revisit Derrida’s 1980s work on mourning and memory:

the gift . . . of Mnemosyne [the mother of the muses of the arts], Socrates insists, is like the wax in which all that we wish to guard in our memory is engraved in relief so that it may leave a mark . . . We preserve our memory and our knowledge of [the things we remember]; we can then speak of them, and do them justice, as long as their image (*eidolon*) remains legible. (Derrida, *Memoires* 3)

What is the relation, in any modern model, between the memory ‘itself’ (in some ‘authentic’ sense) and the mnemonic or mnemonic image? Is there an ontological difference between the two? Or are they ultimately indistinguishable? Furthermore, what is the distinction between the memory-image as it were ‘in the mind’ and the external, readable mark or image (e.g. the photograph)? What happens, then, when these three orders of things (external sign versus memory-image versus memory *as such*) are collapsed together? When the difference between ‘actual’ memory and the image-sign that brings it to mind are conflated into one (e.g. in the *photograph*)? As Derrida asks:

Is the most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity that of a possible mourning which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us? Or is it that of the *impossible* mourning, which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or the vault of some narcissism? (*Memoires* 6)

Derrida speaks here of the ever-present danger of reducing or assimilating the other to the self (the same)—as opposed to the more ethical, dialogic relation of what he calls ‘impossible’ or ‘true’ mourning, which refuses this reduction or assimilation; which leaves the other his/her/its alterity, strangeness, unknowability, unrepresentability: that aspect of the (now absent) other that is always *beyond* or outside of memory. This more ethical, ‘impossible’ mourning thus takes on the quality of a mode of being; an approach to the other in general (living or dead; present or absent):

Everything that we inscribe in the living present of our relation to others already carries, always, the signature of *memoirs-from-beyond-the-grave* . . . This finitude, which is also that of memory . . . can only take that form through *the trace of the other in us*, the other’s irreducible precedence; in other words, simply the trace, which is always the trace of the other, the finitude of memory, and this the approach or remembrance of the future. (*Memoires* 29)

In this view, the other always ‘precedes’, comes *before*, the self: if not literally and chronologically (because absent or dead), then logically and ethically (cf. Levinas, “Other”):

This terrible solitude which is mine or ours at the death of the other is what constituted that relationship to self which we call ‘me,’ ‘us,’ ‘between us,’ ‘subjectivity,’ ‘intersubjectivity,’ ‘memory.’ The *possibility* of death ‘happens’, so to speak, ‘before’ these different instances, and makes them possible. Or, more precisely, the possibility of the death of the other *as* mine or ours informs any relation to the other and the finitude of memory. The ‘within me’ and the “within us” acquire their sense and their bearing only by carrying within themselves the death and the memory of the other. [. . .] We are only ourselves from the perspective of this knowledge that is older than ourselves; and this is why I say that we begin by recalling this to ourselves: *we come to ourselves through this memory of possible mourning.* (*Memoires* 33–34, emphasis mine)

In Derrida’s neo-apophatic model the self is constituted in the act of mourning the other (in memory), who cannot be comprehended by the finitude of memory. This failure to ‘internalize’ the Other is thus the ‘birth’ of (a highly qualified) interiority:

Upon the death of the other we are given to memory, and thus to interiorization, since the other, outside us, is now nothing. And with the dark light of this nothing, we learn that the other resists the closure of our interiorizing memory. With the nothing of this irrevocable absence, the other appears *as* other, and as other for us, upon his death or at

least in the anticipated possibility of a death, since death constitutes and makes manifest the limits of a *me* or an *us* who are obliged to harbour something that is greater and other than them: something *outside of them within them*. (*Memoires* 34, emphasis in original)

But the dimension of irreducible unknowability in the other persists in (our) memory, guaranteeing the asymmetry of the relation, and thus—*in theory*—respect for the other, not *despite* but precisely *because* of the other’s “inexorable absence”. In Drucilla Cornell’s succinct phrase, “[there] is no ‘within me’ without this experience of loss” (Cornell 73). ‘Self-constitution’ is understood here in this sense: in mourning, in memory of, the other, who resists comprehension by the phenomenologically determined finitude of memory, the self begins to be constituted, to constitute itself. And yet this ‘interiorization’, halted by the persistence of the other’s ‘exteriority’, its otherness, its dimension of infinite unknowability, may fail, and the mourning therefore reach a kind of ‘successful’ conclusion. Just as the self seems to be coming into a consciousness of itself through mourning, in memory, the other in its infinitude resists comprehension by a finite memory. ‘Finite’ not merely in the visual-spatial terms that stretch back through Augustine to the classical rhetoricians, but also in the more contemporary sense of a specific set of cognitive functions, not to mention a whole new set of metaphorical associations implied by the single metonym; that is, ‘memory’ as part of the whole that is consciousness—really the same thing, in the end.

Finally, this ‘failure of mourning’ or “failure to fully recollect the Other” within the finitude of memory is (Cornell 73), ironically, an affirmation of the other as absolutely other: “an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over here, in his death, outside of us” (*Memoires* 35). This is the truth behind Veronique’s tears as she cries on the hotel bed after Alexandre shows her the photograph of her double she does not remember taking. And when he consoles her by making love to her, it is a gesture whose wholly compensatory nature the viewer easily overlooks, so rarely is the heterosexual norm in the place of the fetishistic stand-in. In other words, while Veronique’s relationship with Alexandre may be mysterious, her ‘relationship’ with Weronika is of another order altogether (Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 49 n. 2).

The redemptive potential of an ‘escape from time’ acquires a unique expression in *The Double Life of Veronique*. Few contemporary filmmakers have struggled with not merely moral but eschatological questions with such complexity and lightness. Eschatology (from the Greek *eschatos*: ‘last’) is the branch of theology that treats of death, judgment and the future state of the soul—a technical term for the metaphysical version of reality that has been predominant in Western culture for over 2,000 years. The secular eschatology of *Veronique* is rooted in the medieval allegorical eschatology of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, in particular the second canto of the *Paradiso*,

in which Dante-pilgrim, a living, embodied mortal, is permitted to journey temporarily beyond death to the region in which the souls of the redeemed attain everlasting union with God (see Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 40–43). His journey is recounted for the most part retrospectively by Dante-poet. Dante thus splits himself into two distinct subjects: the subject of narration and of the narrative; of knowledge and experience, respectively—which are united only at the end of the entire narrative. At the opening of the *Paradiso* Dante-poet addresses the reader directly, in a rare ‘authorial aside’:

O you who are within your little bark,
eager to listen, following behind
my ship that, singing, crosses to deep seas,
[turn back to see your shores again:]²² do not
attempt to sail the seas I sail; you may,
by losing sight of me, be left astray.
The waves I take were never sailed before;
Minerva breathes, Apollo pilots me,
and the Muses show to me the Bears.

(Canto II. 1–9)

“Minerva” (Greek: Athena) is the Roman goddess of wisdom, by whom Dante-poet is ‘inspired’; “Apollo” the Greek god of artistic representation, by whom Dante-poet is guided; “the Bears” are Ursa Major and Minor; the ‘Big and Little Dippers’. “In the *Paradiso* the poet’s ‘task’ is . . . ‘to represent a realm of pure yearning, lost even to memory, and therefore beyond representation’ (Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 42)—‘pure’ desire for *the Other* in absolute terms: unrepresentable and unknowable *alterity*. In *The Double Life of Veronique*

Kieslowski faces a comparable challenge: the representation of an ‘object’ so abstract as to be beyond representation in any but the most figurative, displaced, or allegorical of forms; where the object is in a sense unrepresentability itself, and where ‘God’, ‘the infinite,’ ‘death’, and so forth are the shorthand for this unrepresentability. (42)

Here ‘the Other’ comes *before* ‘God’, who is merely one more *type* for radical or absolute alterity. In other words, *The Double Life of Veronique* is ultimately concerned with what is for modernity the oldest problem of all: not merely the self; subjectivity; consciousness—the nature of individual human *identity* in all its moral-psychological complexity—but, more importantly, how or even whether we can represent this to ourselves. In *Veronique*

this translates into the challenge of representing an *interiorized* subjectivity; a self that is determined by its difference from what is ‘outside’

[other], and yet in a more fundamental or logically prior way is determined by its relation with the other, even if that other is conceived or figured as somehow an aspect of the self. And yet, paradoxically, at an absolute remove from the self. The representation of this inconceivable relation in the non-allegorical, [non-metaphysical, prosaic] language of film is what Kieslowski attempts in *Veronique*. (Kilbourn, “Non-Euclidean” 43)

For example, in each section, in one key scene, each woman looks directly into the camera: Weronika on the train to Krakow, smiling mysteriously; Veronique in her apartment, having been awoken from a nap by an uncanny, reflected light. In these moments Kieslowski pushes the film’s self-reflexivity to the limit of his peculiar realism, underscoring indirectly the relation between the two. In this view *Veronique* becomes the embodiment of Bordwell’s precept that the art cinema is a “cinema of psychological effects in search of their causes” (“Art Cinema” 776). Bordwell would also likely interpret these unusual moments as examples of ‘expressivity’, in which “[o]dd (‘arty’) camera angles or camera movements independent of the action can register the presence of self-conscious narration” (*Narration* 210). It is as though ‘Kieslowski’, through the camera and acting, teases both Veronique and the viewer with the possibility that the ultimate perpetrator is outside the diegesis, beyond the frame, when in fact everything we need to know to solve the mystery lies *within* the film: just as Fabbri’s puppet show can be read as a negative or inverse parable of Weronika’s death, so the latter can be read as a parable for Veronique’s life. As will be seen in the fourth chapter, this kind of radical meta-cinematic self-reflexivity is exploited even more overtly (and politically) in Michael Haneke’s *Cache*. In the meantime, we turn to a very different contemporary art film whose focus on comparable themes—memory, interiority as exteriority, representability—finds a very different mode of expression.

EXOTICA: MEMORY, MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA

The restricted narration and elliptical editing in Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica* (1994) ensure that first impressions will be wrong. As it emerges, this film is all about the past, flashback scenes playing a key role in the narrative, and only in the second half is a measure of understanding or ‘judgment’ possible. The film builds slowly to a final revelation that is in fact a refutation of clarity, the film’s last shot an affirmation of the viewer’s lack of knowledge or understanding of the central ‘mystery’. As others have suggested, metaphorizing on the strip-club setting, layers of unknowing are gradually stripped away even as the film’s narrative accrues in length. This dimension is underscored by the question of what Paul Coates terms “the *ownership* of memories”, which in this film remains meaningfully ambiguous (“Egoyan”

25; see also Gruben 269). Coates sees this structural ambiguity leading to the eventual coming-together of antagonistic characters, like Francis and Eric, through their “apparent common access” to the same memory of the scene of Francis’s daughter’s death (“Egoyan” 25)—which is not the same thing as ‘collective memory’ (Gruben 269). Such a positive reading is not possible for the female characters—a fact underscored by the aforementioned ultimate scene of reinforced ambiguity.

As an example, most critics single out the recurring shot of the field, in which (as revealed in its final iteration) Lisa’s body is found. Can this memory be said to belong to any one character? Its first occurrence is preceded by a shot of Christina and followed by one of Francis in the strip club’s washroom; he appears to have been experiencing a traumatic memory, which we see: what appears to be a ‘flashback’ begins with a direct cut to wide shot of a bucolic field in summer, on the soundtrack a decidedly unthreatening new age piano over a synthesizer wash. In subsequent iterations the flashback focuses on Christina and Eric when they first meet, as volunteers in the search party, looking for Lisa’s remains. The second time is preceded by a shot of a reflective Francis in Thomas’s pet shop; the third by a shot of Francis in his car, gazing pensively out the window. But this iteration is interrupted visually midway by a cut to Eric sitting in his spartan apartment, in a similar attitude of melancholic reflection, and presumably in the same time-frame as Francis. The ‘flashback’ then continues, the extra-diegetic music having bridged the transition. As the past scene unfolds, Egoyan cuts back to Eric in the present, the soundtrack knitting the two temporalities together. In spite of interpretative conventions around the cinematic representation of memory, the viewer is compelled to acknowledge that this ‘memory’ is as it were shared between and among various characters—particular the two male leads, whose situations and identities are associated, from this point on, through Egoyan’s manipulation of visual and aural levels which, typically, trump any rational narrative logic. These ‘flashbacks’ must be judged in context before they can be safely judged against the seemingly comparable sequences in any other film. To refer again to the example of Rick’s ‘memories’ of Paris in *Casablanca*, it is understood that the memory-scenes-cum-flashback—and thus the memory itself—‘belong’ to Rick, in the sense of being an emanation of his affective interiority—even though, with the intercutting of archival footage there is a subtle but sudden shift to an objective register of meaning: these images (and a certain code of representation) ‘belong’ to anyone in possession of the proper interpretive code; moreover, they could not possibly represent Rick’s ‘memories’ in the same way the initial rear-screen projection process sequence is meant to. But the effect is not one of Brechtian distanciation: in classical style, according to Turim, “flashbacks typically hide their formal function . . . by being presented as memories, dreams, or confession” (6). Therefore, one of the effects of the defamiliarized ‘flashback’ in *Exotica* is to draw the viewer’s attention to this “formal

function” as part of the film’s subtly but pervasively reflexive structure. On the question of flashback ‘ownership’ Bordwell reduces the choice to one between a specific character or what he calls the “narrational commentary”, which is another way of saying ‘authorial expressivity’ (*Narration* 212). These flashbacks function self-reflexively precisely to disrupt the possibility—not to speak of the necessity—of choosing one or the other. In *Exotica*, therefore, what appear to be recurrent flashbacks to the field and search for Lisa’s body represent what Deleuze describes as “not simply several people each having a flashback, [but] the flashback *belonging* to several people” (*Cinema 2* 49; emphasis mine).²³

Furthermore, unlike *Casablanca*, with its flashbacks to their ‘prelapsarian’ love in Paris on the verge of occupation, in *Exotica*, while past time is apparently regained, there is no recuperation of lost ‘innocence’. No return to a prior affective condition in its originary authenticity is possible, and this, precisely, is the film’s central trauma. This holds true even with the final flashback scene, when the story returns to the time before Lisa’s death, when Francis was a different, happy man, and Christina’s troubles were only beginning. The sheer weight of what has come before—what the viewer has already witnessed—given the plot structure, makes it impossible for this to count as anything but an ironically redemptive ending. This point is made empathically and enigmatically in the final long shot of the closed, unreadable facade of Christina’s family home: a surface behind which the camera will not be allowed to penetrate. One function of the grainy video-image of Francis’s wife and daughter that initiates this sequence is to indicate precisely the *personal* nature of this final memory; unlike the recurrent shot of the field, this video-assisted memory also clearly ‘belongs’ to Francis in a way that the other flashbacks do not. On the other hand, this final flashback is anticipated several times in the course of the film, when these video-images of now-deceased mother and daughter are intercut briefly out of context, as ‘flash-forwards’ to the final flashback. This is the film’s ‘madeleine-image’, the homely video precipitant of the past’s mediation. For Coates, the ambiguity of the image’s provenance serves to conjoin through associative editing two otherwise alienated characters, Tracey and Francis, for whom this ‘memory’ is as “collective” as that of the recurrent flashback to the field, ‘shared’ by Francis and Eric (and Christina) (“Egoyan” 27).

As in other 1990s films, the grainy video image stands out as ‘imperfect’ and therefore somehow more ‘authentic’. According to Coates,

it is the imperfect image, not the perfect one, that is fetishized: on the grounds of its greater closeness to life. For Egoyan, as for Freud, dwelling on the fetish arrests a process just before its issue in trauma. But for Egoyan, unlike Freud, the trauma is not of eros . . . but thanatos: in clutching the last trace of the deceased . . . one renders it a relic. (“Egoyan” 27)

The film's theatrical fantasy-fetishization of the schoolgirl image²⁴—the performance of Francis's “modern refusal to accept death”—transforms his mourning for his dead daughter into “faulty mourning”, which, unlike “normal grief”, is endless, becoming indistinguishable from what Freud classifies as melancholia (“Egoyan” 28–29). For Patricia Gruben (echoing Derrida),

faulty mourning [entails] the construction of a ritual that fixes and spectacularizes grief rather than enabling recovery; when the object of mourning is preserved through photography or video, the moment of grief is encapsulated and thus extended long beyond its natural life. (265)

In Egoyan's words: “we always live with the images of the deceased, and for that very reason lack the space to mourn their absence” (qtd. in Coates “Egoyan” 29). In this view, melancholic longing for the other acquires the status of trauma: “The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound” (Freud, “Melancholia” 262). This mediation of and by the image is both the sickness and the cure: it is what allows Francis to overcome his melancholic obsession with his daughter's loss as much as it drives home the fact that he will never ‘see’ her again. For Coates, “the viewed object is not only taboo—a hand repeatedly blocks the camera's view of [the] grainy clip finally revealed as one of Lisa and her mother—but too precious to touch” (“Egoyan” 27). Nevertheless, “[l]ooking is . . . unconsciously conjugated into touching”; once Francis—thanks to Eric—gives in to temptation and touches Christina's flesh, the elaborate fantasy structure sustaining him collapses, for “whatever can be touched cannot be a fantasy” (“Egoyan” 27–28). “Noli me tangere” the image says: *n'est touche pas*; look but don't touch (see Metz, “Photography” 88; see also Gruben 255). This is the (unspoken) motto of the Exotica club, just as it is the (unspoken) directive of cinema spectatorship, and what after Benjamin we might call the irreducible auratic distance of the image—“the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be” (“Paris” 105). Benjamin famously links the ‘decay’ of this aura to the emergence of a technology-based mass culture in the early twentieth century, identifying a new mode of perception linked to a desire in the “present-day masses” to

‘get closer’ to things, and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing's uniqueness . . . by assimilating it as a reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at close range in an image [*Bild*], or, better, in a facsimile [*Abbild*], a reproduction. [. . .] The stripping of the veil from the object, the destruction of the aura, is the signature of a perception whose ‘sense for sameness in the world’ has so increased that, by means of reproduction, it extracts sameness even from what is unique. (105)

According to 1970s feminist film theory, as a function of the experience of watching films made in the Classical Hollywood style, the viewer experiences simultaneously two related processes: *identification* with the film’s male protagonist (physical appearance, actions, point-of-view), and *visual mastery* (‘ownership’) over objectified female characters. These processes are ultimately illusory, being based in an imaginary, fantasy relation to the world on the screen: a relation defined by an irreducible and necessary *distance*. The relation of viewer to screen is one of *extreme voyeurism*: you cannot ever be *seen* in your watching; your engagement with the world onscreen remains essentially visual, *imaginary*—and yet it has effects on *you*, both pleasurable, and otherwise.

The hegemony of visual pleasure in the culture has elicited anti-visual responses, especially in French theory and philosophy. For example, Emmanuel Levinas’s anti-ocular privileging of other senses, like touch:

For Levinas, the two meanings of ‘regard’ should . . . be rigorously separated, for to care for the Other meant refusing to turn him or her into an object of visual knowledge or aesthetic contemplation. [. . .] Instead of the distance between subject and object congenial to sight, touch restores the proximity of self and other, who then is understood as neighbour. [. . .] Touch, moreover, is connected to the primacy of doing over contemplation, in particular a kind of doing that reveals the vulnerability of the self to the world”. (Jay 556–57)

This is the very proximity—the very space of the ethical for Levinas—which cinema, or rather a certain theory of spectatorship, historically has sought to avoid, disavow or even forbid: the collapse of the requisite distance for voyeuristic viewing and the dialectic of identification and objectification this implies. Here, the Levinas Jay presents parts company with Benjamin, for whom irreducible auratic distance defines the premodern relations of ritual—“the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be”—whereas for Levinas (according to Jay), the proximity afforded by touch “can be understood as the phenomenological ground of religious ritual” (Jay 558).

These scenes in *Exotica* thus represent the film’s own (ironically) anti-ocular tendency: the degree to which this film (like *Cache*, for instance) militates against the very seductive power of its own images, in order to perform an ironically negative critique of the commodification of the image. At the same time, the film’s ‘anti-realism’—in fact a new kind of realism—illustrates Thomas Elsaesser’s observation that “the idiom of realism no longer sustains the new media temporalities of prosthetic memory” (“Serpent’s Egg” 175). This can also be interpreted as a call for yet another new kind of ‘realism’, supported by a new—or ‘evolved’—stylistic register—precisely what David Bordwell has elaborated as ‘intensified continuity’ style, which I return to later.

"MEMORIES ARE JUST THE TRACES OF TEARS": 2046

2046, Wong Kar-Wai's foray into hybrid science fiction, brings together what are for this study two key intertextual chronotopes: what Barbara Mennel calls the 'train film'—*a la* Von Trier's *Europa* (8–9)—and the giant sequoia scene from *Vertigo* and *La Jetée*. Here we see the cinematic trope of temporalized space as complement to the examples of spatialized time in the previous chapter. The super-fast train of the digitally rendered future in 2046 represents a postmodern updating of the 'train effect' as the founding myth of cinema, hearkening back to the epochal impact of the (probably apocryphal) story of the original audience response to the Lumières Brothers' 1895 *actualité*, *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (Mennel 1). For early twentieth-century audiences trains and cinema are already mutually imbricated:

the moving train embodied the changing perception of time and space in modernity—space as urban versus rural and time as modern versus premodern. Films manipulate space and time, whereas trains collapse space and require the concept of universal time . . . [W]ith the invention of the train [time] had to become consistent across space. (Mennel 8)

In 2046 Wong updates this founding chronotope, appropriating the concept of a global system of time zones as apogee of early modernity's tendency to spatialize time—"In the year 2046, a vast rail network spans the globe . . ." (2046)—re-temporalizing universal time as a metaphysical (imaginary) space through which the film's protagonist's pulp-fictional avatar travels, in a science fiction novella-within-the-film, titled '2047'.

According to Kristen Daly,

[t]he premise of the movie is a writer who writes stories about the future: the year 2046. Wong Kar-Wai says that he came up with the idea when Hong Kong was turned over to the Chinese and they promised not to change anything for fifty years. This absurd idea gave him the inspiration to create the story of a writer writing about 2046—a time and place you can visit where nothing ever changes, but no one, except our writer, ever comes back. (10)

Wong's 2046 represents a kind of recontextualized postcolonial summary of the themes and strategies we have touched on in the other filmic examples. One of the plot's strands can even be read as Wong's homage to Resnais. Hong Kong, Christmas Eve, 1966: Chow, the protagonist, meets 'Mimi', an old friend from Singapore. "The nostalgia and heartache [evoked] here is two- or even three-fold. There is Lulu's nostalgia for her dead boyfriend, Chow's nostalgia for his encounter with Lulu

in Singapore”, and then there is the viewer’s potential ‘nostalgia’ for the earlier Wongian intratexts (*In the Mood for Love* and *Days of Being Wild*). But suddenly (and just as meaningfully) *Last Year at Marienbad* is invoked: Chow tells Lulu they met two years ago at Christmas; she says she doesn’t remember meeting him; he gives her some details; she isn’t sure—at any rate, she’s not the same person anymore; she’s changed her name. As the sequence plays out, it emerges that the pattern of Mimi’s life has been the same as Chow’s (so far): the one great love of her life is dead (absent) and now she remains trapped in memory; the present is irredeemably inflected by, saturated by memory: “Typically for a Wong film, she is thinking of someone else” (Brunette 104). As a result of re-meeting Mimi/Lulu, Chow takes a room in the ‘Oriental Hotel’: an oasis of nostalgia in the midst of old Hong Kong. He tries to rent room number 2046 but is given 2047 instead. During a government-imposed curfew in Hong Kong in May 1967, Chow stops going out, stops writing pornographic stories and begins writing a novella: ‘2046’—the prequel to the one we saw and heard at the beginning via voiceover: a science fiction narrative set in 2046, “about men and women looking for love” (2046).

Like *Orpheus*, 2046 focuses intensely on the story of its masculine protagonist, characterized by narcissism and melancholia. After all, in Cocteau’s re-telling of the myth, Orpheus is granted the opportunity to undo the past, to triumph over death (in Cocteau’s re-telling Death herself re-winds time, erasing memory, in order to restore Orpheus and Eurydice to idyllic bourgeois connubial bliss—itself a vision of hell, depending on your point of view). In Wong’s version of memory as a kind of hell of nostalgic mourning for lost love, the protagonist, Chow, is obsessed with a woman in his past: Su Lizhen, a professional gambler and *femme fatale* he leaves behind in Shanghai in the opening flashback, but who originates intratextually (played by a different actress) in Wong’s previous film, *In the Mood for Love* (2000).

2046, together with *Days of Being Wild* (1991) and *In the Mood for Love*, form a loose 1960s Hong Kong trilogy. Many of Wong’s perennial themes are present in 2046: “the painful contradictions of love; the persistence of longing, memory, and regret; and the hopelessness of ever recapturing, modifying, or getting rid of the past” (Brunette 105). In other words, for Chow (as for the protagonist of *La Jetée*, for example) there is no escape from time, and so he fantasizes about staying forever in 2046, which signifies as a *time*: the year prior to the future year of Hong Kong’s ultimate assimilation by mainland China (50 years after 1997; therefore 2047 = Hong Kong’s ultimate ‘expiry date’)—and simultaneously as a *place*: the number of a hotel room next door to Chow’s, in the Hong Kong of the mid-1960s, where much of the film’s present-tense action is set. ‘2046’ is also the room number of a hotel room in Wong Kar-Wai’s previous film, *In the Mood for Love*, “in which the protagonists conducted secret liaisons” (Teo 134).

As Peter Brunette says of the characters in *Chung King Express* (1997; the handover year): “even as life is happening, it is experienced as memory” (56–57). This idea is complicated in 2046: as a hotel room, 2046 is for Chow a perpetual site of memory (*lieu de memoire*); as a future time, it is a fantasy zone outside of time in which lost memories can be recaptured, affording the film its strange temporality, its ‘nostalgia for the future’ (in Jameson’s phrase) which conceals a masochistic desire for the eternal recurrence of the same. “2046 is continuously presented not so much as a date but rather as a *place* that people seek to arrive at by means of an ultrafast bullet train, in order to preserve or relocate their memories” (Brunette 103). Wong in effect flouts Turim’s contention that “[i]maginary and potential future spaces are obviously less available to ‘visualization’ than are events of the past” (219). The film opens in a spectacular CGI-animated future city—the setting of a novel, also called ‘2046’, which we see and hear (but do not read), Chow’s alter-ego/fictional narrator, Tak, speaks in Japanese voiceover:

A mysterious train leaves for 2046 every once in a while. Every passenger who goes to 2046 has the same intention: they want to recapture lost memories, because nothing ever changes in 2046. Nobody really knows if that’s true, because nobody’s ever come back . . . except me. I once fell in love with someone. After a while, she wasn’t there. I went to 2046: I thought she might be waiting for me there. But I couldn’t find her. I can’t stop wondering if she loved me or not. But I never found out. Maybe her answer was like a secret that no one else would ever know. (2046)

The narrative cuts from this ‘flash-forward’ (to the futuristic novel that present-tense Chow has not yet started to write; a metaphysical backstory) to a flashback: Chow leaving Shanghai in 1966. Here he says goodbye to Su Lizhen: the second woman in his life to bear this name and the first to break his heart. Shanghai (mainland China) and Hong Kong, 1966: the film invokes *specific* settings in a specific historical period, almost entirely with claustrophobic interior shots, favouring close-ups and mid-range shots. Screen space is used with great attention to geometric composition; often a close-up of a character’s face is balanced by a solid block of colour in the other half of the screen. Typically, there are no establishing shots of either city (apart from the CGI images of the non-existent city in the fictive future).

Typical of Wong (and cinematographer Christopher Doyle), 2046 is characterized by *discontinuity editing*—a stylistic and narrative strategy derived in part from the style of the international postwar art film. This is a style of film editing that deliberately goes against or violates the ‘rules’ of continuity editing—the basis of both classical Hollywood style and the intensified continuity (as new ‘international baseline’). Like Wenders,

Wong appropriates and incorporates archival footage to ground the fictional narrative in actual historical events. In *Wings of Desire* the presence of archival footage is motivated by what we already know of the angels as ethically neutral witnesses to the unfolding of human history within a dialectic obscured by the film’s unapologetic humanism.²⁵ In *2046*, scenes of riots and social-political upheaval in mid-’60s Hong Kong are spliced into the complex montage, in the decontextualized style of television and a certain strain of documentary film. Far from providing an objective backdrop for an individual’s life, modern Hong Kong history is itself enveloped by an almost overpoweringly ‘subjective’ narrative obsessed with desire, loss, regret and memory. According to Stephen Teo:

Though the [1960s] has an unmistakably nostalgic significance for Wong, his depiction of the period is fundamentally tragic. Hong Kong in the 1960s was surviving on . . . ‘borrowed time’, in a pre-’97 condition that produced a certain syndrome of fear and insecurity causing citizens to drift and wander—time as a trope of restlessness. In the post-’97 era, Wong suggests that Hong Kong now survives in a state of changeless time, which still causes citizens to drift and wander. (142)

“Memories are just the traces of tears”, reads the film’s epigraph. In his central role, Chow is associated with *time*, where the women in his life are associated with *emotion*, in a kind of dialectic of emotion and time in memory. As he declares at one point: “Love is a matter of timing; it won’t do if it’s too soon or too late”. This is the *temporality* of ‘either too soon or too late’, which corresponds to a *spatiality* of ‘so close but far away’: the trauma of living in a present moment which is never the ‘right’ time, never the ‘right’ place—and therefore the person one is with is never the ‘right’ person: this person is always somewhere *else*, in some *other* time. “Memories are just the traces of tears” also speaks to Brunette’s observation that Wong’s films are about life “experienced as memory, even as it is happening.” As Stephen Teo notes, “throughout [2046], all the leading ladies . . . shed tears beautifully at key moments to reinforce the notion of delayed emotion” (144). All the tears in the film that fall too late, as ‘delayed emotional response’, mean: he is *already* a memory to her, even before he is gone. Tak’s ‘secret’ in the 2047 section—“leave with me”—repeats verbatim the Japanese boyfriend’s request of Jing-Wen in the 1960s section, in the first half of the film. That Jing-Wen fails to respond, other than the tear that falls after he leaves without her (which we see twice), provides the motivation and justification for the subsequent futuristic restaging of this scene, for which it is also Chow’s ‘real-life’ source.

Nostalgia derives from the Greek: *nostos* homecoming + *algos* pain, grief, distress. Hence, nostalgia as ‘wistful yearning for the past’; longing (desire) for home or *equivalent* place, time, or condition of innocence,

peace, harmony, etc.; in short: the painful awareness of paradise lost. In the postmodern view,

Nostalgia is a longing for a prior state, often perceived to be innocent, which will always remain unfulfilled because this state is irretrievable—indeed, it never existed. Advertising is adept at speaking to consumers in nostalgic terms. This can take the form of evoking earlier times, when life seemed less complicated, or it can be a reference to a time period when . . . the potential consumer was younger. (Sturken and Cartwright 217)

Rather than an historical consciousness that might allow for individually and socially progressive political action, postmodern pop culture gives us ‘collective memory’ as often as not packaged in *nostalgic* terms. “Memory is not commonly imagined as a site of possibility for progressive politics. More often, memory, particularly in the form of *nostalgia*, is condemned for its *solipsistic* nature, for its tendency to draw people into the past instead of the present” (Landsberg 144). What Landsberg does not recognize is that this peculiarly postmodern form of ‘nostalgia’ is really another name for what she labels prosthetic memory, and what Marianne Hirsch, in a different context, calls ‘postmemory’: in each case it is a matter of the subject appropriating ‘memories’, a past, so to speak, that is not proper to it; someone else’s past; another’s memories. Although, in pop cultural terms, these are always already fictive or simulacral memories of a past that never was. In the essay titled “Nostalgia for the Present” Frederic Jameson also

diagnose[s] contemporary culture as irredeemably historicist, in the bad sense of an omnipresent and indiscriminate appetite for dead styles and fashions; indeed, for all the styles and fashions of a dead past. [. . .] It is by way of so-called nostalgia films that some properly *allegorical* processing of the past becomes possible: it is because the formal apparatus of nostalgia films has trained us to consume the past in the form of glossy images that new and more complex ‘postnostalgia’ statements and forms become possible. (*Postmodernism* 287)

This kind of postmodern film facilitates the reification and consumption of the past in the form of “glossy images,” discouraging any meaningful historical consciousness in the viewer (287). Pam Cook re-values nostalgia in relation to both objective ‘History’ and subjective memory:

Where history suppresses the element of disavowal or fantasy in its representation of the past, nostalgia foregrounds those elements, and in effect lays bare the processes at the heart of remembrance. [. . .] Nostalgia is predicated on a dialectic between longing for something idealized that has been lost, and an acknowledgment that this idealized

something can never be retrieved in actuality, and can only be processed through images. (4)

Building on Jameson, Cook speaks of the “emergence of the nostalgic memory film . . . which reconstructs an idealized past as a site of pleasurable contemplation and yearning” (Cook 4). In 2046 this idea is literalized: as Chow explains, “all ‘2046’ meant to me was the number of a hotel room . . . I made up the whole thing, but some of my own experiences found their way into it”. Chow originally wanted to stay in 2046, and he does end up writing the novel 2046, exploiting Hong Kong’s recent history and probable future as an allegory for his own interior condition. What does it mean to want to *stay* in 2046? The desire for *no* change, ever; for time to *stop*. Wong’s film represents an intensely affective representation of memory via the city-as-visual-mnemonic structure of diasporic subjectivity against the historical backdrop of post-handover Hong Kong, in which the hotel room equals a train through time: time and space are the same. As Chow explains in voiceover, he begins writing the story ‘2047’ to help Jing-Wen, his landlord’s daughter, with whom he may be in love, understand “what her [Japanese] boyfriend was thinking”. As he confesses, though, he’d “begun to feel it wasn’t about her boyfriend at all. Rather, it was more about me”. In putting himself in the place of the boyfriend, the sole passenger on the train to 2046, Chow repeats in Cantonese the first part of Tak’s opening voiceover:

If someone wants to leave 2046, how long will it take? Some people get away very easily. Others find that it takes them much longer. I forget how long I’ve been on this train. I’m starting to feel very lonely . . . [. . .] I once fell in love with someone. After a while, she wasn’t there. I went to 2046: I thought she might be waiting for me there. But I couldn’t find her. I can’t stop wondering if she loved me or not. But I never found out. Maybe her answer was like a secret that no one else would ever know. (2046)

Like a succession of musical motifs, everything in this film—gestures, images, words and whole passages of dialogue—gets repeated, at least once, but always with a difference; sometimes immediately, sometimes not until much later in the film, putting an unusual degree of pressure on the viewer’s capacity for recall. In the last ‘2047’ section, Tak offers a third variation on the opening voiceover monologue: “I once fell in love with someone. I couldn’t stop wondering whether she loved me or not. I found an android which looked just like her. I thought the android might give me the answer”. This ‘secret’, which is Chow’s as much as his fictional alter-ego’s, is given away within the science-fictional story: the secret is that he wants a woman—the android avatar of Jing-Wen in the 1960s story—to “leave with [him]”,²⁶ expressing a desire whose object is at once intensely

specific for Tak and Chow alike (where Tak's suffering is comprehensible only in the light of what we know of Chow's history with Su Lizhen, going back to *In the Mood for Love*, the "old days" Tak refers to), and generalized, referring to any woman, all women, or 'woman': as though he were Orpheus begging his Eurydice to accompany him on the journey back out of hell, or a Faustian figure, doomed (like a landlocked Dutchman) to wander indefinitely, waiting for the selfless woman whose love is his only hope for redemption. This redemption, as suggested, is only ever a negative value in this postmodern context: the negative principle that structures his desire for a woman he cannot have, and therefore driving him in all his subsequent relationships from one woman to another, deliberately rejecting opportunities for some kind of happiness.

"I'M EXACTLY WHERE I WANT TO BE": ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

The modernist psycho-katabasis film is given a postmodern makeover in Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), which appeared at the same time as *2046*, but represents a more stylistically hybrid, commercially appealing memory film. As observed, films as diverse as *Wild Strawberries* and *A Christmas Carol* contain significant sections in which the protagonist as an old man 'revisits' his past life, in order, if not to see the error of his ways, then at least to gain some perspective on himself—on his behaviour, his relations with others, his very identity—in the present. As noted, *A Christmas Carol* displays many of the classical features of this kind of narrative, in both stylistic and epic terms: with its tripartite structure and spectral guides, this film stands as a cinematic bowdlerization of Dante's *Commedia*, with Christmas past or childhood corresponding to 'hell', Christmas present as purgatory and Christmas to come as either heaven or an even worse hell, depending on the moral choices made in Scrooge's present waking life. In *Wild Strawberries*, however, Bergman eschews such obvious conventions, with the elderly Isak Borg either taking a much more active role in the re-enactments of his past, or as absent altogether (in this one way Bergman is *more* Dantean, as the pilgrim is able to at least converse with the denizens of the afterlife, whereas to the denizens of his past Scrooge remains an invisible spectator). As noted, the existential solitude that Isak expresses owes a clear debt also to modernist literature, and he stands in stark contrast to the classical protagonist (cinematic or literary) in that he does not appear to 'learn' anything or grow as an individual over the course of the film—until perhaps the final scene, which is also the final dream-memory.

The temporality of myth or fairy tale, with which Cocteau plays in *Orpheus*, is also a factor in the representation of Isak's dream-memories, where the relation of space and time is even more complicated. Most

obvious is the absence of hands from all the clock faces in the film—not only the clock in Isak's first dream about his own mortality, but also his own pocket watch in the scene where he visits his even more aged mother. This immeasurability of time marks its very absence, as in Freud's version of "The Structure of the Unconscious":

The laws of logic—above all, the law of contradiction—do not hold for processes in the id. Contradictory impulses exist side by side without neutralising each other or drawing apart . . . There is nothing in the id which can be compared to negation, and we are astonished to find in it an exception to the philosophers' assertion that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. In the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and (a thing which is very remarkable and awaits adequate attention in philosophic thought) no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time. Conative impulses which have never got beyond the id, and even impressions which have been pushed down into the id by repression, are virtually immortal and are preserved for whole decades as though they had only recently occurred. They can only be recognised as belonging to the past, deprived of their significance, and robbed of their charge of energy, after they have been made conscious by the work of analysis, and no small part of the therapeutic effect of analytic treatment rests upon this fact. It is constantly being borne in upon me that we have made far too little use of our theory of the indubitable fact that the repressed remains unaltered by the passage of time. (*Outline* 34)

In contrast to the spatialized (a-) temporality of *Last Year at Marienbad* (as distinct from the disjunctive temporality imposed through discontinuous montage), time in the dream-memory scenes in *Wild Strawberries* is continuous and contiguous with time in the 'real world' of the film. This signals Isak's confusion of the two realms, even as the difference between past and present is clearly marked for the viewer in *spatial* terms, through a combination of conventional (classical) and more unorthodox and self-conscious techniques: dissolves, voiceover announcing transitions, tendentious musical effects etc. On the conceptual level, however, the motif of the 'timelessness' of the other- or underworld is seen in *Orpheus*, as well as Godard's *Alphaville*, which imagines a dystopian future in which "one can only know the present. No one has lived in the past, or will live in the future" (*Alphaville*). Of course, the idea of a perpetual present is really the same as the idea of timelessness: 'time' in either case is utterly reduced to space, through which bodies move; the basic duration of an object-world makes of the present a kind of 'hell', corresponding to the modernist novel's preoccupation with subjective states of existential crisis, figured in the objective terms of a secular 'inferno' or purgatory,

in which the possibility of ‘redemption’ remains only as a fading but poignant dream.

In a direct line from Bergman’s postwar films to the contemporary art cinema, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* rejuvenates the psycho-katabasis genre by reimagining what Kovacs calls the modernist “mental journey” as a science-fictional narrative of a man who literally travels back through his own memories of a failed relationship. In the course of this experience he is not guided but bounded by the ‘godlike’ wielders of memory-erasing technology. In the end, any neat tripartite structure is completely deconstructed into one of the most complex, multi-fragmented flashback frame-narratives in American cinema.

The intertextual ironies begin with the film’s title, whose original context is provided by Mary, the Lacuna office assistant, quoting “Pope Alexander” (from *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*):

How happy is the blameless Vestal’s lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned. (Pope 2517)

As with the other quote from Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, these utterly decontextualized lines ironically illuminate the relationship in the film of memory to desire; between Joel Barrish’s relation to his past and to his love for Clementine. Moreover, there is an added irony in the fact that Mary herself has undergone the erasure of her memories of a painful relationship with Dr. Mierzwiaik. “Blessed are the forgetful”, intones Mary, quoting Nietzsche’s 1886 work (again from *Bartlett’s*), “for they get the better even of their blunders”. As a parody of the biblical Beatitudes, these lines ironically reinforce the ‘ignorance is bliss’ theme of which the film is so skeptical. In contrast to *The Matrix* (1999)—another film seemingly critical of the desire for consumerist complacency—*Eternal Sunshine* offers a more complex analysis of the situation of the prisoner compelled back into Plato’s cave (the ur-katabasis): bitter for the knowledge gained and regretful of a lost innocence.

Any conventional relation between memory and narration is abandoned as the film establishes a whole new relation between filmic narration and *forgetting* (whether ‘voluntary’ or not): “I still thought you were going to save me” says Joel (Jim Carrey), speaking to Clementine (Kate Winslet) in the rapidly disappearing Barnes and Noble bookstore memory-locus, in the repetition of this particular memory, from shortly after their first meeting. Gondry’s film complicates the possibility of ‘second chances’, of redeeming one’s past mistakes. Whether escape from time is possible, or even desirable, is unanswerable. After all, Clementine’s response to Joel in this scene—after he says “It’ll be different. If we could just give it another go-round” (before her image, too, disappears)—is “Remember me. Try your best. Maybe we can” (*Eternal Sunshine*).

The Barnes and Noble bookstore where Clementine works is a kind of postmodern Library of Babel, with its bourgeois European cultural counterpart in Georges's book-lined living room in *Cache*. (As Mary Carruthers explains, the bookcase as metaphor for memory is traceable to first-century Roman culture, because of its lexical and structural resemblance to the dovecote or 'pigeonhole', already a common metaphor for an ordered, subdivided—'cellular'—memory [35–36].) As the contents of the bookstore shelves begin to disappear from Joel's memory, we see the spines with no titles, then only white etc. In *Cache* no one ever seems to be reading the books; as Georges's producer remarks, there is "never the time" (*Cache*). Ara Osterweil points out that the Laurent's apartment, "encased with bookshelves . . . stacked from floor to ceiling . . . is a near exact replica of the studio set" of Georges's highly rated television literary talk show (38).²⁷ In *Eternal Sunshine*, all the books are merely a function—like the cassette tapes and journals—of the mise-en-scene's focus on 'retro' technologies of (prosthetic) memory.

This critique of the dialectic between analog and new media forms—between literate and 'post-literate' epochs—is already thematized in *Wings of Desire* in the Staatsbibliotek as locus of collective memory; Wenders's film queries the status of the book *vis-à-vis* collective or social memory, between the 1980s and today. Going by the *Cache* example, the book in these more recent films may in fact stand as much for collective *amnesia* as for any valid or vital form of memory. *Wings of Desire*, by contrast, seems to fetishize books and writing, including writing implements, like the fountain pen which, in close-up, inscribes the poem of the child and the angel that frames the narrative. (Wong Kar-Wai's 2046 also fetishes the fountain pen in close-up, a thoroughly ironic metonym for the pulp-fiction writer whose imaginings of a subjectively determined twenty-first-century future are illustrated in sequences at least as cinematically spectacular as those of the present-tense narrative, set in mid-1960s Hong Kong. In the visually mediated, screen-filled, yet oddly visceral world of *The Bourne Ultimatum* by contrast, the only time a character picks up a book is when Bourne uses one as an impromptu weapon in a scene of brutal hand-to-hand combat.)

Particularly effective is *Eternal Sunshine's* representation of the ever-evolving, present-tense nature of individual memory. As we will see with Egoyan's *Exotica*, Gondry's film disrupts conventional thinking around the 'ownership' and authenticity of memory. Joel experiences his memories simultaneously as 'authentic' and inauthentic (prosthetic and simulacral); as both the originary 'original' and a repetition. This structuring paradox is driven home in Joel and Clementine's shared first memory of meeting at Montauk, the last one presented in the order of the plot. In this sense the film interrogates the limits of 'personal', individual, subjective memory over against 'public', collective, social memory. Do these films maintain and help us understand this distinction, or do they contribute to their confusion in the first place? *The Truman Show* (1998; Peter Weir), another Jim

Carrey vehicle, had already explored these questions within a different sort of dystopian science fiction scenario. In a key scene, set in a bar in the film's 'real' world, the manager chides two waitresses for watching a re-run of an episode of *The Truman Show*, because they already have it on the "Greatest Hits" tape. In this sequence, as throughout, Weir plays on the difference between the television camera/frame *within* the film, and the actual film camera, manipulating the (extra-filmic) viewer's response in a manner that clearly anticipates *Cache*. In *The Truman Show*, we see Truman (Jim Carrey), in the show's present tense, looking at a fragmentary photo and other relics or 'souvenirs' of his last encounter with his true love Lauren ("or is it Sylvia?"). As in Proust, the process of recollection is triggered as much by the scent of her sweater as by any image. Unlike Proust, the result is entirely 'voluntary', willed. As Truman drifts into mnemonic reverie, the television producers within the film employ a cliched dissolve into the next scene, thereby clearly marking it as an embedded flashback-memory sequence. Meanwhile, the waitresses in the 'real-world' bar are watching, standing in for the hundreds of thousands of viewers of Truman's private life.

The film thematizes the proprietary nature of modern memory as well: after all, if Truman's past, like the rest of his life, is a commodity to be exchanged, then 'ownership' of memory is an economic rather than a psycho-emotional or experiential matter. "They got rid of her, but they couldn't get rid of his memory", remarks one hardcore fan of the television show-within-the-film. What is the nature, then, of Truman's memories? Who 'owns' these memories, and how does this differ from the concept of collective memory *a la* Halbwachs or Nora? In a traditional Marxian critique, commodification leads to alienation and social atomization; the very opposite of the "collective solidarity", empathy, or ethical action predicted by Landsberg in her theory of prosthetic memory (Landsberg 276–77). The dissociation between individual identity and ownership, control etc. is seen repeatedly in film after film, prompting the conclusion that since the 1970s a new model of subjectivity has emerged, predicated on a new, more negative, model of memory.

As Joel Barrish, the hero of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, comes painfully to learn, one cannot divest oneself of memory by divesting oneself of *things*; there must be a voluntary will to amnesia, an un-remembering, an *apomnesis*: a respectful divestment of one's mnemonic-images of the other, the 'idols' of memory which delay indefinitely the proper conclusion of mourning—in Joel's case not for someone who has died but certainly for an other whose absence from his memory is, at the outset (in the order provided by the plot), all but absolute. In *Eternal Sunshine*, concrete built space transforms onscreen into the literal exteriorized space in which memory operates. This transformation (temporarily) effaces the metaphysical gap between Joel's past and present, as he is suddenly granted entry to spaces—we might guardedly say the spaces of 'repressed' memory—the existence of which in some cases he had long since ceased to be aware.

Unlike Augustine, for instance, for Joel the spaces of quotidian life become the *literal* mnemonic spaces of a diegetic world whose meaning cannot be separated from the medium in which it is conveyed or constructed.

Unlike many other memory films, *Eternal Sunshine*, as a species of science fiction, has been subjected to the scrutiny of critics curious to see how cinematic fictions serve as a sort of allegorical anticipation or reflection of contemporary scientific knowledge. Maureen Turim's introductory essay on the history of the term 'flashback' is exemplary in this regard (3–5). Similarly, Josee van Dijck reads Gondry's film in the context of contemporary cognitive science and her own concept of "mediated memory objects" (15–21). As valuable as this analysis is, like Turim's it develops a theory of memory in which either a specific film or cinema in general is tested against the scientific 'facts': what is known about memory as a faculty of the bio-physical human entity. My approach is to read this film, like all the others discussed herein, as an example of the cinematic standard against which popular notions of memory either persist or evolve. Therefore, whether or not *Eternal Sunshine* is deemed (as it is by Van Dijck) to represent a more 'scientifically authentic' account of memory than, say, Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), is of no interest to me here (33). After all, to describe the representation of memory in the former film as "more complex" than in the latter is misleading: each film presents a radically different model of memory, where it is just as valid to argue that *Memento* captures a more 'accurate' everyday experience of memory via Polaroid snapshots and sticky notes, rather than the satirically Sci-Fi technological approach of the Kaufman-Gondry feature. Not only does this technologically biased reading threaten to overlook the latter's darkly comic side, it mis-represents the film's relationship to digital culture. For, while *Eternal Sunshine* does represent 'digital' technology as an aspect of its mise-en-scene (computers; MRI-style digital brain scans; etc. [see Van Dijck 29]), it pointedly resists exploiting the CGI effects readily available in 2004. As Gondry explains, there are no blue screens in the film; all of the highly effective special effects—on which the story depends—are created as they say 'in camera' (*Eternal Sunshine*). Thus any reading that tries to locate this film in relation to the ongoing scientific understanding of how memory 'really' works will miss the film's crucial self-reflexive dimension: its complex critique of its own medium specificity and its role in the generation—the production and reproduction—of decidedly *non*-scientific views of memory.

Arguably, MP3 files, BlackBerrys, digital cameras and the like have not yet had enough time to locate themselves within the ever-changing matrix of prosthetic memory technology—although this claim might very well sound as dated as these brand names by the time this book appears. The point of all the 'retro-' technology in *Eternal Sunshine*, however, is that cassette tapes, photographs, notebooks and other 'analog' objects (like Truman's souvenirs of Lauren/Sylvia in the other Carrey film) have had time—whether a century or so or merely a few decades—to become

naturalized as artificial memory devices: *aides de memoires*, charged—‘cathected’ (to use Freud’s term)—with affective value. It is all too easy to miss the deeper historical-intertextual significance of these ‘mediated memory objects’ in their debt to Proust’s madeleine. The various objects that Joel is asked to bring to the Lacuna office are obviously examples of those things which ‘trigger’ the mind’s quest for the memory ‘itself’ (Van Dijk 30)—only here the mnemonic content the Lacuna technician is interested in is not a memory *per se* (as Van Dijk states [27]) but the attendant emotional associations. Dr. Mierwiak does not ask Joel to *visualize* or to narrate but to *feel*, in order to “target [the memory’s] emotional core. By eradicating the core, as the Lacuna Inc. website claims, Dr. Mierwiak is able to make the entire memory dissolve” (Van Dijk 28). The emphasis on the memory’s emotional foundation makes sense, given the ‘romantic comedy’ genre the film evokes and then handily deconstructs, purveying a relatively clear-eyed and un-sentimental message about love in the modern world. As Robert Burgoyne implies, for the subject in the present it is not the literal but the metaphorical or, better, the emotional ‘truth’ of a memory that counts: how ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ the memory *feels* (223). According to the same argument, what counts is not the accuracy or authenticity of the memory but *how* one remembers; what is desired is the *experience* of recollecting the past as much as the past *in itself* in some quasi-Proustian sense. Therefore, it is extremely significant that *Eternal Sunshine* (like the Brazilian *City of God*) is not only structured as a frame-narrative, circling back upon itself, like a snake biting its own tale, but that (differently from *City of God*) it is also structured according to a logic of repetition: the compulsive repetition or return of the past—specifically Joel’s past—within or overlapping with the present, as more or less coterminous spaces in which the significant difference between ‘original experience’ and reconstructed memory-image collapses as memory itself is forcibly eroded. What is most significant, however, about the role of repetition is its relation, within the film’s overall representation of memory, with a contemporary understanding of ‘trauma’. This discussion, anticipated in the foregoing analysis of *Exotica*’s democratized flashback-memories, must now be put into a broader theoretical frame.

‘TRAUMATIC’ MEMORY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

‘Trauma theory’ is one of the areas of memory studies in which the intersection of humanities and social science discourses comes to the fore, with theories of representation combining—or clashing—with theories of cognition and whatever is left in the wake of a Freudian understanding of the ‘unconscious’. Ever since the first Gulf War in 1991 a term like ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ has become commonplace, a *cliché*. What is the significance of so-called PTSD for everyday life? Cinematically speaking,

trauma might be defined as “the violent resurgence in the present of images from the past that a peacetime existence has necessarily sought to repress” (Turim 231).²⁸ For Cathy Caruth, who has theorized trauma for a post-9/11 world, trauma names the ‘failure’ of repression, where the ‘trauma’ is not *in* the original event or experience but in the *re-experiencing*, via memory: it is *memory* that is traumatic, not the original experience *per se* (200).

The pathology consists . . . solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. (200)

An *image* of the event; a memory-image. Like the infernal inverse of Proust’s notion of *involuntary memory*, “[t]he returning traumatic [image] . . . cannot be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning, but is, purely and inexplicably, *the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits*” (200; emphasis mine). For Freud (whose concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* stands behind Caruth’s theory), the repressed generally signifies *unconscious* desires, however taboo, whereas traumatic content signifies precisely the opposite. Repressed content names what the subject unconsciously desires to remember, whereas the traumatic is what the subject unconsciously desires to *not* remember: “The survivors’ uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns, as Freud points out, insistently and against their will” (201). What is the key difference between traumatic memory content and ‘normally’ repressed memory content?

Analysts . . . have remarked on the surprising literality and non-symbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal. [. . .] It is this literality . . . that possesses the receiver and resists psychoanalytic interpretation and cure. (201)

Why is this? Because psychoanalytic theory is a hermeneutic model that assumes metaphoricity or metonymity; it reads the manifest phenomena of neurosis—or psychosis—as signs or symbols that stand for something else, and that are therefore susceptible to interpretation, like poems, narrative fictions or dreams. Trauma, as a special kind of representation, does not require ‘reading’ or ‘decoding’ but *witnessing*, objectively and after the fact.

In *Eternal Sunshine* the memories that Joel revisits are by and large not definable as ‘traumatic’—with the exception of his earliest childhood memory of humiliation at being coerced by playmates into crushing a wounded bird, revisited by Joel in his attempt to preserve his memory of Clementine by ‘hiding’ her in—which is to say incorporating her into the mise-en-scene

of—his deepest and darkest past moments. But, as in all the other early memories, Joel re-experiences this *both* as a child again *and* as his adult self. When the little bully twists his arm, it is the adult Joel who cries and falls down, as Jim Carrey is skillfully edited into this scene which begins with a child actor portraying his character. Elsewhere, Gondry uses non-digital techniques and special effects. For example, in the markedly less naturalistic scenes in his mother's kitchen "baby Joel" is played by Carrey filmed in forced perspective and outsize sets to appear much smaller than he is. The fact that the effects are entirely 'in camera' makes them appear all the more uncanny as the eye knows it is being tricked and yet the trick is convincing enough. Gondry is interestingly cavalier in this respect. In the previously mentioned memory scene, the youthful Joel and Clementine play their grown-up game of suffocation-by-pillow in the front yard of Joel's mother's house—a scene that epitomizes the film's relentless rejection of Freud's conception of the unconscious as a 'place' which, in Mary Ann Doane's words, "stores all, relinquishes nothing, and is, most insistently, outside of time" (37). As the setting dissolves around Joel, as the mise-en-scene is erased by the Lacuna technicians and as Clementine disappears from the scene once again, Gondry cuts, in a false graphic match, from one house exterior to another, clearly different, house, clearly meant to be the same house, just as he cuts from little to big Joel. It is as if the film is deliberately flouting the rules of continuity as a kind of literalized metaphor for the vagaries of memory, or rather forgetting, in fast-motion. This scene is also notable in that the youthful Joel and Clementine would never have played this game, as it is an artifact of what is in relative terms their erotic future (the film's present, but in terms of the story, already the past). By the same token, Clementine would not have been there in the first place, and therefore it might be argued that this is an entirely 'inaccurate', even corrupt memory, with correspondingly corrupt narrative value. More reasonably, I think, it can be said that this 'new' or manufactured memory in fact respects the original emotional tenor of the childhood experience qua experience; in short, it preserves the 'emotional core' of the memory as itself a lost object. By super-adding his feelings for Clementine, whom he is in the process of losing, the present-tense version of the memory retains the proper aura of melancholic nostalgia, skillfully augmented by the plangent extra-diegetic music. The result, here and throughout the last few memory scenes, is that Joel, through the repetition (with differences) of the memory, either re-experiences the memory as 'traumatic' or he experiences it as traumatic *for the first time*; i.e. certain memories become traumatic only in their repetition—an idea that is explored in greater cultural-historical depth in Haneke's *Cache*. Furthermore, the trauma resides as much in Joel's forced *reflection* on the process of recollection-as-re-creation as it does on some over-simplified notion of 're-experiencing'. As happens (rather differently) in Koreeda's *After Life*, in re-experiencing Joel is *both* experiencing anew *and* watching himself in



Figure 2.1 *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michael Gondry, 2004).



Figure 2.2 *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michael Gondry, 2004).

that experience—the latter fact driven home by the film’s use of voiceover by Carrey and Winslett in the scene in front of the house.

In a sense, then, *Eternal Sunshine* makes the second, shorter half of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* its intertextual basis. This is precisely because the second time round everything is the same but different, at a heightened level of awareness; second-order, in quotation marks. This is the condition or ‘tense’ of Joel’s re-encountering his memories onscreen; we are seeing these things for the first time, but they have all already happened before. In a sense, Kaufman’s script serves up the first time and the second time at the same time—as if one could watch both halves of *Vertigo* simultaneously. Tellingly, in both films the protagonist fails in his efforts, failing to retain the only image of the woman in question: literally, in Scottie’s case; more figuratively, in Joel’s. Apart from this, both films end on a comparable point of open-endedness: *Vertigo*’s spiral structure implies that Scottie is doomed to remember his own failure (a kind of hell of endless repetition emblematised in the closing shot of the ‘dangling man’, a retroleptic echo of the same shot in his earlier delirious dream). And, in *Eternal Sunshine*, Joel is also condemned by circumstances to remember—having done the ‘work’ of forgetting. Unlike Scottie, though, who loses his ‘Madeleine’ twice over, Joel—a postmodern Orpheus—gets back his darling Clementine, but only after losing her once ‘forever’ in an extended chase sequence through his memories of their relationship unspooling in reverse, and being erased in the process. In the film’s final scenes, we see Joel, an ironic Orpheus, not moving somnambulistically (like Cocteau’s modernist hero) through an allegorical landscape of “the ruins of men’s beliefs”, but rushing headlong through the rapidly crumbling ruins of his *own* recent and entirely literal past, their disintegration visible for all to see.

CONCLUSION: “WHO IS JASON BOURNE? PART THREE OF A SPECIAL REPORT”

This chapter pivots around the distinction between ‘art’ and mainstream examples of memory films *vis-à-vis* what might be called a ‘crisis’ of memory as cinema’s, and thus the culture’s, ‘meta-traumatic’ engagement with its own history. This history is still unfolding and merges with the early twenty-first-century present in its unprecedented narcissistic obsession with its own identity as defined over against a host of real and imaginary ‘others’. Few recent films capture the peculiar panoptic paranoia of this zeitgeist better than the ‘Jason Bourne’ series. To adapt David Denby’s formulation, Bourne’s ‘redemption’ (if it comes) is the result of his ‘escaping’ who he is *now* by rediscovering who he was *before* (76).

The *Bourne* films can be classified collectively as ‘paranoid conspiracy thriller’, but with a twist: “The paranoid conspiracy film focuses . . . on innocent individuals who stumble on a devious plot. [. . .] Unlike James

Bond . . . [the protagonist] is an unwilling participant in violent spy games” (Prammagiore and Wallis 385). Like Robert Clayton Dean (Will Smith) in *Enemy of the State* (1998; Tony Scott), the hero of this type of film “is motivated as much by self-preservation as by any sense of obligation toward his country. [. . .] He runs for his life in a state of befuddlement, failing to comprehend why others are trying to kill him . . . ” (Pramagiorre 385). More generally, “[a]ction film plots place the hero . . . in increasingly thorny, and violent, confrontations. Consequently, action sequences become the central organizing feature of the genre and violent spectacle becomes the vehicle for expressing character development” (384). The *Bourne* series (like the new *James Bond* series) is characterized by scenes of graphic violence that are difficult to recall as action sequences in their discrete parts precisely because no single action is seen in its totality; *fragments* of actions barely glimpsed, pushing but never crossing the threshold of legibility, producing what in Chapter 5 I call a *controlled* incoherence. This is exemplified in one fight sequence in *The Bourne Ultimatum* in which Bourne goes hand-to-hand with a fellow assassin, finally killing him in the bathroom of the Moroccan apartment setting. The sequence is a blur of handheld camerawork, unusual angles and rapid-fire cuts between medium and close-up shots, seemingly timed to coincide with each blow, in the spirit of the *Psycho* shower scene. The viewer is similarly denied a coherent or static view of the mayhem unfolding onscreen (in stark contrast to the now famous Turkish bathhouse fight scene in David Cronenberg’s *Eastern Promises* [2007]).

But what sets the *Bourne* films apart from much contemporary violent action-thriller is its use of violence—in both narrative content and form—to represent Bourne’s subjective memory process. The contemporary, post-9/11 popular cultural fascination with torture and/or violent coercion takes on a much more serious, *critical* form, especially in the final film. From the opening frames, Paul Greengrass’s handheld camera weaves and darts furtively yet authoritatively, like CCTV footage that has exchanged its static view-from-above for a fragmentary subjective perspective whose expressive qualities are in constant flux. In some shots, the camera seems to align itself with the (usually nefarious) forces of surveillance and (visual) control in the film, peeking over shoulders and through window blinds, folding the viewer’s voyeuristic gaze into the story in a subtly new form of self-reflexivity.

The flashback-memory sequences in this film are at once conventional, motivated by plot and character and providing key bits of story information, and highly inventive in their associative economy. The ‘madeleine-object’, so central a component of the memory-film in its art cinema manifestation, is here reduced to a series of embedded visual triggers: image-objects that fall into the protagonist’s field of vision, setting off subjectively coded flashbacks. For example, Bourne’s second flashback ‘episode’—they come on him not like reveries but like involuntary PTSD hallucinations—occurs while Bourne is on a train for London to meet with the *Guardian*

newspaper's 'Security Reporter'. As he scans the lead story, "Who is Jason Bourne? Part Three of a Special Report"—the first paragraph reads like the advertising copy for the film itself—Bourne's memories are prompted by a photo of Maria (Franka Potente), his girlfriend from the first two films, inadvertently murdered at the beginning of *The Bourne Supremacy* by an assassin's bullet meant for him. This image gives way to the first level of 'memory' in the flashbacks, comprised of footage from the second and first Bourne movies, when Maria was still alive and from the moment of her death, underwater. The second, as it were deeper, level of memory consists of images shot specifically for the third film; fragments of the 'backstory' to the whole trilogy, presumably containing the secret of Bourne's former, authentic, identity.

The opening sequence—a set-piece that picks up exactly where *The Bourne Supremacy* left off—follows Bourne through a wintry Moscow night, wounded and trying to evade capture or worse. Breaking into a pharmacy to procure painkillers for a bullet wound, Bourne experiences a kind of mnemonic hallucination, rendered as a subjective flashback initiated by a close-up of a tap dripping into a bloody sink. This elides over a cut with the obviously traumatic memory of his initiation a few years before into Treadstone, the CIA's top-secret anti-terrorist program. The jumpy, fragmentary flashback scenes are digitally streaked, as if seen through a semi-transparent membrane. Voices, too, are modified in the manner of a conventional dream sequence, in which time is distended while the memory-image refuses to cohere into a meaningful whole. The most striking aspect of this sequence is the image of Bourne, after stating that he is unable to "commit to the program", having a black hood pulled suddenly over his head; an image evocative of photographs from Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, and by now iconic to the point of banality. These pictures return in the second flashback sequence, as Bourne's memories of Maria in 'happier' times and the water-motif of Maria's death elide with Bourne's own near-death experience of hooding and waterboarding in the CIA headquarters. In the final, extended flashback, at the film's conclusion, Bourne is revisited by the ghosts of his past even as he moves again through the same spaces in which these events occurred, in a neat doubling of present-tense action and third-act exposition that is completely different from the trope of the present-tense hero entering into the literal spaces of the past in the art films examples discussed in the first chapter. Finally, Bourne learns what he had forcefully forgotten: that he had joined the program willingly, volunteered to have his identity—"David Webb"—replaced with another, along with any memory of the process. Dr. Albert Hirsch (Albert Finney) tries to convince him that, since he 'made *himself* into who he is', Bourne is responsible for all the murders he has committed since, in the name of American national security. Just as the CIA has been surveilling, controlling and killing people in order to cover up the fact of these very operations, so Bourne learns here that the truth he has been searching for

all along—the source of his problems—is the same as the other answer he has been seeking: himself. In this respect, Bourne has much in common with other contemporary anti-heroes, like *Blade Runner's* Deckard, who is also an Oedipal subject in the pre-Freudian sense: at once perpetrator and victim, hunter and prey, vaguely aware that the mystery or secret at the heart of his quest is the enigma of his own identity. This is borne home by the final memory scene's most overt *Manchurian Candidate* allusion: as the final test of his absolute commitment to the program, the sleep-deprived Bourne is coerced to shoot a prisoner whose black hood, like Bourne's in the earlier scenes, obscures his head and face, a crude but effective synecdoche for the originary voluntary relinquishment of identity. In killing the other, signalling his willingness to kill blindly, Bourne is in effect killing himself—a necessary prerequisite for the new career he has undertaken. But the fact that this is revealed at the end in flashback changes everything, as by now Bourne is torn between regret and the desire for vengeance. If this was his final act before being re-born as Jason Bourne, in mnemonic hindsight Bourne is un-born, as he sees again the nameless other who he had to kill in order to become someone else. In the film's final shot, Bourne throws himself several stories into the Hudson river, the trilogy ending where it began, Bourne in water, afloat, more dead than alive—in fact, whether he survives or not remains ambiguous.

The significance of Bourne's traumatic memory-images does not end with his character, or the film's conclusion. At the risk of doing violence to a very strong group of films, the manner in which *The Bourne Ultimatum* displays Bourne's 'traumatic memory' of identity deliberately relinquished sanctions its interpretation as a metaphor or allegory (meta-trauma; meta-memory) for the culture's collective trauma or 'crisis' of memory, and therefore identity. In this reading the trilogy taps into contemporary panoptic paranoia: the fear of being watched, all the time, coupled with the capacity to be omnivoyant. The final scene of memory regained emblematises the broader culture's ocularcentric bias: the sheer visibility and representability of even the heretofore 'repressed or otherwise unconscious contents of subjective interiority. As an aesthetic ideology this is opposed to the counter-hegemonic tendency of the art film to incorporate into its structure a critical self-reflexivity that is always potentially a meta-critique of the assumptions underpinning the total visibility and representability on display here. Bourne's past does not return easily or willingly, and in the end he needs the help of another witness, but there is no question that this past returns as it really was, as if in accordance with Freud's idea that "the repressed remains unaltered by the passage of time" (*Outline* 34)—but this is really just an excellent example of the degree to which such thoroughly 'unscientific' notions remain fixtures in popular cinema's representation of memory.

That Bourne's recovered 'traumatic' memory of identity loss centres around highly allusive, politically charged iconic images, ripped from the

leading news stories of the past decade, testifies to the film's left-wing politics, while signalling its (necessarily) conservative aesthetic. This film's style, as noted, exemplifies intensified continuity as the apotheosis of Deleuze's "sensory motor mechanism", in a more or less complete rejection of the hallmarks of the postwar art film's time-image. Even Bourne's mnemonic images, self-consciously mediated in post-production, do not grant him (or the viewer) respite from the simultaneously engrossing and alienating qualities of the new stylistic dominant as 'prosthetic memory' in action. One of the more interesting aspects of this type of memory, according to Landsberg, is that, "like an artificial limb, [prosthetic] memories often mark a trauma" (Landsberg 149). The trauma that precedes the necessity of a prosthetic limb, of course, implies the loss of something that was once there. Within the film's world Bourne is fortunate in that his original identity is in some sense regained; the viewer, however—as the true subject of prosthetic memory theory—must make do with something considerably less reassuring.

3 ‘Global Memory’

Cinema as *Lingua Franca* and the Commodification of the Image

If you've designed a picture correctly, in terms of its emotional impact, the Japanese audience would scream at the same time as the Indian audience.

—Alfred Hitchcock

Memory is blind to all but the group it binds . . . [T]here are as many memories as there are groups . . .

—Pierre Nora

INTRODUCTION

One of the principal aims of this book, as noted, is to circumvent the overly utopian privileging of capitalist-consumerist pop culture characteristic of theories of contemporary prosthetic memory. Such an approach does little or nothing to get us beyond the ethico-political contradictions of a culture in which the visual image is the ultimate commodity form, whose transcultural ‘consumability’ may mask its complexity and its resistance to facile interpretation. This chapter extends the exploration of the cinematic representation of memory into a ‘global’, transcultural forum. (And I retain the term ‘representation’ because it economically signifies at once a cultural and a political dimension: the aesthetics versus the politics—or better, ethics—of representation.) We are returned, then, to the more general question of cinema’s legibility across borders, its status as global *lingua franca*, not to speak of the status of the ‘we’ that claims to ‘own’ or determine the meaning of such a thing as memory, recognized—like ‘History’—to be inextricable from the discourses and media in which it is constituted.

Underpinning any discussion like this one—of texts, narrative, writing, images, language etc.—is a notion of *literacy* upon which a certain definition of cultural modernity depends. More than ever, perhaps, it is necessary today to recognize the centrality of literacy in the broadest, most inclusive

sense, and in relation to what Linda Hutcheon calls ‘discursive communities’ (*Irony’s Edge* 89)—particularly with respect to the perpetually mutating presence of a master-trope like irony. At the same time it is necessary to take into account the ever-present possibility of the failure or negation of literacy at the limits of what can be construed as human ‘language’—of what can be known or represented; represented and therefore known. This returns us again to the question from the Introduction of the linguistic status of the cinematic image, with its powerful iconic-mimetic dimension long downplayed by the highly influential branch of 1970s theory focused on films as *enunci-ated* texts. The sheer spectacle of the medium leads one inevitably to contemplate the transcultural translatability of a ‘language’ like cinema, however; to recognize its status as a principal modality of collective cultural memory, a kind of *global* memory system; as both source of and storehouse for our collectively most valued memories. But to think of film in these terms is also obviously problematic. Historically, film is a medium with very few ‘speakers’ in relation to viewers. Today this is changed, as many people—at least in the heretofore more developed Northern hemisphere—have access to the means of production, but for much of cinema’s history the vast majority have been neither ‘speakers’ nor ‘writers’ but ‘readers’, or rather, viewers (Ezra and Rowden 6–7). Moreover, worldwide levels of what Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden call ‘cineliteracy’ are higher than ever before: “[t]his global cineliteracy has been created and made necessary by the degree to which capitalism as the catalytic agent in the expansion of popular culture has undermined the viability of cultural or national insularity” (3)—in short, the viability of those collective identities we cherish most dearly among the army of metaphors we daily mobilize to shore up our consensual notions of reality. As we have seen, the memory films discussed here are linked in their incorporation of an auto-critical reflection on these very questions.

‘Cineliteracy’, indeed any brand of literacy, implies memory. This is not merely a question of memory as storage and retrieval mechanism, like a digital archive and search engine. Rather, as these filmic examples demonstrate, this is as much a matter of the individual film as prosthetic repertoire of hermeneutic codes coupled with defamiliarized aesthetic conventions. That is, in knowing and remembering how to ‘read’ specific moments in certain kinds of films the viewer exercises a reflexive awareness—a kind of second-order defamiliarization—of the medium itself even in the midst of the desired identificatory and/or participatory immersion. Questions of literacy and language also imply those of translation and translatability. The problem with a certain dominant model of translation, however, is its underpinning assumption of a translatable content: a relatively fixed meaning to be ‘carried across’, to be metaphorized.¹ The notion of a signifying presence, independent of the material signifier (that which does the carrying) is at the heart of the so-called Western metaphysics targeted by the deconstructive project initiated some four decades ago, by Jacques Derrida and others.

The logocentrism of Greek metaphysics will always be haunted, therefore, by the ‘absolutely other’ to the extent that the Logos can never englobe everything. There is always something which escapes, something different, other and opaque which refuses to be totalized into a homogeneous identity. (Kearney 117)

In dialogue with Derrida, Richard Kearney expresses the fundamental problem of every instance of translation—especially between so-called ‘Western’ and non-Western texts; i.e. the culturally ‘familiar’ versus the culturally ‘other’, which translates in cinematic terms into the question of the translatability or ‘transmissibility’ of a specific signifying content across the peculiar barriers to communication erected by and within a rapidly globalizing medium.²

In general terms, this problem is not unique to the modern period. In any cultural moment, however, translatability or communicability (metaphors of viral contagion notwithstanding) always return to the significance of transmissible, ‘public’ narratives. According to medievalist Mary Carruthers,

Where literature is valued for its social functions, [certain] works . . . provide the sources of a group’s memory. Societies of this sort are ‘textual communities’, in Brian Stock’s phrase, whether those texts exist among them in oral or written form. [. . .] Literary works become institutions as they weave a community together by providing it with shared experience and a certain kind of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests. (12)

In this account of medieval *memoria* Carruthers in effect describes a form of ‘collective memory’ in which can be perceived an anticipation of contemporary theories of memory as social prostheses. The crucial transformation to a properly modern form of collective memory, culminating in the eighteenth century, however, is made possible with the invention of printing, which facilitated the exteriorization and archivization of heretofore individual memory (see Le Goff 81–82). The notion of ‘textual community’, moreover, necessitates an expansion of our definition of a *modern* society in that, like Benedict Anderson’s definition of a ‘nation’, this community need not necessarily be localized in either space or time. This is obviously one of the most significant effects of the invention of the book and subsequent print culture. Linda Hutcheon’s notion of ‘discursive communities’ extends this logic to its extreme, taking into account groups and societies whose existence and identities share no common geographic or temporal reality. An analogous distinction can be found between Maurice Halbwachs’s formulation of a decidedly twentieth-century ‘collective memory’ and what Andrew Hoskins has termed ‘social memory’ (Hoskins 2–4), where

the latter term in each pairing—discursive community; social memory—applies to societies determined entirely *within* the mass-mediated, image-saturated ambiance of late capitalism. Such societies also correspond to the early twentieth-century social organization designated by Ferdinand Tönnies as a *Gesellschaft*, in which all human relations are determined by exchange value. In contrast to the quasi-utopian *Gemeinschaft*, determined by authentic community and face-to-face human relations, in “a *Gesellschaft* . . . relationships between people tend to be impersonal, superficial and calculating, and self-interest is the prevailing motive for human action” (qtd. in Krutnik 87).³ *Gesellschaft* is also characterized by the sort of ‘false’ or artificial memory presupposed by what Benjamin calls *Erlebnis*: “the mode of experience of short-term memory”, in which a culture informed and maintained by narration has been replaced by “information and sensation” (Dimendberg 129). This kind of change is traceable in turn to real socio-cultural transformations in modern urban life, the triumph of what urban theorists call abstract and ‘centrifugal’ over ‘centripetal’ social spaces (129). In short, there is a great temptation to see in contemporary forms of social or cultural memory a principal symptom of the society of the spectacle, characterized by atomization and alienation, and predicted by post-Marxist, anti-postmodern critics, such as Guy Debord and Frederic Jameson (see also Burgoyne; Pence; Landsberg).

Andrew Hoskins, among others, complicates this view, invoking Halbwachs to radically qualify what we saw in the Introduction as the centuries-old catachresis (its metaphorical origins forgotten) of individual memory as storage place, arguing for an essentially external, dialogic mode of modern memory:

[m]emories do not reside as ‘store’ in the mind—as is perhaps our everyday understanding of human memory—but instead are provoked, being challenged, altered, sustained and shared by others. Collective memory, in this way, is the product of a negotiation between individuals and their wider surround at a given time and in a given context. (Hoskins 3–4)

Moreover, “[t]he ‘balance’ of social memory has shifted and is shifting from eyewitness and living memory to more mediated forms of remembering; indeed, the latter has become the principal vehicle of the former” (4). Hoskins emphasizes the centrality of the visual to this process: “[t]he media, as today’s principal source of visual images, powerfully shape or direct social memory” (4).

This chapter focuses the ongoing analysis of what we have termed the ‘madeleine-image’ as pivotal narrative element in both the art cinema and more commercial memory films, as it concentrates and conflates the primary attributes of the Freudian (sexual) fetish and the process of cathexis, on the one hand, with Marxian reification-as-catachresis and the

commodity fetish as "social hieroglyphic" at the heart of the exchange relation, on the other. As the basis of social relations, exchange throws into relief the desirability of the Levinasian self-other relation as ethical determinant, despite its literal impossibility as a guide for living. The madeleine-image accomplishes this as a specific image-object while at the same time metonymizing the filmic image *per se* as commodity form *par excellence*. Therefore as we begin to read cinema in general as a primary modality of social or cultural memory it becomes easier to recognize when specific films or filmmakers attempt to counter this seemingly universal condition of the cinematic signifier. The essentially catachrestic nature of this image, in its reification—what Richard Terdiman identifies as the necessary forgetting of its commodity-fetish status—links it as much to a collective amnesia as to memory. Hence, the dominant trope in late or postmodernity is not metaphor or metonymy or even allegory but dead metaphor. The argument behind this is already present in what Terdiman calls the "memory crisis" evidenced in nineteenth-century French literature—the cultural period out of which the cinematic age is born. Terdiman already makes the connection between modern memory and commodity exchange, between "mnemonics and economics", in what amounts to an unintentional critique of Landsberg's attempted recuperation of commodification in the theory of prosthetic memory:

Since the twin revolutions—economic and political—of the nineteenth century, it was becoming increasingly clear that the processes that characterize the economic and the mnemonic realms are what make the social world happen for us. Goods move and are transformed in their circulation; memories are displaced and transformed with the passage of time or in the course of an increasingly dense and highly organized process of information exchange. [...] Essentially, 'reification' is a memory disturbance: *the enigma of the commodity is a memory disorder.* (11–12; emphasis in original)

This, then, is the crux of the memory crisis Terdiman describes: that the objects "to which memory could traditionally count on attaching itself", once commodified, paradoxically "suppress the memory of their own process". In other words, the traditionally "intimate relation" of objects to remembrance is subverted (13), betrayed by what we have here labelled the madeleine-image.

With respect to cinema, our ongoing examination of the image is thus also always concerned with the potential of a certain category of film to incorporate within its narrative a self-reflexive or meta-cinematic critique, and its complicity therefore in what might be called the commodification of everyday life. While one general concern of this book is the fate of the postwar international art film, as stylistic paradigm, narrative model, anti-commodity, or counter-hegemonic cultural force, in the preceding chapter

specific mainstream commercial films were introduced for the purpose of contrast, in order to bring out more clearly the difference in meaning and value of a given film's self-consciously critical or even 'political' dimension, whether in thematic or formal terms. The difference that emerges, as seen with the 'Jason Bourne' paranoid conspiracy action thriller, is the difference between well-made and stylistically 'progressive' films that in the end shore up a liberal-humanist status quo, versus another cinematic approach predicated upon a completely different set of assumptions about the social or political 'purpose' of film as the definitive twentieth-century art form.

This chapter in the main continues the examination of more 'neo-classical' or commercial examples, before turning again to the international contemporary (post-1980s) art cinema in the next chapter. Before discussing Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002) (this chapter's principal filmic example), however, I want to give space to Ridley Scott's highly influential *Blade Runner* (1982), typically discussed in generic terms as science fiction, neo-(or tech-) noir, or proto-cyber-punk; as a film about the spaces in and technologies with which identities are produced, consolidated and legitimized; as either a 'modernist' or 'postmodernist' text; etc.⁴ *Blade Runner* is a landmark film in its deeply intertextual investigation of modern memory's crisis of authenticity, as a function of the larger crisis faced by modern subjectivity figured in the film in terms of what it means to be authentically 'human'. Terdiman diagnoses an initial crisis beginning in the late eighteenth century, a period in modern European history of social, cultural and political revolution in which "people experienced the insecurity of their culture's involvement with its past, the perturbation of the link to their own inheritance"; a moment in which "the very coherence of time and subjectivity seemed disarticulated" (3–4). Therefore the memory crisis referenced in *Blade Runner* is by definition second-order, and thus central to the postmodernity of the diegesis. That said, Scott's film engages in a relatively sophisticated critique of the image and visual reproductive technologies *without* crossing the line into an overtly self-reflexive, politicized, auto-critique, establishing a pattern to be followed by innumerable contemporary genre films, including a horror movie like *The Ring*, in which an uncritical faith in the fundamental visibility, representability and knowability of the 'inner self' of dream, memory and the so-called 'unconscious' emerges relatively unscathed from its confrontation with radical otherness transmuted into eminently mass-marketable images.

BLADE RUNNER: IDENTITY CRISIS AS 'CRISIS' OF MEMORY

For Barbara Mennel, *Blade Runner* exemplifies the "contemporary dystopian vision", which is concerned with "the problems of reality, virtuality, memory and subjectivity. Paradoxically, while cinematic representation is

enabled by technology, it is technology itself that becomes the problem in negotiating questions of utopian and dystopian visions of the future" (140). This is a key point in that the critique of technology—typical of contemporary SF—in the film comes to centre upon modes of literal prosthetic memory. This critique, moreover, resonates meta-cinematically in terms of the as-yet open question of cinema as 'universal language' and as repository or archive of consensually determined meanings: what is 'worth' remembering versus what is deemed either trivial and expendable or too traumatic and therefore better expunged.

Memory construed on a collective or social level resonates in *Blade Runner* especially in terms of the film's much-remarked critique of late modernity's hyper-consumerist orientation:

In the diegesis of this film, the L.A. of 2019 is nothing other than the almost total realization of the dystopic horrors that remain only virtual today. Hence, the world of *Blade Runner* is not a space-time to come but a space-time that *will have been*. The future is today, and today has always already fled back to the future imperfect. (Doel and Clarke 141)

The world of *Blade Runner*, in other words, is a future as always already past: the future anterior tense made manifest. As Ridley Scott admits, the film represents the L.A. of 2019, forty years in the future, in the stylistic terms of Hollywood films of the 1940s, forty years in the past (Ostrow C7). In what becomes a standard conceit in subsequent neo-noir and SF films, as well as their more hybrid art house counterparts, *Blade Runner* incorporates a self-conscious critique of its own exploration of the questions of the present in a futuristic setting represented in the terms of a recognizable past: second-order prosthetic memory in action. It does this, however, without compromising its implicit faith in the power of the pre-digital (filmic) image to not simply "re-represent, re-produce, re-play and re-flect" reality but (in seeming contradiction of Jameson's postmodern 'depthlessness' [Postmodernism 6]), to penetrate beneath its glossy surface to a 'deeper' reality within.⁵

On the level of individual character, the question of memory (like everything else) is focused upon the difference between human and Replicant, which is to say: this difference comes down to memory, in terms of authenticity, ownership, representability etc. This is, after all, the key difference between Rachael (Sean Young) and the other three Nexus 6 Replicants. As Tyrell (Joe Turkel) remarks, "She's beginning to suspect, I think", to which Deckard (Harrison Ford), in a telling elision of pronouns, responds, "Suspect? How can it not know what it is?" Tyrell's answer is revealingly enigmatic: "Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell; 'More Human than Human' is our motto" (*Blade Runner*). This would seem to be at odds with the L.A. Police Department, whose motto—judging by the existence of 'blade

runner' as job description—would seem to be '*either* human or not'. But the reality is immediately shown to be more complex: as Doel and Clarke point out, the Voigt-Kampff test administered to Rachael and Leon in the opening scenes can only ever reveal one of two possible options: (a) that the subject is a Replicant; or (b) that the subject's identity is undecided (156). It cannot *prove* the subject's 'humanness' defined according to the Humanist, post-Enlightenment criteria the authorities insist upon, which are 'physical' only insofar as they involve involuntary physiological responses to *emotional* stimulation. The test focuses primarily on the presence or absence of *empathy*, which, presumably, only properly socialized human beings possess. The Nexus 6 Replicants, with life-spans of only four years, are like children, experiencing only the most basic emotions—"hate, love, fear, anger, envy" (*Blade Runner*)—without acquiring a higher moral-ethical sensibility before dying. From these emotional responses the Replicants do, of course, form memories, but nothing like what Rachael, an 'experimental' model, possesses. Tyrell, their creator and CEO of the eponymous corporation, fatally underestimates the strength of the Replicants' desire to have what separates them from the typical human being: 'more life' in which to live and build up a body of memories which then provide the continuity of (singular) identity and psychological depth. And, although the approved 'director's cut' of the film ends up throwing Deckard's humanity into doubt as well, all versions uphold this conventional, time-honored model of individual human being.

The Replicants' built-in 'expiry date', of course, guarantees their ultimate status as mass-produced commodities (Doel and Clarke 152). From his initially unreconstructed perspective, Deckard reluctantly confirms Rachael's suspicions that she is not human. Her challenge—"Did you ever take that [Voigt-Kampff] test yourself?"—goes unanswered, however. As she puts it (after saving Deckard's life by shooting another Replicant): "I'm not *in* the business . . . I *am* the business" (*Blade Runner*). In the nineteenth-century metropolis, the female counterpart to the urban *flâneur* is the figure of the prostitute, whom Benjamin calls "seller and sold in one" (Friedberg 40)—an ambulatory commodity. While Rachael is by no means a prostitute, her initial appearance is clearly calculated to recall the *femme fatale* of *film noir*. And, as Doel and Clarke note, debates around gender or ethnic or racial difference are displaced onto the question of *specific* difference (152): Replicants are discussed by the human characters as if they were a different *species*; a wholly *non-human* mode of being. "[T]he presence of the Replicants serves to affirm 'the fiction of the real'" (150): this is the most radical aspect of the film's critique of technology; the Replicant's themselves remain 'replicas', *copies* of the human, and *not* 'simulacra' in Jean Baudrillard's sense of a copy without an original, an image without a referent.

The 'real' in *Blade Runner* therefore includes nature, the 'human', authenticity, identity etc.—all dependent on a certain notion of *memory*.

At the same time, like many contemporary SF films,⁶ *Blade Runner* thematizes the commodification of memory (see Bukatman 77–79). What does it *mean*, then, when memory is presented as something technically produced, implanted, faked? As Deckard learns, Rachael is the unwitting recipient of ‘memory implants’ from an authentic human, Tyrell’s niece. “If we gift them with a past, we create a cushion, a pillow for their emotions, and consequently we can control them that way”, explains Tyrell. Deckard: “Memories. You’re talking about memories” (*Blade Runner*)—not her *own*, but ‘authentic’ memories nonetheless. Rachael has also been given photographic ‘evidence’ with which to substantiate ‘her’ memories. Unconsciously, the film all but conflates the *difference* between a photograph and the memory itself, posing the question: in this near-future world, *is* there, will there be, *will there have been* a difference?

Leon (Brion James), another Replicant, also possesses photographs, but they do not signify in the same way as Rachael’s. Leon’s photos do not represent ‘false’ or ‘implanted’ memories but his own, *recent* and presumably *authentic* experiences in *real* spaces, such as his hotel room. Hence Deckard’s ‘discovery’ of Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), a female Replicant, behind a blindspot around a corner inside the tiny reflected image in a convex mirror on the rear wall of the room in the picture. In this (still extraordinary) sequence, Deckard employs the retro-futuristic ‘Esper machine’ to penetrate the photo of the hotel room in a way that is not optically possible in a 2019 predicated upon a pre-digital 1982. (This also contradicts Scott Bukatman’s conclusion that in the film the photograph’s “inescapable flatness and depthlessness” is emphasized [80].) In its chunky analog operation the Esper machine is reminiscent of the single-reflex camera; Doel and Clarke note the allusion here to Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* (1966), for instance, but the import of that film’s famous sequence is inverted: here the heretofore invisible truth hidden ‘inside’ or beneath the surface of the image is readily *revealed* with the aid of new technology, heralding perhaps a more optimistically postmodern faith in visual-epistemological prostheses.⁷

Deckard’s successful analysis of Leon’s photograph is effectively predicted by Walter Benjamin, in his elaboration of the ‘optical unconscious’ in the 1936 essay on “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility”:

Clearly, it is another nature which speaks to the camera as compared to the eye. ‘Other’ above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious. Whereas it is a commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms), we have no idea at all what happens during the split second when a person actually takes a step. This is where the [film] camera comes into play, with all its resources . . . It is through the camera that we first discover



Figure 3.1 *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982).

the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. (17)

For Benjamin, the camera reveals what was heretofore invisible to the ‘naked eye’, in an analogy with that part of the mind (or its contents) unavailable to conscious awareness: the ‘unconscious’ as the region of *otherness* within the self. For example, in a psychoanalytic reading of the film, Rachael’s memories, along with the photo of her mother,

‘provide [her] with an entire Oedipal history’, through which she has been cybernetically constituted as a subject—following precisely the same trajectory as the human child engendered as a female subject. The way in which Rachael repeatedly submits to Deckard reinforces this. Replaying the Oedipal drama, Rachael re-assumes the definition of Woman (*La Femme*) in accordance with the phallocentric ordering of the symbolic. (Doel and Clarke 149)

But this is always already the logic of classical Hollywood film, especially narrative genres like *film noir*; that is, whether a given character does or does not correspond to an ‘Oedipal subjectivity’ has clearly been ‘programmed’

into the film by the filmmakers—just as Rachael has been engineered to remember experiences she never actually had: someone *else's* memories. After all, one implication of the notion of 'prosthetic memory' is that the memories you possess as 'your own' may in fact originate *outside* you, not in your personal experience—whether you are conscious of this or not. As if in illustration of this: symptomatic of the film's own 'unconscious' is the wealth of photos spread across *Deckard's* piano, as he daydreams about unicorns. These photos seem to represent all manner of individuals, appearing to date back to the mid-twentieth and even late nineteenth centuries—as if he had his own collection of other people's mnemonic images. Deckard's status as human is thrown into doubt in the director's cut of the film, even though "[t]he supposedly determinant distinction between human and Replicant . . . is above all produced by a categorization that perpetually breaks down" (Doel and Clarke 152).

Like both the city and the cinema, psychoanalysis is a product of the modern age, with its obsessive focus on and privileging of the individual. In film theory's conflation of the mis-recognition constitutive of Lacan's mirror phase with spectatorial identification, "the cinema screen is compared to a *mirror*, in which the viewer sees his *ideal self* reflected—even as he recognizes that it is *not* himself—hence an ideal; a *fantasy self*" (Sturken and Cartwright 73–75). According to Colin MacCabe, "[t]he specular relation thus established in . . . the mirror phase, provides the basis for primary narcissism, and is then transferred onto the rest of the human world where the other is simply seen as another version of the same—of the 'I' which is the centre of the world" (184). In this light the anti-Replicant sentiment in *Blade Runner* appears as an ironically more 'ethical' response, as it were leaving the other to its own otherness, outside the self/same. But this theory makes it all too easy to overlook the *actual* mirrors within the film's mise-en-scene: the convex mirror in Leon's photo, for example, has an art-historical intertext in the convex ('fish-eye') mirror in Jan van Eyck's "Wedding portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife Giovanna" (1434 CE). According to Erwin Panofsky, in this painting "[t]he mirror itself may represent the eye of God observing the vows of the wedding. A spotless mirror was also an established symbol of Mary, referring to the Holy Virgin's immaculate conception and purity" (202–3). Within the mirror in Van Eyck's painting one can see what looks like the distorted (but optically correct) image of what might be a priest, performing the ceremony, as well as another person, who may be the artist himself, in a moment of painterly self-reflection. However, the patriarchist connotations of wifely virginity borne in the mirror resonate with the unicorn in medieval allegory as Christ-like symbol of purity and fertility, tameable only by a virgin. With humanism these associations are secularized in terms of chastity and marital fidelity. Therefore, even though the unicorn in Deckard's daydream clearly points to the ambiguity of his ontological status—the unicorn is a mythical creature, and yet it has a certain existence—it also underscores

the ironic theme of bourgeois marriage as social ideal in a future world of hard-boiled blade runners and Replicants. Perhaps this is at the heart of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ in this film (of which more below). Panofsky’s ‘eye of God’, moreover, speaks to the film’s opening shot: the hellish L.A. cityscape reflected in the iris of an eye in extreme close-up; a visual pun, as old as Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera*, on the eye/I figured *either* as the all-seeing subject, wielding a colonizing, totalizing gaze (‘Offworld’ is a neo-colonial space, and the Replicants are a slave-race), or as the product of the city itself, a dystopian space, cut off from any authentic past, adrift in a perpetual present, disguised as a future determined by the tropes of a bygone cinematic era.

Blade Runner’s famous climax (retained in all the different versions) is a chase sequence culminating in a rooftop confrontation between Deckard and Roy—an ironic and counterintuitive conclusion to their struggle, perhaps, in that Deckard, the human hero, is reduced to ‘dangling’ abjection, clearly intertextualizing Scottie’s vertiginous helplessness in the influential opening rooftop chase sequence in *Vertigo* (also quoted—and ‘redeemed’—at the beginning of *The Matrix*, to name another, more recent example). That Deckard is saved from certain death by Roy—he gives him “more life”—could be seen to represent the ‘redemption’ of *Vertigo*’s final shot of Scottie, poised passively at the edge of the abyss, but something more complex is going on in this scene. In brief, it may be argued that Roy’s ‘salvation’ of Deckard represents the transformation, for better or worse, of the so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’, mirrored in 1950s to 1980s American film (see e.g. Gates), into something much more inclusive: a crisis of human identity *per se*—although this is still framed in a way that ultimately privileges the masculine, thereby displacing right to the end the related questions of gender, race or other categories of difference. For this reason this scene marks a founding moment in the crisis of identity that is underwritten by a new ‘crisis of memory’, where the significance of individual memory, typical of contemporary popular culture, is ultimately predicated upon its *emotional* dimension. This privileged valuation once again ensures that the image-vehicle—the ‘madeleine image’—has not simply displaced but has supplanted any ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ conception of memory, independent of its cultural-technical mediation.

GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSLATION: BABELIAN DETOURS

A ‘*lingua franca*’ is a modern Babelian language born of trading routes, patterns of economic and cultural exchange—a symptom of nascent globalization under capitalism⁸—that has come to signify “any language serving as a medium between different nations, etc. whose own languages are not the same; [in general] a system of communication providing mutual understanding” (*OED*). ‘*Lingua franca*’ is the universal phrase for a universal language that reinforces a quasi-universal collective identity, like



Figure 3.2 *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

that of the nation. It goes without saying that the notion of a *lingua franca* in a post- or neo-colonial age of globalization is more fraught than ever, not least because the 'global' today is potentially (or virtually) co-extensive with the planet as a whole. The history of modernity, after all, is the history of the proliferation of 'lingue franche' (a contradiction in terms), competing for hegemonic status in the prevailing cultural-political-economic order.

As a function of the density and 'believability' of *Blade Runner*'s diegetic world, the filmmakers contrived a *lingua franca*, 'Cityspeak', spoken in the streets of twenty-first-century Los Angeles, a hybrid of Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, German and Hungarian, as in the early scene at fast food kiosk when Gaff (Edward James Olmos) picks up Deckard to take him to Bryant (M. Emmet Walsh). The building in which the LAPD is headquartered appears in a high-angle shot as Gaff's police 'spinner' descends to the rooftop. The architectural style as well as the shot's visual structure clearly echo the view of the headquarters of Fredersen, 'master of Metropolis', in Lang's 1927 film. This skyscraper, as part of the Art Deco-futuristic mise en scène, is known as 'the New Tower of Babel', introducing what is for *Metropolis* an important pre-cinematic, indeed premodern, intertext.

The 'Babylonian theme' in this chapter merges with the idea of film as a special kind of 'universal' language. Alison Landsberg connects this with the question of the 'ownership' of memory:

Prosthetic memories cannot be owned exclusively. Despite the fact that these memories are made possible by a commodity culture, and circulate like commodities, they can never be owned as private property, and as a result they occupy a unique position within and yet implicitly

opposed to capitalism. In fact, one might even say that they function as . . . ‘universal property.’ (Landsberg 151)

In its utopian desire to recuperate capitalism’s politically progressive potential, this theory overlooks its own insight into the contradictions of memory in the age of technical reproducibility. The ‘prosthetic memories’ Landsberg describes represent a ‘new’ kind of individual memory with collective social import. These memories, in short, are no more ‘private’ or ‘public’ than the words with which we all communicate—or fail to communicate—with one another, every day. As signs they are exteriorized, irreducibly social in their function; as commodities, however, they are as progressive or as transgressive as the hegemonic structure of late modern society permits. Contra Landsberg, it is precisely the commoditized nature of certain images which can lead to a ‘short-circuiting’ of memory. The aforementioned Babelian intertext is a good example of the more meaningful discontinuity beneath the surface of apparent continuities between films, like *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, from two different epochs. The recurrent image of the ‘new Tower of Babel’ may thus be read as an appropriate emblem of the quasi-universality of the cinematic signifier.

What David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson term a “global film culture” is at once more inclusive and more limited than the notion of a global cinematic ‘language’. The authors rely on a model of unilateral Hollywood domination, downplaying the disparities and contradictions between the economic (and therefore ‘cultural’) considerations of world cinema and the simultaneous multi-directional flow of cinematic signifiers (*Film History* 694–712)—what Robert Stam describes as the “tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization, in which hegemonic tendencies . . . are simultaneously ‘indigenized’ within a complex, disjunctive global cultural economy” (*Film Theory* 287). Since the early 1990s, the linguistic—and therefore *literary*—implications of cultural globalization have been superseded in the academy by concern for the political-economic declensions of globalization, with departments of global studies (or similar names), focusing on neo-colonial globalization under late capitalism. Still, behind the current post-globalization discourse lies the old idea of a shift toward a monolithic and centripetal world-system based around a single language—a scenario which, given the cultural resonance of the Tower of Babel story (*Genesis* bk. 11), has deep mythological resonance for literary and other humanities scholars.⁹ This myth, which, as noted, provides the allegorical and visual foundations for *Metropolis* (1927) (and which that film’s modernist allegory significantly re-writes, only to be re-written in the postmodern terms of *Blade Runner* in 1982), has proven to be of continuing relevance in later twentieth-century popular culture; witness Alejandro González Iñárritu’s recent multi-national blockbuster, *Babel* (2006)¹⁰—a film that, in allegorizing what Harlan Kennedy calls “the pentecostal pluralism of modern cinema” (71), attempts to thematize and incorporate into its

very form the contemporary problem of the impossibility of clear, untrammelled communication between and among different persons and peoples.

'Babel,' as in 'Tower of', has become a pun in many Indo-European languages. Although interpretations vary, the general applicability of the Babel story to any discussion of translation is self-evident. The Tower of Babel is, on one level, a fable of the (historical) necessity of translation—which is precisely Derrida's object in choosing it as a vantage point from which to survey Walter Benjamin's essay on translation (see "Roundtable" 100)—but it is also now readable in terms of a fable of the *failure* of linguistic globalization (cf. 100–5), enacted in a drama of God's disapprobation and not the *destruction* but the 'deconstruction' (*Ab-bau*) of the tower, the concrete symbol, the structure that is erected by man only to be 'deconstructed' by God.¹¹ This deconstruction is equally the dispersal of the people and the dissemination of languages. In engendering linguistic confusion and therefore the necessity of translation, God ensures the untranslatability of all texts for which the Babel story stands as a model ('Babel,' as a proper name, is untranslatable ["Roundtable" 101]; it gets translated as 'confusion', a common noun). This, at least, is the legacy of the history of translating this story. To appropriate a Derridean locution: How to avoid translating? One can never avoid translating, because (paraphrasing Derrida, in what has become a poststructuralist gospel) translation, like language itself, has already begun without us. Such is the double bind imposed by God upon humankind ("Roundtable" 102). And this is one (fictional) explanation for the in- or non-human dimension of language, where 'human' is the knowable, what is familiar, 'heimlich'. Language is *in-* or *non*-human to the extent that it retains this dimension of 'unheimlichkeit' within it, which precedes us, the human. Benjamin and Derrida converge on this point: as Derrida (invoking Levinas) puts it: language always starts before us, without us; language *is* exteriority, *is* otherness; language is the inhuman and the untranslatable ("Denials" 99). And fiction is the mode of discourse in which this feature of language is thematized even as it is most blatantly exploited.

The Tower of Babel, simultaneously constructed and deconstructed, is an impossibility; it is sublime. One modern alternative to the Tower of Babel is the 'groundless ground' of multiple languages, of plurivocality, of polyphony, even cacaphony—the absence of the ground of a single, unifying, global 'human' language. The collapsing of the Tower in the story is not the collapsing of difference—that would have been the effect of its successful completion; rather, it is the *engendering* of difference, the father giving birth to the mother tongues, whose alienness, if Walter Benjamin is to be believed, is commensurate with their proximity (see "Translator"). And this contemporary 'crisis' of communication, the centrifugal atomization of language, has as its counterpart again a contemporary 'crisis' of memory; hence the interdisciplinary upsurge in interest in memory in the past ten or fifteen years.

MEMORY AS WRITING (REVISITED)

To claim, like the 1970s film theory that simultaneously complicated this notion, that cinema is a language, is to assume a viewing subject with a very unusual relationship to the screen image—one which, as visually based, must needs be explained in terms of verbal discourse and structural linguistics. Under psychoanalytic and feminist film theory, this subject finds itself, in Eric Santner's summation, in the guise not of a looking but a “speaking subject”, to be which means “to have already assumed one's fundamental vocation as survivor of the painful losses—the structural catastrophes—that accompany one's entrance into the symbolic order” (9). Moreover, this subject is placed into a perspective in which

[t]he violence of history grows out of a refusal or an inability on the part of the members of a society to assume the vocation of mourner-survivor of what might be called the violence of the signifier . . . [H]istorical suffering is believed to spring from a failure to tolerate the structural suffering—the always already shattered mirrors of the Imaginary—that scars one's being as a speaking subject. (9)

Of course in the psychoanalytic model that held sway in film theory into the 1980s, it is precisely narrative fiction film that offered perhaps the primary modality for the temporary reconstitution of these “shattered mirrors” of the psyche; a theory of film that, as Stephen Prince reminds us, depended on the (unconscious) suppression or ‘forgetting’ of the mimetic iconicity of the filmic image-as-sign (see “Discourse”).

In rehearsing this debate, I recognize the ongoing prevalence of the myth of cinema as language, which in turn rests (it seems to me) upon the notion that cinema is a form of *writing* (“cinematography”; see Doane 34) in the same sense that we speak of any writing system, phonetic or not, whether alphabetic, syllabic, ideogrammatic, hieroglyphic or other; in short, any system of material marks or traces in any medium that is recognizable as a writing system, regardless of whether or not it can be read as such—regardless of whether or not the reader-viewer is capable of moving from the act of ‘merely’ looking to the more complex act of actually decoding, *reading* the meaning (signifying content) ‘behind’ or beneath the words-as-signs themselves (signifier aspect) (De Certeau 92–93). In other words, just as it is true that someone with no knowledge of a given verbal language can recognize the attendant writing system as a species of writing without knowing what or even whether anything intelligible is written there, so (this argument runs) cinema is a ‘writing system’ so to speak underwritten by a historically determined set of assumptions about its quasi-universal legibility and translatability. In other words, we tend to view films under the assumption that we are also ‘reading’ them, while we may in fact be *mis*-reading them; in effect merely recognizing the status of the visual and

auditory signifiers as meaningful without necessarily successfully completing the interpretative task leading to some kind of temporary but contextually valid understanding of the filmic text as specific semiotic package. All of this is further complicated by the dual status of every cinematic image as both iconic and indexical sign.

To put this another way: as Derrida implies in *Archive Fever*, every instance of writing is a kind of "spectral response . . . informed by a *tekhnē* and inscribed in an archive . . . There would be neither history nor tradition nor culture without that possibility" (62–63). In other words, every such communicative act is a kind of 'posthumous' utterance, made possible by the grammatology of writing as what Derrida elsewhere calls "telecommunication" ("Signature" 311). Peter Brunette and David Wills contextualize this very usefully in their consideration of the relationship between Derridean deconstruction and film theory. In their summary of the position of writing relative to speech in Derrida's re-thinking of the Western metaphysical tradition,

the most important characteristic of writing . . . germane to all language, is the question of distancing, which brings with it the idea of mediation. This is most obvious in the case of the written, that form of language by definition enacted in the expectation of a certain absence. That is, the act of writing assumes (at least structurally) that writer and reader are involved in a *rendez-vous manqué*: they will not both be present at the same time, now or in the future, or there would be no need for writing. (Brunette and Wills 61)

This argument however requires the hypostatization of cinema's linguistic status—really a necessary *forgetting* of its visual-iconic status—and writing as the pre-eminent material modality of language: "[by] extension, writing comes to cover all forms of reproducible language, including those that leave traces, like a voice on a tape" (61)—and even speech, according to Derrida's grammatologic, "must also be defined as 'written.' The same can be said of film: to the extent that it is a language, it is to be considered a type of writing" (61). This "to the extent" rhetorically conceals a blindspot perhaps unavoidable in a text on Derrida written in the late 1980s. While acknowledging that contemporary (post-Metzian) film theory has acknowledged cinema's irreducibility to language, Brunette and Wills side-step the problems inherent in such a designation by staking their claim for cinema's *writtenness* in its dependency on a technological apparatus, "whether that apparatus is the camera itself, or, at the other end of the spectrum, the system by which the spectator puts desire into effect" (62). In either case, "the same structural result is achieved", but "[in] its offering of a certain appearance of fullness of vision, however, cinema-tography wants to forget that it is always written" (62). In parallel fashion, Brunette and Wills seem to want us to forget that cinematography is comprised of a series of visual

marks or signifiers whose ordering in a specific film is *not* contingent on a larger system equivalent to the Saussurean *langue*: a form of writing, in short, without the grounding grammar of language properly speaking.

COMMODIFICATION AND MEMORY

Among the other key aspects of Alison Landsberg's definition of prosthetic memories, she claims that: (1) they are interchangeable and exchangeable and therefore always already commodified; and (2) they "might be instrumental in generating empathy and . . . an ethical relation to the other" (Landsberg 149). Landsberg argues that

commodification, which is at the heart of mass cultural representations, is precisely what makes images and narratives widely available . . . to people who live in different places, come from different backgrounds, from different races and from different classes. Furthermore . . . commodities, and commodified images, are not capsules of meaning that spectators swallow whole, but rather the grounds upon which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed. (149)

It is difficult to not interpret this last point in the context of hegemony as control through *consent*; the tacit tolerance of 'counter-hegemonic' ideologies or actions in order to guarantee continued dominance of the ideals and values of those whose interests are served by the current system. This results in a subjectivity based not in a 'false' but a *dual* consciousness; in the ethical and social contradictions that arise from a collective disavowal of the individual's highly qualified form of agency.¹²

Cinema—to return to Landsberg's argument—is both a form of collective memory and a medium from which the viewer may glean information about the past—whatever its truth-value. Landsberg is concerned less with questions of historical 'accuracy' and more with the empowering potential for the individual of such an expanded *mnemic* dimension.

The cinema and the technologized mass culture that it helped inaugurate transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Thanks to these new technologies of memory on the one hand and commodification on the other, the kinds of memories that one has 'intimate', even experiential, access to would no longer be limited to the memories of events through which one actually lived. (Landsberg 146)

The problem with what might be termed the 'hegemony' of prosthetic memory, and the attitude toward history and pastness this implies, lies in the 'public' nature of the memory in question, which circulates widely:

according to Landsberg, such “prosthetic memories, especially those afforded by the cinema, ‘become part of one’s personal archive of experience’” (Burgoyne 224). Landsberg argues for the positive “political potential of prosthetic memory”, which

lies in its capacity to enable ethical thinking . . . [. . .] Prosthetic memories enable individuals to have a personal connection to an event they did not live through, to see through another’s eyes . . . to make possible alliances across racial, class and other chasms of difference. (Landsberg 156)

The theory of prosthetic memory implies that the individual has been ‘empowered’ (by technology) to simultaneously ‘witness’ and *experience* historically significant past events—but what kind of perspective on historical ‘truth’ does this provide? Or rather: how is such ‘truth’ reconfigured by this very model? After all, to ‘see through another’s eyes’, in cinematic terms, has never meant more than a visual-optical isomorphism (as explored in science fiction memory films like *Blade Runner* or *Minority Report* [2002]); to truly ‘feel’ or experience *as* or *in the place of* the other would entail a mode of technical mediation beyond the capacities of conventional cinema—unless it is acknowledged that the full range of human psycho-emotional experience is determined primarily by the bounds of the visual.

At the same time it is increasingly difficult to articulate a clearly personal or individual alternative perspective on memory. For example, José van Dijck’s notion of ‘mediated memory’ versus a so-called ‘living memory’ opposes an always already artificial (technologically enhanced) ‘social memory’ to the memory ‘embodied’ in those who lived through a particular experience (see Hoskins 3–4). As will be seen in Chapter 4, Koreeda’s *After Life* offers an illustration of this opposition through its staging of the differences among photograph, video and film: the video footage serves to ‘remind’ the subject of what they experienced or lived through, in order to prompt memory proper in all its emotional magnitude. The resulting memories-on-film are the product of group collaboration; these representations are ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ only insofar as they ‘feel’ that way to the subject—there is no way of gauging their objective accuracy or veracity *vis-à-vis* the ‘actual’ past, and perhaps no need for this anyway.

‘VIRAL MEMORY’: IMAGE AS COMMODITY FETISH

Douglas Rushkoff was one of several influential media analysts in the early to mid-1990s to write revealingly of what had come to be known as the “mediaspace” or “datasphere”—the “circulatory system for today’s information, ideas, and images” (4; 7), for most in the developed world the very space or medium of everyday life. Rushkoff claims that the

messages in our media come packaged as Trojan Horses. They enter our homes in one form, but behave in a very different way . . . once they are inside. This is not so much a conspiracy against the viewing public as it is a method for getting the mainstream media to unwittingly promote countercultural agendas that can actually empower the individuals who are exposed to them. (7)

The legacy of this utopian tendency in critical theories of popular culture and media is visible in Landsberg's prosthetic memory, on the one hand, and in theories of cultural memorialization and public archiving, such as Pierre Nora's notion of '*lieux de memoire*' *vis-à-vis* modern French history, on the other (see Frow 218–46). As I argue throughout this book, such complacency regarding the emancipatory capacity or potential of contemporary culture is no longer justified or even possible. The (potentially reductive) worst-case-scenario argument is as follows: within every seemingly transgressive or subversive image—and I highlight the image on purpose—is packaged the same basic message about the virtues of individualism, of ceaseless consumption and the poignant yearning for a once and future paradise of personal fulfillment. Excluded from this "capsule of meanings" is any self-consciousness of the ironies and contradictions inherent in a vast population of like-minded consumers, all pursuing the same self-serving, essentially anti-social goals. What is required first of all therefore (to follow this argument to its endpoint) is a clear-eyed appraisal of specific cultural forms with a critically skeptical awareness of received ways of interpreting or making sense of such texts and images, of the messages about identity or 'reality' they ostensibly convey. This has, in fact, been achieved, but without disturbing the general order of things; that is, with the result that such self-awareness is now part of the assemblage of meanings conveyed in new and emergent genres or modes, such as the 'smart film' (cf. Sconce; Sereda)—a hip and ironic postmodern successor to the more seriously self-reflexive modernist art film and its contemporary manifestations.

One of the general purposes of this book is to reflect upon the already historical phenomenon of the 'art film' in terms of its own evolution and in relation to other, more commercially successful or thematically 'accessible' cinematic modes—allowing for alternative ideas, approaches or models of subjectivity to infiltrate, infect and invigorate the conversation. The primary example, as noted, is the dialogically charged ethical model of the self-other relation, as sketched in the writings of Levinas and Derrida, which is already invoked by Landsberg in her theory of the operation of prosthetic memory as a particularly (potentially) efficacious form of collective memory in contemporary popular culture. The challenge for contemporary cultural producers—not to speak of the critic or consumer—is to determine how to produce images or texts with genuinely subversive or transgressive content—a viral "genetic code" (Rushkoff 9); in short, what

kinds of forms or modes could be found or developed to this end given the (postmodern) understanding of the impossibility of assuming a transcendent position of critical objectivity 'outside' the dominant structure,¹³ from which to make judgments and suggest alternatives? Or: to what extent do such forms emerge as it were 'unconsciously' or spontaneously, out of the Nile mud of a globalized cinematic discourse? There is space here to only begin to sketch some possible answers to these questions.

Rushkoff grounds the idea of 'media virus' in the ramifications of second-order representations of real-world events, or 'media events', insisting on the literal significance of their viral nature: "'media events' are 'media viruses' because they provok[e] real social change. [. . .] This term is not being used as a metaphor. These media events are not *like* viruses. They *are* viruses" (Rushkoff 9). I would qualify this to say that, in this instance, the distinction between metaphorical and literal (or 'real', although these are obviously not the same thing), is moot, in a rapidly digitizing world in which any absolute distinction between 'real' and 'virtual' or simulacral is long since elided (see e.g. Baudrillard). Belying this denial of metaphoricity, however, Rushkoff, referencing a late-'80s/early-'90s discourse of AIDS, asserts that, "if the host organism"—popular culture—has a weak immune system, its susceptibility to invasion is dramatically increased. It can't recognize that it is being attacked and can't mobilize its defenses" against the 'genetic coding' of the invading virus (9; 10). "The only 'intention' of the virus, if it can be said to have one, is to spread its own code as far and wide as possible" (9)—which sounds like a pointless exercise in evolutionary perpetuation of the species, until one remembers that contemporary popular culture operates according to precisely the same logic.

Rushkoff's non-metaphorical metaphor borrows its structure from sign theory: the material form or delivery mechanism for the media virus is its "protein shell" (10); the signifying content its "genetic coding"—and, as in poststructuralist revisions of Saussurean semiotics, it is the former, the signifier-aspect, that really counts in the cultural production and circulation of meanings: "the 'protein shell' of a virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even pop hero—as long as it can catch our attention" (10)—as long, I would add, as there is a material (visual, auditory, tactile) form to be apprehended by the viewer/reader/listener. This is after all the fundamental message of sign theory underpinning the academic disciplines under the banner of Cultural or Communication Studies: no signifier, no signified; no medium, no message; no image, no ideology. The other salient aspect of this model is also as old as the *épater les bourgeois* avant-garde impulse from the late nineteenth century on: "The more provocative an image or icon . . . the further and faster it will travel through the datasphere" (10). Shock and awe rule the day; novelty and the new are everything, depending on a short-circuiting of expectations and conventional responses, however temporary: "We do not recognize the image, so

we cannot respond automatically to it. Our interest and fascination is a sign that we are not culturally ‘immune’ to the new virus” (10).

From this basis in 1990s cultural theory I develop here a reading of a representative film—*The Ring*, Gore Verbinski’s 2002 remake of the Japanese film, *Ringu*¹⁴—in its intersections with contemporary (visual) media, in order to advance a theory of memory-as-virus, or ‘viral memory’. In doing so I go one step beyond Rushkoff’s analysis, extending his concept to embrace the larger paradox lurking in the background of his book: that the virus in question and the host organism it is attacking are ultimately one and the same thing.

“SHE NEVER SLEEPS:” *THE RING*

The Ring (2002; Gore Verbinski) is structured visually around a network of graphic motifs, all originating in the film-within-the-film on the videotape, as they ‘infect’ the minds and memories of those who watch the tape. Such graphic motifs exemplify the way in which perceptual (visual, auditory) elements can convey meanings that anticipate and underscore more obvious thematic meanings. The ‘source’ of these visual elements is the dead girl, Samara, who, in Julian Stringer’s phrase, “possesses the ability to transfer—or translate or adapt—her thoughts and memories on to videotape” (298).¹⁵ But the real significance of the film is on the meta-diegetic level of marketing and reception, at which it is possible to see the *Ring* phenomenon as a whole as a perfect example of viral media as cultural memory, with no traceable, authentic ‘source’; a pure memory-image without founding reality: “the *Ring* phenomenon is cross-cultural and multi-media. [...] It . . . comprises multiple texts—or more properly, a series of mutually penetrating inter-texts . . .” (Stringer 299). One of these inter-texts is the American re-make of the Japanese film, in relation to which Stringer asserts that “Hollywood continues to do what Hollywood has always done—namely, absorb world culture and sell it back to the rest of the world in a more expensive version”, which in the case of *The Ring* entails re-merchandising a story that has become a “global media franchise” (301): “[t]o explain and justify this particular aspect of the cultural politics of film adaptation, studio executives, filmmakers, publicists, and commentators alike . . . invest in notions of universal value” (301). Director Hideo Nakata explains the international commercial success of his film this way: “I think the fear of the unknown is universal”. [...] At the same time, however, culturally specific values are also attached to *Ring* and its remakes . . . [yet] it is noticeable that consensus has not been reached concerning the meaning of such values” (qtd. in Stringer 301). Consensus does seem to have been reached, however, among Asian critics of Hollywood’s process of adapting a Japanese *kaidan* (ghost story) by subjecting it to the narrative constraints of global transcultural commercial cinema pandering

to audiences demanding universally accessible themes, transparent motivations and narrative closure—a process in which “culturally specific values are perceived to be lost in translation” (302).

Apart from the nebulous category of ‘values’, a much better way of illustrating the contradictions and paradoxes of cultural difference *vis-à-vis* translatability is through specific examples of cinematic style—the actual visual and auditory elements identifiable within a specific film that lend it its unique look, tone, mood etc. For example, one of the most arresting visual aspects of the American *Ring* is the ubiquity of water in the mise-en-scene: in almost every outdoor shot either it is raining or the sea is visible; one of the signs of Samara’s presence is the water that uncannily appears indoors to flow along floors and down stairs—a material emanation it seems of the well, the “lonely place” in which Samara died and now dwells (Stringer 298). In Verbinski’s version the overabundance of water is justified by re-locating the story in the coastal Seattle, Washington, area, where it is often wet and rainy. In the original Japanese film, there is actually much less water onscreen, but it can be imputed all the same to culturally specific sources alien to the ‘average’ North American filmgoer; i.e. “the importance of water to the horror imagination of a nation prone to typhoon, tsunami, and other destructive natural phenomena” (Stringer 304). With *The Ring* sequels and other subsequent remakes of what Julian Stringer calls successful “‘J-horror’ . . . ‘cultural brands’” (297), all the water imagery now likely signifies for the non-Asian viewer as typical ‘J-horror’-adaptation imagery. But it is too easy to get distracted by the putative symbolic value of onscreen water. Water, after all, is often merely a medium, facilitating the transmission of something else. What can be underestimated is *The Ring*’s critique of the mass media via specific media forms; its incorporation of a very high degree of pseudo-critical self-reflexivity as a Hollywood studio picture. In this respect *The Ring* furthers the contradictions embodied in a film like David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (1999), the much-discussed example of a highly successful commercial film that nevertheless succeeds in appearing to present a scathing critique of the very sort of commodified rebellion it perfectly exemplifies.¹⁶ Far more explicitly than in *Fight Club*, however,

[In] a very literal sense, the medium that carries the *Ring* tale really is the message. . . . [R]ecall . . . the solution to the mystery of [Samara’s] videotape: in order to save your own life, you have to make a copy of the tape and then show it to someone else, thus allowing the virus successfully to pursue its mission of adapting and leaking out into the world in an ever-increasing spiral of malevolence. In other words, the *Ring* virus itself resembles the very processes of textual translation it so gleefully spawns. *Ring*, *The Ring*, and all the rest, provide a paradigmatic example of the kinds of cultural ‘retellings’ which [James] Naremore suggests have by now completely infiltrated contemporary media culture. (Stringer 303–4)

After helping him make his own copy of the tape, as an antidote to its deadly effects, Rachel (Naomi Watts) assures her son: “Don’t worry sweetie. You’re going to be ok”, to which Aiden (David Dorfman) responds, “What about the person we show it to? What happens to them?” (*Ring*). The cursed tape works by ‘infecting’ the viewer with its images: that the mysterious videotape kills anyone at all is thanks to the logic of the ‘virus.’ As Samara’s father, Richard Morgan (Brian Cox), remonstrates, “What is it with reporters? You take one person’s tragedy and force the world to experience it. You spread it like sickness” (*The Ring*).

‘Viral media’ today are exemplified by new media advertising techniques, especially as employed on the Internet; in other words, by *digital* technologies:

Viral marketing and viral advertising refer to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness, through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. ‘Viral advertising’ refers to the idea that people will pass on and share interesting and entertaining content; this is often sponsored by a brand, which is looking to build awareness of a product or service. These viral commercials often take the form of funny video clips, or interactive Flash games, an advergame, images, and even text. [...] The assumption is that if such an advertisement reaches a ‘susceptible’ user, that user will become ‘infected’ . . . and can then go on to infect other susceptible users. (Wikipedia)

It seems only appropriate to cite Wikipedia, an electronic reference source whose online information hegemony is almost entirely the result of the viral forces it so helpfully defines here. How does *The Ring* re-invent the conventional Hollywood horror film (offering at the same time a powerful challenge to the more recent ‘torture-porn’ horror sub-genre, exemplified in the *Saw* and *Hostel* franchises)? The answer lies in the tiny television screen reflected in the pupil of Rachel’s eye in the scene in the cabin where she first watches the fatal videotape. What is curious about *The Ring* as horror film is its critique of specific media technologies, especially television. This is a film all about the dangers and deadliness of *images*. As Aiden ominously informs his mother about Samara’s essential nature as horror film ‘monster’: “Don’t you understand, Rachel? She never sleeps”. At the conclusion Aiden asks: “It’s going to keep going, isn’t it? She’ll never stop” (*Ring*).

As in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the curious thing about the mise-en-scene—indeed the world—of *The Ring* is the anachronistic privileging of analog over digital media or technologies. Rachel takes her own picture with a digital camera, and in another scene does ‘research’ by utilizing a web search engine—but it is the telephone, television and of

course videotape that are fetishized. Telephones ring with a portentous suddenness (as in Lynch's *Lost Highway*, or *The Matrix*); besides transmitting images television sets are 'weaponized', knocking people out; from Rachel's bird's-eye-perspective the camera scans neighboring high-rise windows, in which we see the inhabitants watching television as they go about their daily routines—viral culture, indeed. For its part, videotape is physically stretched, distorting the image and revealing heretofore unseen information, in a curious variation of *Blade Runner*'s self-reflexive amplification of Benjamin's 'optical unconscious'. Beyond these examples, though, the cursed film-within-the-film is a litany of grainy pixilated black-and-white video imagery, replete with artifacts of its own production, both material and stylistic. As Noah (Martin Henderson) remarks after first viewing the tape: "very student film", underscoring *The Ring*'s own degree of ironic self-awareness. The tape also intertextualizes a specific film history, almost parodically evoking the self-conscious modernist avant-gardism of the famous opening montage of Bergman's *Persona* (1966), with its shocking surrealist imagery, 'irrational' juxtapositions and non-narrative disjunctive editing.

COMMODITY FETISHISM AND THE 'MEMORY CRISIS'

Like its Japanese model, *The Ring* opens on a dark and stormy night with a scene in which two bored schoolgirls compare urban legends. Katie, the first victim, remarks: "I hate television. . . . You know I hear there's so many magnetic waves traveling through the air because of TV and telephones . . ." (*Ring*). But television and videotape are not the only technologies or media forms critiqued in the film. After all, we first hear about the tape through the urban myth Katie's friend Becca is prompted to relate:

Have you heard about this videotape that kills you when you watch it? [. . .] You start to play it, and it's like somebody's nightmare. Then suddenly, this woman comes on, smiling at you . . . seeing you, through the screen. And as soon as it's over, your phone rings. Someone knows you've watched it. And what they say is 'you will die in seven days'. (*The Ring*)

After viewing the tape, the viewer is 'infected' and doomed to die—but first she must languish for seven days in a limbo of dread.¹⁷ In the meantime, the victim's social identity undergoes a strange transformation. Those (including Rachel) who have watched the tape then appear in photographs or in CCTV footage with distorted faces, as if their imminent 'existential' transformation were proleptically mirrored in their (photographically mediated) outward appearance.

Ultimately, as in an otherwise very different film like *Fight Club*, the critique of the mass media in *The Ring* connects to a larger—and deeply cynical—critique of contemporary consumer culture:

[A] consumer culture is a commodity culture . . . a culture in which commodities are central to cultural meaning. Commodities are things that are bought and sold in a social system of exchange. The concept of commodity culture is intricately allied with the idea that we construct our identities, at least in part, through the consumer products that inhabit our lives. (Sturken and Cartwright 124)

In late modernity the simulacral image—the representation without referent—is the commodity *par excellence*:

Baudrillard has suggested that the late nineteenth century saw the emergence of a commodity culture in which the distinction between objects and images eroded. Instead of a ‘real’ world of objects to which advertisements refer, we see the emergence of a culture in which the image itself is what we live through and consume. (Sturken and Cartwright 227–28)

The Ring can therefore also be read as a dark *satire* of consumer culture, exploiting the conventions of horror film to critique the contemporary image-based culture—especially in terms of the impact of the *mass media* on everyday life, with an ironically self-reflexive focus on older, analog technology. Today we can say that every commodity is a fetish, the second part of Marx’s phrase a silent presence, not needing to be spoken. By the same token, each iteration of the Freudian fetish implies the commodification that is the potential fate of every object. Freud and Marx, psychoanalysis and political economy, come together in the contradictions of late capitalism that are nothing but the collectively unconscious “blindspots” of an entire society (Mulvey, “Fetishism” 8).¹⁸ In modern culture the ‘fetish’ mystifies the relation between the object or referent and its representation or sign; in postmodern terms the fetish mystifies the relation between signifier and signified. In the aesthetic realm, this is a shift from reference to signification: in Marxian terms this implies a different ‘superstructure’ in relation to a different ‘base’, reflecting the concomitant shift in the economic realm from industrial to finance and information capitalism (4). ‘Commodity fetishism’

refers to the process by which mass-produced goods are emptied of the meanings of their production (the context in which they were produced and the labor that created them) and then filled with new meanings in ways that both mystify the product and turn it into a fetish object. (Sturken and Cartwright 61)

Psychoanalytically speaking, the fetish *in general* is “taken up in two chains of meaning”: it is *both* metonym *and* metaphor, index *and* icon, absence *and* presence. Alluding “metonymically . . . to the contiguous place of the lack . . . and metaphorically, according to Freud’s conception, it is an equivalent of the penis, as the primordial displacement of the look aimed at replacing an absence by a presence” (Metz, “Photography” 86). For the purposes of my argument I define fetish in a ‘primordial’ pre-Freudian and -Marxian sense as an (unconscious) substitution that conceals a *lack*—where the latter signifies *both* desire *and* absence; for example, sexual and commodity fetishes, as well as anthropological and religious idols—but the ultimate instance is (and has always been) the word, sign or image itself. No matter the context, what is lacking and/or desired is the ‘*real thing*’—always already a ‘patriarchist’ and ‘phallogocentric’ construct (see Jay 493–542); therefore (it goes without saying), whether in terms of Freudian penis or Lacanian *phallus*, the object of this discussion is by definition what Metz calls “the fetishistic nature of *male* desire” (“Photography” 89).¹⁹ (We see this Mulveyan fetish exemplified in *The Ring* whenever Naomi Watt’s body is photographed or framed in such a way, in Mulvey’s famous formulation, as to “freeze the flow of the action in moments of erotic contemplation” [Mulvey, “Pleasure” 488]—moments of defamiliarization long since naturalized and re-familiarized in Hollywood’s symbolic economy.)

As Mulvey argues, Freud’s and Marx’s theories of the fetish are each reducible to a theory of the sign. Marx is explicit about this, characterizing the commodity fetish as a “social hieroglyphic” (see Marx 167), just as he invokes religious fetishism, in order to describe the transformation of the object into a sign, heralding the larger, later transformation of the relation between economic base and cultural superstructure to a second-order relation of *cultural* production (heralded by Adorno and Horkheimer in their 1944 essay on “The Culture Industry”). The commodity-sign *qua* sign is subject to the failure of not reference but signification:

For Marx, the value of a commodity resides in the labor power of its producer. If this labor power could ever inscribe itself indexically on the commodity it produces, if it could leave a tangible mark of the time and skill taken in production, there would be no problem. But the index, the sign based on direct imprint, fails. Value has to be established by exchange. (“Pleasure” 9)

The traces of production are forgotten, or effaced altogether (10). On the one hand, labour-based exchange value is displaced by the abstract symbolic value of money. On the other hand (echoing Guy Debord²⁰), Mulvey argues that “capitalism resurfaces the commodity as image. [. . .] Commodity fetishism triumphs as spectacle. As spectacle, the object becomes image and belief is secured by an erotic, rather than a religious aura” (“Pleasure” 10). Marx’s figure of the “social hieroglyphic”, as rich as it is,

tends to distract from the truth that the commodity-sign in question here is the cinematic image, which is both indexical and iconic. Mulvey implies that it is a ‘hieroglyphic’ only metaphorically, but I would argue that, as second-order hieroglyph, this image signifies indexically as the trace of the other-as-object, having passed before the camera: this other, which, in classical and much post-classical film narrative, is subsumed into the self in its illusory efforts at self-consolidation and -totalization. In the art film counter-tradition, however, there is the possibility that the onscreen other retains its alterity—at the price of the failure of ‘closure’ or narrative resolution, and of the identificatory mechanisms on which classical cinema’s preferred or ‘proper’ reception depends.

Like the trace, in both quotidian and Levinasian senses, Freud’s theory of the fetish depends upon the logic of classical sign theory, in that the fetish stands for something that is no longer there, pointing to the underlying fetishistic character of *every* sign (“Pleasure” 9). But the fetish-as-sign is more complex still. “The fetish object acts as a ‘sign’ in that it substitutes for the thing thought to be missing. The substitute also functions as a mask, covering over and disavowing the traumatic sight of nothing” (11). In other words, Freud’s fetish connects to memory through trauma: “the fetish allows access to its own cause. It acknowledges its own traumatic real and may be compared to a red flag, symptomatically signalling a site of psychic pain” (“Pleasure” 6). “For Freud, the fetish object also commemorates. It represents a memorial, marking the point of lack (for which it both masks and substitutes) and ensuring that the fetish structure . . . includes, through its very presence, a residual knowledge of its origin” (11). Thus the fetish, as the (material) presence of an absence, the memory of the (primal, originary) traumatic event, “fails to lose touch with its original traumatic real and continues to refer back to the moment in time to which it bears witness, to its own historical dimension” (11). Thus the fetish-as-sign points back, *en-abime*, to a second-order traumatic event: the moment of the loss of the real, and the original traumatic effacement of that loss.

This connection between the two paradigms, political-economic and psychoanalytic, comes down to the observation that under late capitalism every object is a commodity, every commodity a sign (Baudrillard’s “object-sign”), and the image (as sign) the pre-eminent commodity within a spec[tac]ular society in which the greatest daily challenge—the key to what we might call ‘healthy’ consumption—is the successful evaluation and decoding of the proliferation of signs and images. This is a task requiring a special kind of literacy dependent on a capacious artificial memory; the ability to navigate a massive shared intertextual matrix. In other words, just as Baudrillard’s simulacra *precede* any ‘real’ or original referent, the semiotic and cultural levels precede the economic and psychoanalytic in the grounding of a social identity that in turn precedes the individual (see Baudrillard). This is because—to appropriate the radical re-reading of sign

theory explicit in thinkers as diverse as Derrida and Bakhtin—the sign itself is irreducibly *social* in its value and in its functioning.²¹

In *The Ring* Samara's videotape itself can be seen as a perverse *anti*-commodity fetish-object, focusing the film's critique of consumer desire and identity formation under late capitalism. In the society of the spectacle, the *image* is the ultimate commodity fetish, an object invested with subjective meaning through which social relations are mediated, identities are formed, desire is satisfied and pleasure gained. "Commodity fetishism can be seen as an inevitable outcome of mass production and distribution of goods to many different consumers. It demands however, that labor and working conditions are made *invisible* to the consumer" (Sturken and Cartwright 61). Echoing Terdiman's analysis of nineteenth-century modernity under bourgeois capitalism, Mark Kingwell puts this into the context of the impact of economic globalization upon individual ethical awareness:

What is deeply worrying here is not just the unconscious (or even, sometimes, conscious) acceptance of a brutalizing economic determinism, but also the concomitant modification of attitude . . . by which we lose any connection whatsoever between the objects purchased and the facts of their production. The shoes are just too cool or . . . the brand identity just too sharp for me to spend too much time obsessing over how these fetish objects made their way to me. Globalization of the labour market doesn't just allow this disconnection, it demands it. We must *remember always to forget* the conditions of the creation of consumer and cultural goods, because otherwise we might become disgusted with our own needs and desires, and what is necessary to satisfy them. (63)

Kingwell's critique of consumer culture updates the key Marxian notion of *reification*.

Commodity fetishism operates through *reification*, a process by which abstract ideas are assumed to be real and concrete. In advertising this means that objects (commodities) acquire *human* qualities (are perceived as sexy, romantic, or cool, for instance), and human relations can become increasingly *objectified* and devoid of emotional meaning. (Sturken and Cartwright 61)

As noted previously, this perpetuates the second-order 'crisis of memory' constitutive of life in late modernity.

The Ring centers on a mysterious videotape whose images have a paranormal origin, in which the conventional (i.e. 'natural') relation between image and referent is inverted: in the world of the film, rather than reflecting or reproducing objects in the world, the tape's images themselves *produce* 'real objects', like the fly that is simultaneously in and on the videotape.

And, just as images become ‘real things’ so human beings are transformed into images in the process of ‘reification’ which, as a peculiar form of mimesis as “ironic replication”, is always accompanied by horror; what John Freccero calls “mimesis with a vengeance” (102). To quote Godard’s *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her*: “Dead objects are still alive. Living persons are often already dead”.

THE ‘REDEMPTION’ OF THE IMAGE-AS-FETISH

The climactic scene of Samara’s return exemplifies the film’s self-reflexive critique of the mode of reification unique to later or postmodernity, in which the object is transformed into a subject—‘subjectivated’—in a uniquely visual sense. This returns us to the notion of the television looking back at the viewer, in the urban myth recounted in the film’s opening scene. As noted in Chapter 1, the filmic image in its preferred reception reproduces some of the aspects of the Benjaminian ‘aura’, whose waning in the modern period has been in direct proportion to the advent of the exchange relation. In his 1939 essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, Benjamin defines ‘aura’

as the ‘unique manifestation of a distance’, that which is essentially ‘inapproachable’ and can therefore not be retained or grasped completely or immediately. Epistemologically aura cannot be grasped completely by consciousness, but remains unique, ‘lost to memory that seeks to retain [it]’. It is only through an unconscious memory that we can approach it, as something that resonates with our consciousness without becoming fully conscious. Aura makes objects appear to be subjects, returning our gaze: ‘To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return’. (Martin 21)

Postmodernity compounds the uniqueness of the auratic fetish-object by privileging the image over all other objects as ultimate commodity form. *The Ring*, which is symptomatic in this regard, goes one step further by presenting an image of objects that actively, uncannily, return the viewer’s gaze (Easthope 130–31): we look, with the protagonist, at the ubiquitous television monitor in the film and watch as it does not simply look back but *produces* Samara as spectral image-as-agent: the prototype of a long line of villainous character-functions, whose only modality is to act, always powerfully and decisively, often violently, the ‘horror’ of Samara’s appearance in the climactic scene of Noah’s death derives from the difference between the grainy VHS black-and-white of her world, which is retained as she spills over into the full-colour, ‘real’ world of the film. In concert with the stuttered digital editing, this produces a powerful hybrid image.

Stewart Martin’s analysis of Benjamin’s aura allows us to gauge the thrust of the media critique purveyed in *The Ring* (and other, comparable



Figure 3.3 *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002).

cultural texts). Benjamin's focus is on aura in its decline, which is the result of mass-reproducibility (as in the title of his 1936 essay):

[m]ass reproduction of identical copies destroys the uniqueness of aura and, by implication, its inapproachability; it becomes graspable by the perceiver not just as property, but as something consciously retained. [. . .] Destruction rather than completion is the nature of [the 'homogenous empty time' of alienated labour under industrialized capitalism]. [T]he shock of the new does not achieve self-presence but the repetition of the same, concealed under the illusion of progress. (Martin 21)

Over against the "redeemed time of aura," this is for Benjamin "the time of hell"; what he calls, "in less theological terms . . . 'now-time' [*Jetztzeit*]" (Martin 21). Jürgen Habermas describes "Benjamin's concept of the *Jetztzeit*, of the present as a moment of revelation; a time in which splinters of a messianic presence are enmeshed" (1751). Martin identifies "the phenomenon of newness and what happens when it becomes an over-determining structure of cultural experience", one aspect of the problem of the commodification of the 'redemptive potential' of the image:

[the] temporality of the new dissolves the promise of the new as something different into the always-the-same, transforming history into a linear passage of destruction. [. . .] Hence Benjamin's angel of history: its head is turned away from the future since heaven is now present only at the beginning as something lost, transformed into an apocalypse that blows outwards in an irresistible force, and without redemption the passage of time is experienced as perpetual destruction. (Martin 21)

To follow Martin's reading is to re-think the relation of the angels in *Wings of Desire* to the 'angel of history' in Benjamin's Ninth Thesis: to the extent that Wenders's angels view history as a ceaseless unfolding, with negation (death, war, destruction) as a necessary condition or driving force, the film upholds the worldview offered at the opening of Goethe's *Faust*, part I, where Mephistopheles describes himself as "Part of that force which would / Do ever evil, and does ever good. / [. . .] The spirit which eternally denies!" (33 ll. 1335–38). But Martin reads Benjamin's angel as a more radically *modern* witness to the catastrophe of history without hope of redemption. This difference no doubt owes something to the fact that Benjamin never saw the war's conclusion with the (at least temporary) defeat of fascism, while *Wings of Desire* is clearly marked by its historical moment, looking back melancholically on the aftermath of World War II in Germany, while evincing uncertainty about the imminent future in a Berlin still divided by the Cold War.

Martin pinpoints the structuring paradox of Benjamin's critique of modernity: "auratic forms . . . enable the relation to unconscious memory needed for experience to be achieved, while aura is destroyed by the modern culture of shock" (21). What Martin, through Benjamin, achieves here is a critical analysis of why the shock element in contemporary popular culture—appropriated from the 1960s countercultural inheritance from the early twentieth-century avant-garde—has lost its power to shock by becoming normative (21). To put it another way: the more the 'revolutionary spirit' of the 1960s took hold in mainstream society, the faster it was commodified by the business and marketing sector. This analysis also lends weight to Frederic Jameson's contention regarding historical amnesia as constitutive of postmodern consciousness, in that the decline of 'shock-value' is a direct correlative of the decline of collective memory around the historical referent; in other words, a direct, albeit 'unconscious', denial of the iconicity of the image in question (cf. Sontag, *Photography* 19–21). And, as Martin goes on to point out, Benjamin's notion of a historically inflected unconscious contrasts with Freud's "resolutely ahistorical" unconscious, making Benjamin a much more self-aware "theorist of modern experience" than Freud (21). This 'unconscious memory' is also in line with Proust's 'involuntary memory', which, unlike Freud's notion of repression, is able to release its contents to a conscious (and pleasurable) purview via the

intercession of the precipitating factor which I have labelled the 'madeleine-object'. Only in Benjamin this object is problematized in terms of its 'cult value' as always already vanishing auratic object, giving way before the commodity fetish proper as material form of the exchange relation. Therefore, just as Benjamin's unconscious memory (needless to say, perhaps) is more historically aware than Freud's, it is also more politically aware than Proust's:

The immense . . . work of recollection required for Proust [sic] to 'experience' his childhood, is revealed to be a distinctively modern art of memory, which seeks to generate experience through the convergence of voluntary and involuntary memory, without the traditional forms of auratic attention; the modern individual compensating for the loss of collective memory with the intensive labour of self-reflection. (Martin 22)

In other essays, like "The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility" (building on Siegfried Kracauer's work [see e.g. "Cult of Distraction"]), Benjamin extends his analysis of the decline of aura to descry a "new mode of attention: distraction" (see "Work of Art" 119). Thus—in Martin's reading—Benjamin (among others) gives voice to the early twentieth-century extension of the 'memory crisis' whose initial symptoms Terdiman diagnoses in the literature of nineteenth-century metropolitan life.

Memory, at least according to its *prima facie* function as a faculty for retaining the past, faces a crisis within [the modern] culture of the new. Modernity destroys memory while making it essential. The new threatens to negate memory, but it is only through retention of the past that the new is recognized as new. [. . .] The overwhelming proliferation of the new and the development of new memory technologies with superhuman powers of storage and recall, renders memory an embattled, personalized faculty, ironically reposing to the active forgetting of the new in order to preserve itself. (Martin 20)

The reproducibility and commodifiability of even the iconoclastic modernist artwork destroy its indexical relation to origin, to a specific time and place, to the artist's or writer's hand. The Romantic cult of the artist gives way to the commodity fetish, concealed by the myths of uniqueness, authenticity and originality. For Benjamin, "the ceremonial, ritual or cult value of an auratic work is replaced by its 'exhibition value', in which the absorption of the spectator into the work is inverted, with the spectator absorbing the work" (Martin 22). In this light *The Ring* provides a spectacularly self-reflexive updating of a motif found in David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1982: the same year as *Blade Runner*), in which this process is re-inverted, with the protagonist-viewer being literally absorbed into

the apparatus (in the case of *Videodrome*, the television).²² In *The Ring*, by contrast, the difference between image and ‘reality’ is broken down (within the diegetic world, at least), but in a way that economically combines both the paranormal (and therefore uncanny or inexplicable) and the technological, and therefore ‘believable’. At the same time, that other distinction, between videographic-televisual and properly filmic image is upheld—a curiously nostalgic touch at a time (2002) when this very distinction was rapidly becoming moot with recent advances in HD video technology.

CONCLUSION

We have considered how they are disseminated, and how they kill, but *where* do the images on the tape originate? Rachel asks Aiden if Samara talks to him; he replies: “No, she shows me things.” In an embedded flashback (in the form of a videotaped interview that Rachel discovers at the Morgan house), a psychologist suggests, “Let’s talk about the pictures. How did you make them?” Samara: “I don’t . . . make them. I see them. Then, they just . . . are” (*The Ring*). Samara seems to have the ability to produce images through a kind of ‘paranormal videography’, or “projected thermography”. As Paul Burgoyne puts it, a principal effect of the mass media is “the *burning in* of memories” in the form of images—the twin towers on fire; hooded Abu Ghraib prisoners—that haunt us ever after (Burgoyne 226). *The Ring* takes this idea seriously, literalizing its catechrestic dimension through the spectral images, the traces of her own anger, which Samara burns onto photographic paper as well as human skin.

The analogous idea underpins the whole narrative of a contemporaneous studio film, Spielberg’s *Minority Report* (2002), in whose future world (Washington, D.C., in 2054 CE) the special police department of ‘Pre-Crime’ depends on “optical thermography”: the pseudo-scientific process by which violent crimes are ‘downloaded’ and projected for all to see before they happen in the form of the decidedly art-cinematic visions of gifted ‘Precognitives’, who live their lives in a womb-like tank, their drug-induced stupor supposedly protecting them from the knowledge which it is no one’s prerogative to possess. In the words of the technician charged with their care, “We see what they see”. And, even though “[t]he Precogs are never wrong”, sometimes they disagree, producing the “minority report” of the film’s title. This report or version stays ‘inside’ the ‘Precog’ who dreamed it, like a ‘memory’ of a *vision* of an alternative future; i.e. *more* than a mere ‘echo’ or *deja vu* of the consensual version/vision of the crime that will be committed. From this basis one might ask: is not memory (in contemporary visual terms) *always* a case of *deja vu*, of the (always) ‘already-seen’? In its most salutary sense, this is the premise of

Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory as a mode of collective memory constituted in and by the shared visual media, especially pop culture narratives, which we all consume every day.

Recall here Pierre Nora's claim that

[m]odern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. [...] The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs. (237)

For Nora, in a conclusion reminiscent of Plato, 'modern memory' delegates "to the archive the *responsibility* of remembering" (237). In her defence of the authenticity of individual memory, Susan Sontag outlines the danger presented by the irreducible role of iconic—or *clichéd*-photographic images in ideology as *idée retrouvée*, "the pictures that lock the story in our minds": "Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings" (*Pain* 86). In Sontag's schema, while "[n]arratives can make us understand" something, "[p]hotographs do something else: they haunt us" (89). To quote W. G. Sebald (whom Sontag invokes here): "they are ever returning to us, the dead" (*The Emigrants* 23), in the form of photographs whose uncanny effect is as much the occlusion of recollection as its prompting. What we see in the decidedly pop-cultural example of *The Ring* series is the intrusion of 'paranormal' images that do not block so much as *replace* proper or 'authentic' memory (whatever that is) with something terrifying and, ultimately, fatal—an image whose danger inheres not in its foreign or alien qualities but in its very familiarity and infinite reproducibility.

There is something deeply strange about the cursed videotape as an artifact of analog technology. As Noah explains, the tape has no 'control track'—and this is impossible: "It's like a person being born without fingerprints" (*The Ring*); i.e. without characteristics that identify time, place or *mode* of origination. Nor is there any trace of the means of production *within* the film itself. In an analogy with the (possibly) visible self-portrait of Van Eyck in the mirror within his Arnolfini Wedding portrait: as Noah observes, the camera should be visible in the straight-on shot of the mirror—a shot that in fact does *not* appear in the version of the film that Rachel watches. In other words, the tape was not produced by any known, conventional, technical means. With respect to the status of the film-within-the-film as a *non-narrative* series of pseudo-cinematic images, this implies: (1) that the tape is impossible, it has no origin; and (2) that its images are 'pure image', image as 'real thing'. There appears to be no referent *prior* to the image; in a sense,

there is no referent, *only* image. This seems ironic, given that in photographic and/or cinematic terms, the existence of such ‘pure’ images is possible only now, in the digital age—and yet this is an *analog* videotape. But this irony is in fact the result of the means of representation employed by the filmmakers. But the film goes further—the tape *itself* has no origin; therefore: it is *either* an ‘original’ in an impossible sense (without origin), *or* it is a ‘copy’ in an impossible sense, where there is no original to be copied. Therefore the images on the tape can be seen as special examples of Baudrillard’s *simulacra*: copies without originals, images without referents (see *Simulacra and Simulation*). *The Ring* thus appears to manifest in its horror film diegesis the commodity fetish’s crucial self-effacement as sign:

Any indexical trace of the producer or the production process is wiped out, in a strange reenactment of the failure of the workers’ labor power to stamp itself on its products as value. Any ghostly presence of labor that might haunt the commodity is cancelled by the absolute pristine newness and the never-touched-by-hand packaging that envelops it.
 (“Pleasure” 11)

But is this literally true of the cursed videotape either within the film or in the film’s formal dimension? As she herself admits, after all, Laura Mulvey’s description of Hollywood style, characterized “around the erasure of its own mechanics of production” (“Pleasure” 12), refers only to the mid-century classical period, and even then may be too reductive. Since the late 1960s at least (speaking of American cinema), “a politically based desire to demystify the magical sheen of the screen”, to defamiliarize and ‘alienate’ the spectator *a la* Brecht, arose in a new, at first avant-garde, aesthetic, “organized around the visible presence of an artisanal author and acknowledgment of cinema’s mechanical processes” (12). Here my argument diverges from Mulvey’s in that, since the early 1990s, when her article was published, Hollywood’s—indeed capitalism’s—propensity to appropriate, co-opt, recycle, repackage and commodify has become only more sophisticated and all-embracing. I state the obvious, then, in pointing out that the radical political impulse of a politically modernist film aesthetic in the 1960s and ’70s has itself been domesticated and neutralized through the commodification of the innovative visual-stylistic forms—many adopted directly from European art cinema—developed in this period. As elaborated in the previous chapter, it is at this juncture that recourse to Bordwell’s notion of ‘intensified continuity’ style is justified as a way of accounting for the ongoing transformation of contemporary cinema (not just in America or Europe but internationally) at both the stylistic and thematic levels. This will be taken up with a specific filmic example in Chapter 5.



Figure 3.4 *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002).

4 The Eye of History

Memory, Surveillance and Ethicality in the Contemporary Art Film

In the Orphic underworld the dead must avoid the springs of oblivion; they must not drink the waters of Lethe, but on the contrary drink from the fountain of memory, which is a source of immortality.

—Jacques Le Goff

What wouldn't we do not to lose what's ours?

—*Cache*

INTRODUCTION: TRANSPERSONAL MEMORY

As noted in the Introduction, my argument here discerns a shift that ultimately inverts Deleuze's causal model of the movement-image giving way to the time-image in the postwar art film: a shift in the postwar period and after from what Deleuze calls a cinema of agency (*d'actant*) to a "cinema of the see-er" (*de voyant*) (*Cinema 2 2*), and then to a cinema of the see-er who is also (at the same time) an agential actor. On this basis, this chapter explores the three-way intersection of ethics, visuality and memory in contemporary cinema through a comparison of three films in their relation to, on the one hand, postmodern popular culture, and, on the other, the more rarified modernist ethical and aesthetic traditions that continue to determine the value of an 'art film', one of whose extra-cinematic functions is to resist commodification. David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), Hirokazu Kore-edo's *After Life* (1998) and Michael Haneke's *Cache* (2005) are three diverse examples of the contemporary art film—a category whose critical value I have already addressed at some length in the previous chapters. Each also represents a different response to received cinematic tradition: genre, form and degree of innovation. Each can be (and has been) read in both narrowly literal and allegorical senses. These films are linked, on the diegetic level, by the thematization of a highly public form of 'memory' in the videotape records of everyday life that in each story arrive unbidden and without discernible provenance. The European and American examples are similar in their exploitation of the uncanniness of the very existence of such tapes, constituting in each case a kind of spec(tac)ular

prosthetic ‘conscience’ for the protagonist in question, goading him to acts of increasing rashness and even violence. In Kore-edo’s film, by contrast, the video archive of one man’s exceedingly uneventful life is rationalized within the otherworldly metaphysics of the eschatological waystation of the English title. *After Life* performs a double critique of film as a medium of representing ironically quotidian ‘metaphysical’ realities and of memory as *exteriorized* interiority. This complex self-reflexivity is foregrounded in the film’s privileging within its diegetic world of the cinematic apparatus and its traditional modes of production and consumption. Most importantly, all three films are linked in that in each the enigmatic videotapes prompt the protagonist to ‘remember’ something he had repressed or simply forgotten, or that may or may not have actually happened.

In what follows I examine the representation of memory and memory as representation between the poles of surveillance and spectacle, of objectified and agential subject of the gaze. My argument here is broadly synthetic, concerned as much with questions of *form*—the peculiarly cinematic *manner* in which three such diverse examples appear to overlap in their treatment of similar themes—as with culturally specific issues of narrative content. My argument is therefore both synchronic and diachronic—although ‘history’ is of central concern, whether as master narrative, literary genre or either complement or synonym of memory. The chapter title, ‘the eye of history’, refers to ‘history’ in its status as objective standard or measure of ‘truth’: of the events of human life recorded in narratives sealed with the imprimatur of historiography. The ‘eye’ of the title is a visual metaphor exploiting the cliche of history as the ‘conscience’ of a people or nation; history as omnivoyant eye and collective memory. In the following analyses I therefore explore the ethical and technological implications of this rhetorical device that is itself emblematic of deep-seated cultural prejudices addressed by all three films in very different fashions.

SURVEILLANCE, IDENTITY, ETHICALITY

How we *think* about ourselves today literally coincides with how we *see* ourselves; how we *represent* ourselves to ourselves and to others, but also how ‘we’ represent—or fail to represent—the other. This constellation of vision, representation and epistemology is well illustrated in the genre of ‘surveillance film’, whose resurgence in both Hollywood and European cinema extends the meta-cinematic legacy of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954) and Coppola’s *The Conversation* (1974), while responding to the seemingly unique conditions of a post-9/11 world.¹ What is the broader context for the contemporary manifestation of this most cinematic of sub-genres?² In the various critiques of late twentieth-century, ocularcentric, global culture, as the complement to its spectacular or simulacral aspect, a recurring theme addresses the regime of ever-more pervasive surveillance,

and the perpetual panoptic paranoia to which it gives rise (see Debord; Foucault; Crary; Jay). Both Foucault and Debord, from opposing perspectives, militate against what Martin Jay calls the “hegemony of the eye”, the cultural ocularcentrism discussed in the Introduction (see Jay 383–84). Despite manifest ideological differences, both of these thinkers share a generally critical attitude toward a modern world organized around the privileging of *vision*—a critique which in itself is not so much anti-visual as it is opposed to a certain *ethical valuation* of visuality (Jay 384). Indeed, it is possible to argue that postmodern subjectivity is characterized by this panoptic paranoia in the experience of viewing: the fear of being seen and/or of being able to see, *all the time*, where one is *both* object and subject of the gaze—the epistemological position *par excellence* for members of a society determined by transnational capitalism and its visual-spatial structures of dominance and control.³ This is borne out by the latest cinematic manifestations of this theme: e.g. *Enemy of the State* (1998; Tony Scott), an updating of *The Conversation*; *Red Road* (2006; Andrea Arnold); *Unrequited Love* (2006; Christopher Petit); *Disturbia* (2007; D. J. Caruso), a remake of *Rear Window*.

Questions of morality or ‘ethicality’ arise readily from a consideration of any society of surveillance, as, in an often spectacular reflexivity, it represents itself to itself, its modes of representation generally inadequate to the task of providing a voice or face for a radically *other* other. The ongoing presence of such ethical concerns derives in part from Western culture’s historical dependency on a hermeneutic model that exploits the tripartite eschatological structure of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. Contemporary culture—the narratives we live by, to paraphrase Nietzsche—continues to be pervaded by the domesticated and denatured tropes and topoi of a Christian tradition that has long since lost its hegemonic legitimacy in that portion of the world whose media tend to determine the ideologies, values and identities of much of the rest of the world. The relatively recent invention of Purgatory in the twelfth century (see Le Goff 73), especially, renders it particularly appropriate for cinematic allegories of modern or postmodern subjectivity. Versions of ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’ operate in contemporary popular culture in a very powerful but entirely metaphorical or even allegorical fashion in the representation of various conditions of this-worldly life. But a kind of purgatorial space-time, with its attendant epistemology, lends itself readily to a description of life in a secular and ocularcentric modern world in which the discourse of (the ever-present possibility of) redemption dominates—especially in Hollywood film—as a vague but persistent source of ‘hope’. At the same time, the opposing question of the conspicuous *absence* of redemption is historically relegated to the realm of modernist high culture—literature and the traditional visual arts, but also art cinema. As noted in Chapter 1, redemption retains its general cultural significance but is translated within a mass-cultural context into the narrative of an ‘escape’ from time. This includes, variously, escape from both one’s

individual ‘history’ and an objective ‘History’ as narratives of a collective fate. Seen from the opposite vantage point, however—that of a modernist, avant-garde or otherwise counter-hegemonic tradition—this seemingly positive desire to escape time, which is at bottom a function of the erotic drive, the desire to escape death, ironically inverts into its complement: *thanatos*, the desire *for* death. How better to transcend time’s exigencies, to find ‘deliverance’ from desire, from (in a Levinasian phrase) responsibility to the other?

My introduction here of the tripartite model of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory is justified by the significance of memory and forgetting in the temporal-spatial visions of the underworld or afterlife offered in classical literature, and as a way of re-focusing the notion of a ‘psycho-katabasis’ (elaborated in the earlier chapters), as well as the more general critique running throughout of a late-modern culture whose ethical and epistemological dimensions alike are predicated upon visual images. This eschatological metaphor, then, is a means of organizing and clarifying my comparison of these films on the basis of their respective deployment of memory as the ground for a cinematic aesthetic that tells us as much about *how* ‘we’ remember as it does about how memory gets represented. In this view, I read Lynch’s idiosyncratic approach to narrative in *Lost Highway* as his version of ‘Memory’s Hell’: a highly particularized vision of the infernally hermetic and repetitive spaces of memory and forgetting and the tortured subjectivities that inhabit them. Accordingly, Haneke’s comparably unorthodox approach to form in *Cache* is read as representative of the purgatorial epistemology outlined above—but in the film’s highly specific and irreducibly self-reflexive terms. *After Life*, finally, is taken (to begin with) at face value as a sly, peculiarly ‘Japanese’ exploration of the interface of memory and identity in a zone on the near-side of an eternity—the ultimate denial of time—which goes unrepresented.⁴ And here is the crux: in each film the specific and peculiar details of setting, mise-en-scene and character, not to mention filmic language (editing, shot length, lighting, film stock, special effects etc.) contain or conceal a key element that goes unshown. *After Life* is the most obvious, in its astute (and rather un-Hollywood) avoidance of showing what each subject’s ‘eternity’ would look like after each has made her or his choice of memory. In this moment, when virtually anything can be represented on screen, Kore-edo displays admirable restraint by directing the viewer’s attention back onto the human relationships in this post-death half-way house. Very different is *Lost Highway*’s central mystery: How did Pete Dayton get into Fred Madison’s prison cell, and what became of Fred? What is the relation between the two protagonists? What happened on the side of the road on that fateful night of which no one will speak? The film assiduously avoids providing any answers. Indeed, after repeated viewings it becomes clear that these are precisely the wrong questions to ask if one seeks to understand the film. And, finally, as D. I. Grossvogel

points out, in *Cache* Haneke accomplishes the complex feat of drawing attention to the “unaccountable” presence of the video camera in certain shots, performing a Brechtian defamiliarization of the means of production while maintaining a tenuous balance between mystification and identification—the very mechanisms on which the thriller genre depends (42–43).⁵ The result, once it becomes clear that there is no absolute distinction within the diegesis between video and cinematic image, is that the viewer is at once distanced, radically alienated and also drawn in, trapped through the film’s representation of the camera’s unrepresentability within the diegesis—‘trapped’ to the extent of sharing the protagonist’s confusion and even, in a strange way, his guilt.

This quality of unrepresentability in each film unites them in a common, ironic, critique of the hegemony of the visual in contemporary culture; each film is predicated upon a paradoxical relation to its own medium as cinema has evolved under capitalism as primary narrative mode and thus primary forum for realism as an ethical-epistemological, as much as aesthetic, ideology.

MEMORY, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY

The notion of ‘panoptic paranoia’ introduced above is of course indebted to Foucault’s allegorization of Bentham’s panopticon as a means to analyze the regulatory optical-spatial mechanisms of modern society, constraining individuals to subject themselves to specific moral-behavioural scopic regimes. Debord’s critique of the society of the spectacle, by contrast, is more overtly neo-Marxist in its ideological basis, and its legacy today is an often highly moralistic anti-consumerist/anti-capitalist activism; a brand of un-reflectively ironic cultural production that, while sincerely opposed to the commodifiability of the image, is still constrained to address its audience’s desire for visual pleasure. Martin Jay’s analysis in *Downcast Eyes* foregrounds the aspect of ethical conscience that links modern or post-modern panopticism with the Freudian super-ego and the Christian notion of conscience as comparable internalizations of transcendent structures of ‘divine’ or otherwise metaphysical surveillance:

Reversing the principle of the dungeon, the Panopticon, with its hidden and invisible God, was an architectural embodiment of the most paranoid Sartrean fantasies about the ‘absolute look’. The object of power is everywhere penetrated by the benevolently sadistic gaze of a diffuse and anonymous power whose actual existence soon becomes superfluous to the process of discipline. [. . .] Here the external look becomes an internalized and self-regulating mechanism that extends the old religious preoccupation with the smallest detail that was still immense ‘in the sight of God.’ (Jay 410)

Both the Christian and Freudian models are linked by the general structure of an invisible external surveilling authority internalized as part of the modern subject's psycho-epistemological make-up. They are separated by the element of self-interest: what sets contemporary panoptic paranoia apart from these or other moral-ethical models is the fact that today's panoptic society does not encourage an ethical self-other relation so much as it produces behaviour that guarantees, on the one hand, social order in a juridico-political sense, and, on the other, perpetual consumption.

To apply the visual structure of panoptic paranoia in a comparison of these three films, however, it is necessary to move beyond a traditional inside-outside dualism to an analytical spectrum in which the stylistic distinction between 'art film' and classical Hollywood assumes an ethical value. At one extreme, corresponding to the art film, is the notion of otherness invoked by Levinas and Derrida in their extensive analysis of the intersection of ethicality and signification.⁶ As noted in the Introduction, I am using this model in a 'second-order' sense that recognizes and exploits Levinas's claim that alterity cannot be captured within images (see Jay 550–60). This radical alterity, which acquires its true urgency in the age of cinema, simultaneously determines the self and guarantees its ethical responsibility. At the other extreme, such radically *unrepresentable* alterity contrasts revealingly with the 'universal third-person' promulgated by contemporary globalized consumer culture and corresponding as much to Hollywood's cultural-industrial presence as to its stylistic hegemony. Frank Lentricchia takes the phrase ('universal third-person') from Don DeLillo, in the context of a peculiarly American, televisually mediated epistemology (414). In this view, the exteriority of the subject replaces an interiority always already governed by representation. This is best illustrated in a consideration of the representation of memory in contemporary film: that aspect or faculty of mind that is at once wholly personal, integral to the self's interior field of operations, but at the same time 'transpersonal',⁷ constituted in the form of socially determined signifiers; a set of largely visual images shared amongst the members of a discursive community of potentially global dimensions.

While it is true that all three films take memory as a theme in some sense (most overtly in *After Life*), all three also incorporate a *theory* of memory into their formal structure. As already noted, they belong to a special category of films that do not simply *represent* memory but even more significantly employ memory *as* the basis of a cinematic aesthetic. What all three films share in common is the underlying precept that 'memory' today has no meaning or cultural value in the absence of technologies like cinema; that cinema (to repeat this point from the Introduction) is not merely one of the most effective metaphors for memory but that cinema—alongside photography—is *constitutive* of memory in its deepest and most meaningful sense. In Robert Burgoynes estimation, "Film has played an extraordinarily powerful role in shaping our conception of the history of the twentieth century" (221). Quoting Thomas Elsaesser, Burgoynes argues that

history itself, partly because of the rise of electronic media, has suffered a serious loss of prestige: ‘History, when it’s not just what’s past, but what’s being passed on, seems to have entered a conceptual twilight zone . . . While memory, especially when contrasted with history, has gained in value as a subject of public interest and interpretation, history has become the very signifier of the inauthentic . . . the false and the falsifiable . . . merely designating what is left when the site of memory has been vacated by the living. With the audio-visual media effortlessly re-presenting that site, however, the line where memory passes into history has become uncertain.’ (222)

‘Memory’ today increasingly signifies the ‘human’ past, with its organic, affective link with the present intact; whereas ‘history’ signifies what is absolutely past, back there, in a past that is passed on, to which no ‘living’ connection exists. Furthermore, “cinema . . . seems to evoke the emotional certitude we associate with memory” (Burgoyne 223). Using the past tense, Jeffrey Pence states flatly that

cinema . . . carried the burden of memory in modernity. [. . .] The shape and possibility of meaningful memory . . . are immediately questions concerning technology. Cinema’s iconic, even monumental moments, figures and styles offered something like a continuous cultural tradition and set of strategies, a simultaneously public and subjective mnemonics for framing the past and imagining the future. (237)

Pence’s observation recalls the classical ‘art of memory’, my governing structure for a theory of memory today: a mnemonic system predicated on highly developed visual-spatial faculties in a culture (like today’s) that privileged *sight* over the other senses. The justification for this analogy between cinema and the classical notion of an ‘art of memory’ is the word ‘art’ or ‘*techne*’. In a history of the ‘metaphors of memory’ Douwe Draaisma points out that Western culture has for at least 2,000 years armed itself “against the transience implicit in the mortality of memory by developing artificial memories” (2): “In the end, isn’t human memory just like cinematography, a combination of movement and stasis, a magic marriage of camera obscura and photography?” (134). The idea of an ‘artificial memory’ implies memory as ‘technology’, technique or ‘art’ (Gk. *tekhne*); hence an aid to memory (*aide-memoire*)—*mnemotechnic*—that all but takes the place of a ‘natural’ memory by supplementing and augmenting it, *hypomnesically*, prosthetically.⁸ As observed, prosthetic memory—unlike Marianne Hirsch’s ‘postmemory’, for example—is concerned less with questions of historical ‘accuracy’ and more with the empowering potential for the individual of such an expanded mnemonic dimension. According to Landsberg,

[t]he cinema and the technologized mass culture that it helped inaugurate transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Thanks to these new technologies of memory on the one hand and commodification on the other, the kinds of memories that one has ‘intimate’, even experiential, access to would no longer be limited to the memories of events through which one actually lived. (146)

This notion of appropriated memory raises ethical as well as aesthetic concerns, which Landsberg acknowledges, going on to cite the most eminent philosopher of alterity:

As . . . Levinas argues, any ethical relationship to the other requires empathy: a recognition of the profound difference and unknowability of the other, and a simultaneous sense of commitment and responsibility toward him/her even in the face of such differences. [. . .] [T]echnologies of memory have exponentially increased the opportunities for such empathetic understandings. (147)

As already discussed, the great problem with invoking Levinas in the context of an image-based popular culture is that his ethical theory is predicated upon a consistent critique of a Helleno-Christian aesthetic and philosophical tradition of ‘colonizing’ difference and reducing it to the same—reducing the other to the self—as the hallmark of achieved self-knowledge. Insofar as contemporary visual culture appropriates and amplifies specific aspects of this characteristically modern tradition of representation (i.e. ‘realism’), it is illogical to invoke Levinas straightforwardly for anything other than the purposes of a radical critique of that cultural episteme.

This caveat must be borne in mind in noting that, for Landsberg, “‘prosthetic memories’ are indeed ‘personal’ memories, as they derive from engaged and experientially oriented encounters with the mass media’s various technologies of memory” (148). Thus the most immediate ‘experience’ referenced by prosthetic memory is this encounter with the unavoidable layers of telecommunicative mediation: the ‘memory’ itself is merely the audio-visual ‘content’ that is utterly visible and publicly available. In this light Landsberg distinguishes between prosthetic and collective memory proper, “which tend[s] to be geographically specific and which serve[s] to reinforce and naturalize a group’s identity, [whereas] prosthetic memories are not the property of a single group” (149). In Burgoine’s appropriation of Pierre Nora’s phrase, “electronic or audio-visual *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) have created a kind of second-order memory system that is fast becoming a second-order reality” (225). This is memory as compensatory mechanism; in the most cynical view not memory at all but counter-memory. In contemporary popular cultural terms, the revaluation of memory

and history shores up the perpetual present moment of consumption as the only meaningful temporality; past and future become mere image, commodities with no absolute value. At the same time, ironically, anxiety over the impoverishment or loss of historical consciousness characteristic of this commoditized life-world drives consumer appetite for more ‘historical content’. This reading intersects here with a diagnosis of the postmodern like Frederic Jameson’s, which vacillates between performative celebration of the status quo and ‘lament’ for what has been lost—a lament that seems to identify cinema and memory over against postmodern, ‘post-cinematic’ media, in which memory “play[s] no role” (Jameson, *Reading* 202; see also 18). The questions now are: What other kinds of prosthetic memory are available, in non-mainstream cultural products? What is the place of contemporary art cinema in this revaluation of technology’s role in the mediation of ethical relations?

VIDEO’S ANALOGUE

Video technology evolved rapidly between the mid-1990s and 2005, the year of *Cache*’s release. *After Life* and *Lost Highway* both purvey a hypostatized view of video as if not somehow inferior to then certainly quite other than film properly speaking—and this evaluative difference is signalled in both films in the qualitative differences visible onscreen: the grainy image, staticky sound and ‘amateurish’ production values of analog video, signalling in Bazinian terms an ontological difference from the filmic image.⁹ The hierarchy of visual media in Kore-eda’s film reveals a great deal about this exclusive, culturally and geographically specific ‘afterlife’, even in its seemingly universality, its ready ‘legibility’ at a pop-cultural level. For the non-Japanese viewer, *After Life* defamiliarizes deep-seated narrative and viewing conventions by drawing attention to the marked partiality of all cinematic representations of universality. While the details of daily ‘life’ at the waystation are an idiosyncratic combination of modern and traditional Japanese as well as Western elements, the film’s subject (beyond this peculiar mise-en-scene) is about as universal as they come: death, and what happens after. Setting the film in an antechamber of Death proper allows Kore-eda to tell a story without in the first place exhausting the metaphorical potential of its title, but at the same time without compromising the metaphysical or even ‘mystical’ potential of the notion of an ‘afterlife’ modelled on a life for which cinema is coterminous with memory. The video images in *Lost Highway*, on the other hand, resemble CCTV recordings, all high-angle and quasi-abstract resolution—the compromised iconicity and indexicality alike fully exploited by Lynch. In *After Life*, by contrast, the videotape counterpart to the subjects’ ‘real’ memories looks like they were shot for television.¹⁰

In the digital age video's cultural status is transformed. High-definition digital video has for many filmmakers rendered moot the difference between film and video image. This is exactly the quality of HD video Haneke exploits in *Cache*: "Today we're surrounded by images that we take for reality, which is dangerous because they can be manipulated," explains Haneke. "That's why we filmed *Cache* in high-def video, to create a 'video look.' What the viewer often takes for reality isn't reality, it's just another representation of it" (qtd. in Ng 58). Invocations of a Baudrillardian collapsing of the difference between 'real' and virtual, or original and copy, are justified, to a point. Ara Osterweil, for example, notes that Baudrillard's name is dropped at the cocktail party at Anne's publishing firm; nevertheless, "the ironies of the simulated world, which Baudrillard famously critiqued, are lost upon the Laurents" (38).¹¹ To put it another way, as Matthias Frey implies, the dropping of Baudrillard's name within the diegesis does not prove the sway of his theory over the film (*Benny's Video* 35). Haneke, better than most, portrays the world as it is experienced by the 'typical' filmgoer who would likely prefer the latest Hollywood release to, well, the films of Michael Haneke: at second-hand, irreducibly mediated, even when confronted directly.

As Haneke also acknowledges, with digital video the indefinitely extended shot is now a possibility. There is a dark side to this, however: video's propensity to excess, shooting too much precisely because it costs a fraction of what film costs; after all, montage—like memory itself—is about selection as much as inclusion. As Atom Egoyan observes: "With video . . . [you] can record an entire day in real time without any form of selection. That experience of time is extremely dangerous. [. . .] It has an effect on the process of memory. We give away responsibility for memory to a piece of technology" (qtd. in Pence 24). Haneke interrogates precisely this displacement of responsibility in the commodification of memory in *Cache*'s static long takes. *After Life*, far more playfully, takes this possibility to its logical extreme in its archive of videographic records of an individual's entire life.

Each of the films under discussion presents a different kind of self-reflexive critique of its own medium: while *After Life* is gently ironic, *Lost Highway* and especially *Cache* present much darker critiques of the medium within the film. In the latter, Haneke extends and complicates his ongoing radical critique of the (filmic) image as ultimate commodity form. All three films also examine the relation between videotape and film, and the role these different visual media play in the constitution of memory. What is the practical difference, in terms of the representation of memory, between videotape and film? How do these films thematize this difference? In Pence's historical view, "if film's felt ability to model and remake the world seemed to deliver reality to our collective control, newer technologies like video seem to deliver reality to our individual control" (237–38).¹² The problem with what might be termed the 'hegemony' of prosthetic memory, and the

attitude toward history and pastness this implies, lies in the ‘public’ nature of the memory in question, which circulates widely: according to Landsberg, such “prosthetic memories, especially those afforded by the cinema, ‘become part of one’s personal archive of experience’” (qtd. in Burgoyne 224). Rather than mount a critique of prosthetic memory as counter-memory, however, I seek to show here what is at stake ethically when one invests cinematic texts with the burden of collective memory.

In his conception of the radical alterity of the other Levinas studiously avoids the kind of ‘God language’ that makes rational, secular scholars squirm—hence, perhaps, the ongoing popularity of the French philosopher in those academic circles, including Cultural Studies and Film Studies, in which the Levinasian brand of ethics seems to offer a serious, complex approach to the self-other relation not explicitly grounded in religion or faith. Having invoked Levinasian ‘empathy’, Landsberg ultimately leaves it behind, arguing for the positive “political potential of prosthetic memory”, which “lies in its capacity to enable ethical thinking. [. . .] Prosthetic memories enable individuals to have a personal connection to an event they did not live through, to see through another’s eyes . . . to make possible alliances across racial, class and other chasms of difference” (156). The limits of this utopian (and ultimately non-Levinasian) model become evident when one looks beyond classical and contemporary Hollywood films: if the identification and ‘empathy’ facilitated by classical realist film style is absent because one is watching another kind of film, then the viewer is denied such a galvanizing process of ethico-political consciousness-raising.

LOST HIGHWAY: MEMORY’S HELL

Lynch’s film presents a further inflection of the possibility (or desirability) of ‘escaping from time’: if time is in some sense contingent on memory, and if memory is crucial to identity, then this question about escaping or not escaping time is also about identity: is it possible to escape one’s own identity, and if so, what would this look like? And what becomes of memory, as a result? As *After Life* suggests, death is not necessarily tantamount to an ‘escape’ from one’s identity in life. A narrative like that of *Lost Highway*—although this is anticipated in *La Jetée*—abandons the literal or figurative resolution death can afford, instead adopting a closed narrative economy in which everything metamorphosizes into something else and nothing is ever lost; hence, there can be no closure.

Although both films share a self-conscious fascination with the role of the visual image in contemporary culture, *Cache* contrasts sharply with the intense subjectivity of *Lost Highway*’s hermetically sealed dream-visions. A comparison of the two films is justified by the presence in both of mysterious videotapes appearing without warning, disrupting the affluent, upper-middle-class lives of the protagonists by revealing some ‘truth’ about

themselves that they would rather had remained repressed or otherwise hidden. That Haneke owes a debt to Lynch in his use of this narrative hook has been noted by only a few reviewers (see e.g. Atkinson "Camera"; O'Hehir 2; Beugnet 229). Michael Atkinson quite aptly refers to the videotapes' origin as "certainly violative and potentially metaphysical", hastening to add, however, that Haneke's metaphysical—or rather, 'meta-cinematic'—is *not* the same brand as Lynch's: where Lynch never directly implicates the viewer, Haneke does so from the opening shot.¹³ (The other, obvious, connection is in Anne and George's surname, which they share with Mr. Eddy, a.k.a. Dick Laurent [Robert Loggia], whose death at the end of *Lost Highway*, reported at the beginning, effectively links the two halves of Lynch's narrative.)

The film opens with the shot of a nocturnal two-lane blacktop unfolding as it were endlessly, like a contemporary instantiation of Hegel's 'bad infinite' (not to mention, as several critics have, an apt metaphor of the moebial narrative structure). It is morning and Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) is at home in the modernist Los Angeles house he shares with his wife Renée (Patricia Arquette, who also plays Alice). In Lynch's own trenchant understatement: "home is a place where things can go wrong" (Lynch 226).¹⁴ Lynch literalizes the metaphor lurking in the word '*unheimlich*', in this initial section of the film, set almost entirely within the shadowy and confusing topography of the Madison's home, a space they barely seem capable of traversing without getting lost. As so often in Lynch's films the self—configured here as white, male, heterosexual, thirty-something—is itself the site of the uncanny; at once the most familiar and the most foreign thing, to itself. In Lynch's treatment, however, the stereotypicality of this configuration is exposed and exploded.

The film's focus on the subjective and the mnemonic dimension of narrative is emphasized in an early, key, scene. After receiving the second of three mysterious videotapes, which document an anonymous, seemingly impossible, invasion of their privacy, Fred and Renée call the police, who ask the Madisons if they themselves own a video camera. Renée responds: "No. Fred hates them". Fred explains: "I like to remember things my own way. [...] How I remember them. Not necessarily the way they happened" (*Lost Highway*). Shortly thereafter, this key difference between 'reality' and its subjective reconstructions breaks down completely. In a notable ellipsis, Fred is arrested and convicted of the brutal murder of his wife. Immediately before this, the viewer briefly glimpses, with Fred, the aftermath of the murder on the last tape; that he professes to having no memory of this is rendered moot, for the viewer at least, by the presence of the gruesome footage onscreen.¹⁵

The plot of *Lost Highway*, recognized in the criticism as a cinematic moebius strip, can also be described as a *chiasmus*, involving a parallel structure where each part or half repeats or mirrors the other, but always with a difference.¹⁶ Chiasmus also forces the viewer's attention away from

the beginning or ending of the narrative exclusively and toward the middle; onto the *relation* between the two sides or halves, in a dynamic model of viewing.¹⁷ *Where*, then, is the ‘truth’ in this narrative? To what point or place in the narrative is our attention directed, given the film’s peculiar structure? *Lost Highway*’s chiastic plot revolves around not a moment or point of presence or semantic plenitude, but one of absence and lack; in short, the negative ‘point’ of unrepresentability, the ironically negative sign of the breakdown or impossibility of representation. This is the pivot, the chiastic crossing point around which moves the rest of the story—including the (wholly ironic) question of redemption from time or memory, which collapses into the question of *representation*. The central enigma around which the film revolves is thus its representation of Fred’s subjective experience of his own identity: a crucial aspect of which remains *other*, outside of his own conscious purview (and thus *our* view); that which *cannot* be represented. At this juncture it is best to return to Benjamin’s instructive gloss on Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921), which highlights the observation that consciousness and memory, although interdependent, represent two separate psychic systems:

‘consciousness comes into being at the site of a memory trace’. [. . .] The basic formula of this hypothesis is that ‘becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory trace are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system’. Rather, memory fragments are ‘often most powerful and most enduring when the incident which left them behind was one that never entered consciousness’. (“Baudelaire” 160)

But Lynch has learned his Hitchcockian lesson too well; any such model proves inadequate as an account of a post-psychanalytic film like *Lost Highway*. The structural and thematic centrality of this unrepresentability exchanges for a dialectical finalization the seemingly endless, chiastic dynamic of memory. If this is a species of ‘infinite’ structure, what *kind* of infinitude does it describe? Is it ‘metaphysical’, or ‘physical’? Transcendent, or merely endless? (The same difference obtains in *The Double Life of Veronique*: between the relation of Veronique to Alexandre Fabbri, on the one hand, and Veronique to Weronika, on the other.) More prosaically, this is the literal turning point at the centre of the film; the moment where Fred appears to undergo an off-screen transformation into Pete—a metamorphosis that does not get represented so much as gestured toward, in a scene whose frightening power owes as much to its relative visual reticence as to the fact that Lynch deliberately avoids the kind of digital effects that were then (1996) already on their way to irrevocably transforming the face of mainstream Hollywood cinema. Fred does not metamorphose, morphose or morph. The process, such as it is, is suggested through a judicious manipulation of lighting, make-up, editing and film speed (Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art* 197). The viewer has no idea what has happened until

the scene the following morning when a guard discovers Fred gone without a trace and a completely different man occupying his death-row cell. The younger Pete (Balthazar Getty) has no recollection how he got there. This is the pivotal mid-point in structural terms, but we soon learn that this ostensible exchange or transformation entailed much more than meets the eye. Gradually his parents reveal to Pete that on the fateful night he cannot remember something unspeakable transpired that they witnessed, but they either refuse or are unable to disclose anything more. This something is only hinted at on screen in the combination of hallucinatory visuals accompanying Fred's last night on death row: in addition to scenes of him experiencing an all but parturitive headache, we are returned, by an overriding dream-logic, to the opening sequence of the unspooling nocturnal two-lane blacktop—the ‘lost highway’ motif—until suddenly a figure looms up on the side of the road: Pete Dayton, the film’s new ‘hero’. The temptation is strong to read this sequence as transpiring as it were in Fred’s pain-wracked cerebrum, until the next scene in which we see that he has been literally replaced by this ‘other’ who then takes over the protagonist’s role.

The videotapes at first seem to be part of only Fred’s fictional world, and not Pete’s. This impression is obviated, however, by the presence of the aptly named ‘Mystery Man’ (Robert Blake), who links the film’s two halves and two protagonists in a manner that is generally misread. The Mystery Man is key to understanding the significance of the videotapes in the first half, and the significance throughout of video and other prosthetic technologies. Much critical ink has been spilled in attempts to explain—and thus ‘explain away’—this enigmatic figure. Psychoanalytic readings have met with either failure (Zizek) or relative success (Herzogenrath; O’Connor).¹⁸ In one of the first critical responses, Martha Nochimson asserts that, “when, at the end of the film, the Mystery Man comes at Fred with a video camera grotesquely attached to him as if it were his eye, it is clear that the tapes are the productions of Fred’s most toxic part of himself” (213). This openly contradictory statement draws attention to the manner in which the Mystery Man embodies the confluence of artificial memory, prosthetic audio-visual surveillance technologies (like video), ethicality and identity.

Lynch’s Mystery Man is the very sort of enigmatic alibi that Haneke refuses his audience. More a function than a character, he is contradiction embodied, equalising the *difference* between Fred Madison and ‘himself’, just as he (the Mystery Man) equals the *difference* between Pete Dayton and ‘himself’. But to conclude from this that therefore *either* Pete is Fred’s other self, or that Fred is Pete’s other self, would be to fall back into the sort of metaphysics of identity (not to speak of Aristotelian logic) that underpin psychoanalytic-realist readings of the film. In my reading, the Mystery Man is the concrete embodiment of the radically negative principle driving the narrative¹⁹—the productive negation that is arguably ‘present’ in some degree in every narrative.²⁰ Put another way, the kind of ‘coincidence’ with himself that Fred/Pete seems to desire—mediated through the embodied

image of a certain type of woman—would be for him to manage an escape from time rendered impossible by the film's meta-cinematic metaphysics.

CACHE: MEMORY'S PURGATORY

Cache extends and amplifies Haneke's long-standing preoccupation with the ethical implications of looking.²¹ In the first place, vision itself has a much greater thematic significance than in the other two films. In an early scene, when asked by his mother how things are with his family, Georges (Daniel Auteuil) replies: "The same as always. We hardly see each other." This theme of the failure of vision is emphasized in a much less metaphorical manner in an earlier scene when Georges and Anne (Juliet Binoche) visit the police station to report their apparent videotape 'stalker'. While crossing the one-way street outside the station Georges is nearly run down by a black cyclist going the wrong way. Georges to the cyclist: "Don't you have eyes in your head?" Anne: "You weren't looking, and we weren't looking, OK?"²² Her attempt at conciliation is also a recognition of their mutual visual disability; typical of Haneke, neither the white bourgeois couple nor the young black man—like Majid's son, likely already second or third generation French—is let off the hook; least of all the spectator, whose failure is in fact double: a good part of the viewer's discomfort in watching such scenes is derived from her/his failure to acknowledge in him/herself the equivalent failure of vision. The fact that the viewer is 'only watching a movie' offers little or no comfort.

For Peter Bradshaw, "Almost every one of Haneke's shots is held as steady and implacable as a security camera. If there is a Recording Angel up there, noting our moral behaviour, then he is using celestial CCTV".²³ In his *New York Times* review, A. O. Scott notes that

before we even know what is happening . . . Haneke . . . has deposited his audience at the Hitchcockian junction where voyeurism intersects with paranoia. We are at once innocent and complicit, as if the idle curiosity that brings us into the theatre authorized a malignant form of spying. (Scott 13)

Even though, on a purely formal level, the opening establishing shot immediately forces the viewer to occupy the visual-spatial position of dominance and control, on the level of the narrative the viewer is encouraged to make the imaginative leap to "empathize with the viewed" (Yacowar 229). Ultimately, Georges's investigation into the provenance of the mysterious tapes becomes a *self*-investigation into his own responsibility and degree of guilt (Yacowar 230).²⁴ Jonathan Romney points out that the issue in the film is "not the child's crime but the adult's refusal to acknowledge guilt" (Romney 64), noting that the flashback of Majid's

(Maurice Benichou) forced removal is shot as if from the viewpoint of the young Georges, and also

exactly in the style of the surveillance videos. Yet there is no conclusive literal explanation, nor should there be: Haneke, after all, has adapted Kafka for the screen; and, for all its concrete realism, *Hidden*, no less than *The Castle* (1997), demands to be viewed as parable. (64)

Kafka's novel is a parable about the impossibility of its own interpretation; *Cache* appropriates this modernist trope within an explicitly political contemporary milieu. Not as radical in its modernism, *Cache* is comparably radical in its postmodern engagement with post-millennial surveillance society. Haneke's film exploits the disturbing intimacy of surveillance and cinema in order to say something about memory, a theme addressed in the criticism to date on two levels: the representation of Georges's personal memories of childhood betrayal, successfully repressed for much of his adult life, and the account of the mass-drowning of over 200 Algerian protesters in Paris in 1961 by the French police—an atrocity the collective memory of which was repressed for some forty years. The viewer is tempted to collapse these two very different forms of repression, as if the former were a parable for the latter.²⁵

Cache offers the coldly objective gaze of an anonymous video camera as visual correlative of a 'collective' moral-ethical viewpoint. According to David Cook, Haneke has created "a disturbingly explicit cinema of post-modern malaise focusing on the spectator's sadomasochistic complicity in the act of representation" (603). "Haneke plays on the ambiguous nature of the image and the gaze: on the one hand, they domesticate, normalize, exoticize and objectify the world for easy consumption; on the other hand, they have the power to unsettle this new form of voyeurism" (Silverman 247). Haneke exploits the myth of the objective veracity of the filmic signifier in its iconic aspect while extending his abiding "critique of the commodification of the image"²⁶ in a culture that has forgotten how to remember (Cook 603). For Martine Beugnet, "[in] *Cache*, the object that reconnects the present with a disavowed past may be the image itself" (228)—although it is as readily argued that the image is precisely what sunders us irremediably from that past. As in *Lost Highway*, there is no obvious agency behind the videos that the protagonists, a bourgeois couple, begin receiving at the outset. It is gradually revealed that Georges, the husband, like France itself, has a dark past tainted with racism, violence and betrayal. But it is Georges's singular past that will not rest, and that returns in the filmic medium's relentlessly present-tense narrative viewpoint. This is evident from a comparison of the functions of the videotapes as opposed to the childish drawings Georges also receives: the first record the 'real', prompting memory and inspiring repressed guilt; the second register the 'unreal': the content of Georges's childhood lies and his present-day

nightmares and guilty memories, represented in the diegesis in a style on first viewing indistinguishable from the HD video sequences.²⁷ According to Stephen Prince:

[as] a capture medium, DV ‘reads’ a scene very differently than film does. One of the unmistakable hallmarks of DV is its clarity and depth of field. DV tends to record everything in deep focus and with extremely sharp focus, whereas varying degrees of shallow focus are the norm for images shot on film. [. . .] From the standpoint of film theory and aesthetics, the wide-angle look of digital video arguably fulfills the ideal for cinema that Bazin explicated, that of replicating the viewer’s ontological experience of a rich, multi-plane visual world. (“Artifacts” 30–31)

As usual in Haneke’s films, however, *Cache* ironically *denies* the viewer any conventional pleasures, putting pressure on interpretative conventions by foregrounding the ontological identity of flashback and present-tense, dream sequence and filmic ‘reality’. On the levels of plot and character, *Lost Highway* flouts these conventions even more radically; but in *Cache* the effect is of a different order, opening out extra-diegetically into the viewer’s world. *Cache* therefore exposes itself to the kind of ‘political’ reading that in Lynch’s far more subjectively coded universe is neither possible nor welcome, and that in *After Life* is pushed to the periphery of the individuals’ stories.²⁸ And, while the European and American examples place the protagonist’s ‘traumatic’ experience at the centre of the film, the significance of ‘trauma’ in each case is tellingly different. Haneke makes the point in an interview that trauma inheres not in the past but in the *present*, in memory, as an *effect* of memory (*Cache*). In the experience of remembering, the ‘originary event’ is traumatic, not the event itself: “It doesn’t mean there was a traumatizing scene at the time . . . [Georges] thought, ‘What can I do to get rid of this guy?’ . . . It wasn’t traumatic . . . but it comes back to him as trauma . . . It becomes a trauma because he doesn’t want to recognize guilt” (*Cache*). But Haneke leaves it to his film to remind us that, strictly speaking, everything on screen is always present; there is no ‘past tense’ as such to correspond with this grammatical feature of verbal language, no inflecting of the cinematic signifier; only codes of production, contextual markers and conventions of viewing (see e.g. Prince, “Discourse”).²⁹ This banal observation acquires new significance in *Cache*, where the crucial distinction between a videotaped image being watched after the fact and the present-tense narrative action is gradually eroded, as the viewer is forced to negotiate anew the relation between filmic form and content.³⁰

In *Cache*, Haneke “contemplate[s] one of the fundamental questions of filmmaking: where to put the camera” (Romney 63). Romney makes it clear that the camera placement in the video sequences is the typically ‘impossible’ (because invisible) location of the seeing but unseen camera

of a certain tradition of cinematic realism that is generally observed even in the more radical instances of international art film. But, as Romney implies, to ask ‘where is the camera?’ is, like the question ‘who made or delivered the tapes?’ unanswerable. That said, to ask these questions is a ‘natural’ response in a viewer conditioned to identify with the protagonist, in this case Georges, whose trajectory of self-discovery is *ironically* Oedipal.³¹ This self-discovery leaves him the unwilling bearer of historical guilt while none the wiser about himself. Grossvogel’s assertion that the film allows for only two disparate but linked readings—the post-colonial “morality tale” and the “Brechtian exercise in distancing”—ignores the third possibility that, like both other films, it is also a trenchant analysis of memory’s role in the present-tense constitution of a highly particular identity: Haneke’s presentation of Georges’s failed quest to discover the truth forbids the artificial separation of formal and thematic readings. His failure to uncover that ‘truth’ is the direct result of the *audio-visual* form of ‘terrorism’ to which he feels himself subjected. Whether the viewer sees it or not, the film subtly shifts its own emphasis from the tapes to the ‘means of production’; in order to begin to understand the narrative the viewer needs to understand the film’s mode of *narration*. The focus on identity links the formal and thematic aspects: the viewer is ‘privileged’ to see what Georges cannot; that the camera he cannot see (even though he tries) is potentially indistinguishable from the camera with which the entire film is shot. Trapped between *Cache*’s realist anti-realism and its meta-cinematicity, the viewer can easily miss the film’s deceptively straightforward engagement with radical otherness.

AFTER LIFE: MEMORY’S HEAVEN

That, in films as diverse as *Lost Highway* and *Cache*, the ethically empowering force of prosthetic memory does not manifest as Landsberg prescribes is readily shown. On the other hand one can ask to what degree a Japanese film like *After Life* produces this ethical effect of transpersonal or even transcultural ‘empathy’ in the non-Japanese viewer, given the cultural specificity of its references to twentieth-century Japanese history within a narrative whose formal method combines elements of classical realism with the more ‘difficult’ vocabulary of the international art film? What is the relation in Kore-edo’s film between an engagement with cultural ‘otherness’ and the more immediate, ‘unconscious’ identification with specific character’s memories as they are collaboratively reconstructed as miniature films?

Of the three films under discussion only *After Life* overtly thematizes memory. In fact Kore-edo’s film is one of the most nuanced cinematic treatments to date of the question of how ‘we’ represent our memories to ourselves.³² In this analysis I am less concerned with *After Life*’s place in

the history of Japanese cinema or even Asian cinema generally; my primary concern, rather, is to examine its significance in intercultural relation to the other two films. *After Life*, after all, is a foreign, subtitled film that enjoyed considerable success in markets outside of Japan. Much of its popular appeal may be attributable to the film's tagline: "What is the one memory you would take with you?" Clearly the film taps into widely held cultural associations of cinema, memory and dream. "*After Life*," as Stephen Holden puts it, "is as much a movie about filmmaking as it is about memory" (69). For Jonathan Ellis, "Kore-eda seems to subscribe to the idea that cinematic images are in fact our closest artistic expression of memory" (32).³³ I would go further and argue that, in *After Life*, as in *Lost Highway* and in *Cache*, the difference between cinematic images and 'natural' memory is effaced altogether.

According to David Cook, *After Life* is "a complex meditation on the subjective construction of memory and on the role of the cinema in preserving it" (764). But is this the only or *final* function of the medium of film within the film? Do the films of people's memories function *only* to 'preserve' those memories? What is the function of specific visual technologies here? *After Life* also presents an implicit comparison between film and analog video technology, where the medium of film *per se* is presented as the closest analogue to the form and content of 'authentic' individual memory. Videotape constitutes merely a quasi-Proustian visual *aide-memoire* and does not correspond to memory *as such*. In a crucial scene the counsellor Mochizuki (Arata) must deal with Mr. Watanabe (Taketoshi Naito), one of the recently dead who is unable to choose a memory to take with him to eternity. Mochizuki seats him at a monitor with dozens of videotape boxes stacked nearby: "These videotapes contain a record of your life. One for each year, 71 in all. They won't match your memories exactly, so please just use them for reference. Watch them as a way of bringing back the past" (*After Life*). Contrary to Jonathan Ellis's interpretation of the videotapes as *aide-memoire*, they do not "look like badly shot home movies": the image is not "blurred" and the sound is "tinny" because Watanabe is watching them on a television monitor. And, rather than looking "fake", the acting is in fact as low-key and as naturalistic as in the rest of the film (35). It is very important that the latter especially be recognized; such a mis-reading seems to stem from the unwarranted conclusion that, because Mochizuki tells Watanabe that the tapes will not match his memories exactly, they must therefore be 'inaccurate' or otherwise not an authentic 'record' of what did (or did not) happen in his life—whereas the point of Mochizuki's warning seems to be that these tapes are *not* filmed from the subject's perspective: they do not look like one's memories because they are filmed from someone *else's* perspective, so to speak. Or rather they are filmed from an objective, even clinical position external to the experience depicted; in these tapes the subject of the memory is himself an object to be viewed, an element of the *hypomnesic* mise-en-scene. Ellis subsequently equates the content of the

tapes with ‘reality’ as “out-of-focus home movie . . . that looks nothing like what we remember” (35). The sheer banality of the tapes belies their enigmatic status as record of Watanabe’s life: if these do not represent his ‘actual’ memories, then who shot them? From what or whose perspective is Watanabe watching his past self? The most immediate answer is *ours*: the viewer’s perspective, which is then formalized, given back to the specific character around whom identification may then coalesce. As in *Cache* and *Lost Highway*, the tapes are anonymous, objective, like surveillance videos where (almost) nothing exciting ever happens. But to refer to them, with Ellis, as “*celestial* videotapes”, is misleading, not merely because of the decidedly *un-celestial* character of everyone and everything at the waystation. Unlike the tapes in the other two films, these sequence shots have nothing of the closed-circuit surveillance video about them. More importantly, the videotaped sequences, while coded within the narrative as subordinate to the subject’s ‘authentic’ memories, are stylistically distinct from the film in which they are embedded.³⁴ They differ from the filmed representations of ‘real’ memories in that the camera is fixed at a low angle and medium distance and there appear to be no cuts in the videos themselves. (Kore-eda’s ‘tatami-mat’ sequences all conclude with a cut [in the film proper, not the video-within-the-film] to a close-up on one or two characters—a very un-Ozu-like edit that serves to align the viewer again with the viewer of the videotape-within-the-film.) For the scenes in question Kore-eda mixes the grainy ‘realism’ of video with what appear to be references to the distinctive cinematic style of Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu, deepening the inter-cultural contrast of Euro-American and Asian cinematic approaches to the externalized representation of memory.

Ozu, with Akira Kurosawa and Kenji Mizoguchi, is one of the three most significant and influential directors in Japanese film history. According to David Cook, Ozu’s work, more than the other two, “most expresses traditional Japanese values,” therefore “he was the last of the three . . . to be discovered by the West” (745).

In Japan . . . the simple lifestyle necessarily practised by the people of [the lower middle] class is highly regarded as the most authentic, valid, and human way to live, unencumbered as it is by false values, pretensions, and distortions. [. . .] After all, what could possibly be so real as to be born, make a living, bring forth a new generation and then die? (745–46).

This is, of course, a reductively *bourgeois* ‘humanism’ (in specifically Japanese terms), and therefore needs to be recognized as a specific socio-cultural-ideological construct. That said, Ozu’s films—like Kurosawa’s—“are about the impact of modernization and modernity on traditional Japanese culture” (745–46).³⁵ According to Cook, “[t]o these films of people living restrained and minimal lives, Ozu brought a restrained and minimal

cinematic style (746). In what seems to be a trope of Ozu scholarship, the camerawork in his films is described as motionless, “frequently assum[ing] the low-angle position of a person seated on a *tatami* mat, whose eye level is about three feet above the floor, as if it were a guest or visitor in the household.” (746). Rather than a ‘CCTV’ or bird’s-eye-perspective, the videotape scenes in *After Life* are reminiscent of Ozu in that they are consistently framed by a camera set only a few feet above the ground. In this reading, Ozu’s formal innovations privilege such a low-angle, eye-level, medium-distance perspective, the rejection of the 180-degree rule, and the use of off-screen space. There is no question that Kore-eda employs very similar techniques in the sequence of Watanabe’s videotaped ‘memories’—particularly the emphasis on the static, relatively long duration shot as the basic narrative unit—and that these sequences contrast stylistically with the dominant aesthetic throughout the rest of film. David Bordwell, however, complicates this too-reductive approach:

Ozu’s camera position is not absolute but proportional, always lower than what it films . . . This fact makes it untenable to identify the camera position with an ‘invisible observer’ seated on the *tatami*. Of course in Japanese cinema characters often sit on the floor, and this has certainly encouraged many directors to lower their framing accordingly. (Bordwell, *Ozu* 77–78)

It is not my object here to prove or disprove such cinematic intertextuality, whether homage or parody. Rather, the question of the presence or absence of recognizable or ‘legible’ stylistic elements, traceable to Ozu’s influence upon Kore-eda, is an instructive instance of intertextuality as prosthetic cultural memory, in a sense that respects while ultimately transcending the filmmaker’s supposed intentions. This comparison also foregrounds the fact that Ozu represents (in a sense that transcends Japanese cinema specifically) one kind of art film aesthetic in direct contrast to a more classical realist style. Where the latter foregrounds a particular conception of ‘reality’, Ozu’s art film foregrounds *perception*: the very mechanism of the *perceiving* of ‘reality’. Hence the general distinction between the two categories of realism in terms of a difference in emphasis on either *form* and perception (art film) or *content* and conceptions (classical realism); the difference between seeing ideology at work (art film) and *not* seeing it at all (classical realism). Therefore Cook can say of Ozu’s style that it is “inherently more ‘realistic’ [than classical realism] . . . in terms of the way we actually *perceive* reality” (748; emphasis mine).

In Mochizuki’s explanation, the tapes are intended merely as a reminder, as an aid to *choosing* one memory over others. The subsequent cinematic re-creation, by contrast, is intended as an aid to *re-living* the single memory for eternity. And this is really the crucial difference between film and video technologies within *After Life*. Film, in the form of the low-budget



Figure 4.1 *After Life* (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 1998).



Figure 4.2 *Tokyo Story* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1953).

in-house productions, points ultimately toward the ‘experience’ of eternity in death, toward the going outside of or *beyond* time as equivalent to ‘heaven’ in the film’s ecumenical, non-denominative eschatology. It points, in other words, to an atemporal dimension that precludes both narrative and visual representation and is by definition unrepresentable. Apart from the practical aspects of representing such a thing, through special effects or other means foreign to the film’s aesthetic, this notion is amenable to a theory of time like Augustine’s, in which ‘eternity’ is unrepresentable because it is about total presence or ‘presentness’, which for time-bound human consciousness must remain an ideal: “in eternity nothing moves into the past: all is present. Time, on the other hand, is never all present at once” (qtd. in Ricoeur 333, n. 29). Kore-edo respects the unrepresentability of the ‘real’ afterlife by not attempting to show the memory-films except as short films ending in blackout; i.e. by not trying to represent the *experience* of the subject of the memory, whose position *vis-à-vis* the memory-scene is unavoidably paradoxical. The videotapes of Watanabe’s memories, by contrast, are literally a record of the ‘real time’ of a life; the ceaseless flow of time passing from birth until death. Yet they also aid him in recalling how much he valued a particular moment, which is then re-created by the team of filmmakers, ‘redeemed’ from the purgatorial banality of life so well represented by the tapes.

As noted in the Introduction, in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (as in Marker’s *La Jetée*), the *image* of a woman typically plays the role of ‘madeleine’ in these films, precipitating the protagonist’s process of recollection and, depending on generic and/or diegetic constraints, his redemption. One could say of Alice/Renee in *Lost Highway* that she prompts *both* recollection and forgetting in Fred/Pete, in equal measure. In *After Life*, in a different kind of irony, Mochizuki’s recollection of Kyoko (Kyoko Kagawa), his long-lost love (and the youthful Watanabe’s eventual wife), is prompted by Watanabe’s appearance at the waystation and his subsequent difficulties in selecting a memory. While viewing one of Watanabe’s *aide-memoire* videotapes, Mochizuki discovers that Kyoko’s own chosen memory is of being with him shortly before his untimely death during WWII. The knowledge that he had been part of someone else’s happiness in turn prompts him to select for his own eternal memory not one of Kyoko but of his fellow-team of counsellors-cum-filmmakers. His last sight is of them watching him as they film him watching them, in Kore-edo’s brilliant final conflation of cinema and memory as endless visual-mnemic feedback loop³⁶—a compelling image of heaven. But it is also possible to argue that, while *After Life* is stylistically and in cultural referential terms profoundly different from *Lost Highway*, conceptually the two films are complementary. Both films almost converge at the same point: death—or rather, the death that is life (*Lost Highway*) versus the life that is death (*After Life*).

The contrast here with Lynch’s use of the videographic sequences in *Lost Highway* is striking: as in *After Life*, the image is grainy, obviously of a

different value from the film in which these sequences are embedded. At first the camera pans across the house front at a low angle from below; once inside it seems to float through the interior of Fred's house, navigating via staticky jump cuts, gazing down, impossibly, from a ceiling's-eye CCTV angle. To use David Bordwell's phrase, such a high-angle position, consistently employed, may "invite the spectator to take it as a 'godlike, detached' point of view" (*Ozu* 80). In the final video sequence in *Lost Highway*'s first half, Fred watches the same uncanny CCTV-style footage for the third time. Here, instead of panning into the bedroom and pausing above the sleeping couple in bed, the camera pans over a scene of a blood-covered Fred kneeling on the floor, next to what appears to be Renee's dismembered body. Suddenly in the midst of this shot there is a split-second interruption of colour: the grainy black-and-white briefly changes to a higher-definition colour image of the scene of carnage, than back again. The viewer is momentarily aligned with Fred's point-of-view, as he watches himself, in a merging of the impossible, 'godlike' CCTV perspective and a version of 'reality' that may or may not be Fred's. How Fred remembers things, and the way they actually happened, are collapsed together in a mnemonic image whose source and authority he does not recognize, and—in a terribly irony—over which he has no control.

In the end, the 'closed-circuit' effect of the video sequences becomes just that, transforming the narrative into a closed circuit; a line or loop that collapses in upon itself in the penultimate scene where Dick Laurent/Mr. Eddy is made to watch himself watching pornographic films on a mini-TV monitor, only to have the images end *en-abîme* with a shot of Fred and the Mystery Man in the very attitude in which they are standing and watching him in turn. His death at the end of this scene then sets the entire plot in motion again—but from a different point-of-view.

CONCLUSION: TRANSCULTURAL MEMORY

The question of who or what is 'behind' the camera in *Cache*—and not just what is in front—is built into the film's structure and demands to be confronted (Bordwell, *Ozu* 80). The theme of that which is 'hidden' is also reiterated at the level of the dialogue, where words like 'cache' and 'rien' constitute verbal motifs. What Grossvogel identifies as the 'hidden' video camera functions as both 'godlike', detached observer and deeply implicated human subject position, with all of the attendant anthropomorphic qualities against which Bordwell warns us. The film's long, static closing shot, in which the sons of both fathers can be seen from a distance to meet and (inaudibly) talk, is exemplary in this regard: it readily lends itself to both a utopian and a (panoptically) paranoid reading.³⁷ Any final meaning is undecidable, as the proper interpretive codes remain unavailable to the viewer. By the end there is no way to distinguish between the video camera's

intentionally voyeuristic eye and a conventional master shot.³⁸ In the film's final, vertiginous, irony, the viewer is thrust into the position of whatever agency produced the tapes even as s/he experiences the victim's frustration at not possessing this very knowledge. The one thing that the final scene *might* prove is that neither of the sons was the perpetrator—a conclusion already suggested by the scene of Majid's suicide, seemingly shot from the same position as the unseen video camera that records his first meeting with Georges. But then, as one is forced to abandon the codes of a realist aesthetic, this realization opens up the far more disturbing possibility of the viewer's own complicity: at best a shared sense of responsibility, at worst, a sense of guilt in watching which usually goes neither acknowledged nor understood. The hidden-in-plain-view camera is in the end revealed to be both the *source* and the *means* of (potentially) understanding the suffering of others, if only through witnessing—whether this is the suffering of colonized peoples everywhere, a single people (French Algerians) or the individual (Majid). In the camera's simultaneous absence and presence, *Cache* goes well beyond a critique of the ontological status of the image (see e.g. Ezra and Sillars 217–18), imparting a ruthless ethicality not grounded in a prescriptive moral code but in the audacious representation of the gaze of the other.³⁹ That this gaze calls us to an impossible identification is the source of both the film's radical ethicality and of many viewers' refusal to accept the film at face value.

According to Richard Locke, "Haneke . . . tends to be cool and analytic, postmodern in his pessimistic cultural politics and moral hostility to consumerism and the mass media (including conventional movies)" (114–17). Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, by pointing out the 'provinciality' of such critics as Baudrillard or Debord provides an unintentionally ironic justification of a 'postmodern' critique of contemporary Western culture (108–11). Haneke's own critique of social reality under transnational capitalism proves Sontag at once right and wrong: most of the world does not live like the bourgeois protagonists of these films, yet the privileged 'worldview' embodied in characters like Georges and Anne—a worldview with its analogue in the real developed-world viewer—is dominant insofar as it is in part determined and acquires meaning through technological mediation, and the mass media's global reach guarantees the perpetuation of the global social order where the fantasy life of the few is idealized and fetishized by the many who look on from 'outside'. This situation is made more ironic and complex still by the fact that now those on the 'inside' are also able to 'look on' as spectators of their own lives of increasingly tenuous privilege within a world in which reality is in a very meaningful sense preceded by its representations: in which dreams and especially memories would have no 'existence' without the technology of film to operate as artificial memory and historical record and therefore—for better or worse—as collective ethical conscience. *Cache* thus offers a sophisticated and compelling justification of a postmodern critique of contemporary culture. But if,

as others have pointed out, Haneke's aesthetics are 'postmodern' in a Baudrillardian sense, his politics remain those of an earlier, post-1968 postmodernism predicated on a continued, albeit cynical, 'faith' in at least the possibility of an alternative order of things.

Beyond the American and Japanese films, what *Cache* demonstrates so forcefully is that, in an irreducibly mediated, post-9/11 world, the myth of an escape from time is more dangerous than ever, because there is no escape from history, in its contextual-cultural specificity—just as there is no escape, for the individual, from memory. The only possible 'redemption' might be *through* memory—a possibility denied in *Lost Highway* and affirmed (sort of) in *After Life*. A prosthetic 'memory' comprised of shared cultural intertexts in a globally legible visual language may or may not allow for the individual to confront an ethical responsibility to the other. Two seemingly contradictory 'exteriorities' confront each other here: the literal, depthless exteriority of the collective, quasi-consensual matrix of contemporary social reality; and the exteriority of radical otherness within the self, the otherness presented in and through memory—despite this self's erstwhile deconstruction in the postmodern critique of modernity's myths. In these films we see this contradiction instantiated, exteriorized, even 'globalized', in the contemporary art film's representation of the unrepresentable.

5 ‘Prosthetic Memory’ and Transnational Cinema

Globalized Identity and Narrative Recursivity in *City of God*

Our memories are able to change organically, to position themselves within who we become, but technology is fixed.

—Atom Egoyan

“Why remain in the City of God where God has forgotten you?”

—*City of God*

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter presents a reading of a single contemporary film as a focused way of considering the transnational implications of intensified continuity as a new cinematic *lingua franca*, as well as exploring the parameters of the memory-film as they have changed across this book. In many ways, the trajectory from ‘art film’ to ‘transnational memory-film’ is justified with the notion of transcultural memory, introduced in the previous chapter. A recent prospectus for a conference on ‘Transcultural Memory’¹ claims that

the concept of cultural memory has overcome [the] binary opposition between the individual and the collective, attending to their reciprocal relationship and the cultural grounds on which their mediation takes place . . . How, though, does memory work when events are remembered across and between cultures? In an age of globalization, is it still possible to speak of local and national memory, or do the local and national always exist in implicit and explicit dialogue with the transnational? (“Transcultural”)

Fernando Meirelles’s 2002 *City of God* does not obviously fit the criteria of a ‘memory-film’, but, as the ensuing discussion demonstrates, this is really the result of a need to re-think memory itself as the fundamental

criterion of culture and identity alike; hence the need for the category of the transnational—the latest of the heterodox repertoire of concepts I have thus far marshalled in my examination of the interrelations of cinema, memory and modernity. The movement here has been from the international post-war art film to the transnational memory film, by way of the appropriation, recontextualization and intensification of specific stylistic techniques and tropes in cinematic systems both within and without the dominant Euro-North American sphere of influence.

The powerful visual style of the Brazilian film *City of God* seems ideally suited to the expression of its distinctively Brazilian subject. According to Alcino Leite Neto, Meirelles, along with fellow director Walter Salles, represents “a trend concerned with reshaping Brazilian film language in line with both national and international audiences’ tastes, while at the same time striving to respect the dramatic reality of the country” (10–11). This ‘dramatic reality’, of course, has its own peculiar history, in which cinema plays a significant role (see Johnson and Stam). More than one critic has pointed out a certain affinity between the ‘new wave’ of Brazilian films and the Cinema Novo of the 1960s.² Brazil’s Cinema Novo movement as a whole predicated its aesthetic program on its political goal of “social transformation” (Espírito 290). Theorist and filmmaker Glauber Rocha’s famous manifesto, ‘An Esthetic of Hunger’, called for “a cinematic style appropriate to the social realities of Brazil” (Johnson and Stam 286).³ As Karen Backstein asks,

is the film an indictment of Brazil’s huge economic gap between the have and have-nots? Is it ultimately an attempt to reach the global market through a presentation of energetic violence? Or is it both? [. . .] Ironically, despite the poverty of the people depicted, the filming is far more ‘aesthetic of postmodernism’ than what . . . Rocha called the “aesthetic of hunger”. (39)

For Ismail Xavier, *City of God*

deals with social concerns, but expresses them in the language of MTV, rap and disco cultures familiar to young people of the same age as its protagonists. It is this style that has made *City of God* the most successful Brazilian attempt since the mid-1990s to render social drama palpable to a mass audience. (28)⁴

In addressing the film’s “documentary-like quality” Backstein points out that

the quasi-location shooting, done in a favela (although not Cidade de Deus itself⁵), as well as the use of primarily non-professional actors, tend to blur the line between the fake and the real. Thus, the relentless violence of the narrative, and its depiction of a world ruled by guns and

ruthless criminals, combine to turn the Rio hills into something akin to the lawless ‘Wild West’ of the American 1800s—except that the rapidly edited images, frequently shot with a hand held camera, are more MTV than John Ford. It’s also far more apocalyptic than Ford could ever have imagined, with children barely out of diapers the coldest and most heartless of all. (39)

City of God’s commercial success, as much as its content, is perhaps what sets it at odds with the legacy of Cinema Novo. As Talitha Espiritu explains, while filmmakers like Rocha “realized that the ‘popular’ was often the subject of their films”, the films themselves never achieved a mass popularity (Johnson and Stam 290)—a paradox faced by all modernist avant-garde movements seeking to politicize their audiences and inspire social revolution on the terrain of culture.⁶

As a twenty-first-century Brazilian film, comparisons of *City of God* with Brazil’s variegated cinematic past are as inevitable as they are revealing of this film’s status as a kind of contemporary Latin American version of what Frederic Jameson in the early 1990s labelled the Hollywood ‘nostalgia film’ (see Jameson, *Postmodernism* 279–96). At the same time—in line with the quasi-universal film language invoked by Neto—*City of God* can be considered a paradigmatic instance of what David Bordwell has labelled ‘intensified continuity’: “the baseline style for both international mass-market cinema and a sizeable fraction of exportable ‘art cinema’” (Bordwell, “Continuity” 22).⁷ Utilizing Bordwell’s neo-formalist schemata and building on contemporary notions of artificial or ‘prosthetic’ memory, I read *City of God* in its historical context as a quintessentially ‘postmodern’ film. I invoke this term, mindful of the criticism of postmodern cultural theory as ‘provincial’ for its arrogant disregard of the disenfranchised, disempowered diasporic other, residing outside the Northern hemispheric ‘society of the spectacle’.⁸ Therefore (going beyond Jameson) I invoke a contextually specific, transnational usage of ‘postmodern’, referring to those contemporary films characterized by an ‘intensified’ continuity, as opposed to forms of discontinuity, disjunction and Brechtian distanciation characteristic of the postwar international art film (see e.g. Bordwell, *Narration*; Pasolini; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*). This modernist-postmodernist differentiation is already complicated by the fact that many contemporary instantiations of the art film—defined on one level by its implicit or explicit critique of the commodification of the image—can also be defined as ‘postmodern’ in their stylistic departures from this modernist tradition.⁹ One implication here is that, unlike the plurality of modernisms that arose around the world in the first half of the twentieth century, *this* postmodern (ironically) may be a far more globally consistent category.

What is of interest here is the inflection of an international or ‘universal’ film language with potentially global, mass-market appeal by a radically *other* cultural idiom. As a recent film that is at once transnational

and intensely regional, *City of God* represents (to the non-Brazilian viewer) such a radical cultural hybridity with ironically spectacular effect. In its representation of the recontextualization of Northern hemispheric youth-subcultural signifiers within the radically different socio-economic context of Rio's favelas from the 1960s to the early 1980s, *City of God* exemplifies what Robert Stam describes as the “tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization, in which hegemonic tendencies . . . are simultaneously ‘indigenized’ within a complex, disjunctive global cultural economy” (Stam, *Film Theory* 287).

A typical early review chose to foreground the film’s self-reflexivity, its post-Brechtian distancing techniques, suggesting a certain stylistic consistency:

Anyone who saw Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu’s 2000 film *Amores Perros* . . . will already know how *City of God* feels. Both films are daintily plotted, full of narrative loops and interstices, and yet both contrive, beneath their layers of writerly lace, to be snorting with proletarian energy. (Parker 35)

Unlike *Amores Perros*, *21 Grams*, or *Babel* (all by Inarritu), *City of God*’s complex narrative structure is internally justified by aspiring photo-journalist Rocket’s voiceover—a timeworn technique that gains new life through the implicit analogy between photographer and storyteller in self-conscious difference from the gun-wielding gangster.¹⁰ Backstein observes that “the verbal equivalence of ‘shoot’ with both pistol and camera has rarely seemed as pointed” as in *City of God* (39).¹¹ In Meirelles’s film the symbolic phallicism of the gun ‘justifies’ a degree of prosaic violence whose verisimilitude is countered by the camera’s metaphorical violence—a reminder that (in an analogy to the viewer’s own experience) even in the City of God violence is not quite real until it is mediated through the image.

FILM, LANGUAGE, MEMORY

This chapter explores through *City of God* what Luisela Alvaray, citing Nestor Garcia Canclini’s ground-breaking book *Hybrid Cultures*, calls the tendency of filmmakers in a transnational cultural landscape “to conform to generic cinematic codes (*cine-mundo*) in order to lure international audiences” (qtd. in Alvaray 62). The implicit critique in this formulation glosses over the very significance of such generic codes, which, in producing an international style consequently form the basis for an artificial collective memory-system. This in turn (in its broadest sense) is the matrix within which transnational identities are generated, appropriated, recontextualized and resignified. Behind this is the problem of defining ‘Brazilian’ over against properly transnational (not to speak of ‘global’) cultural

production—a problem arising in part from the gap between critical-theoretical discussions (such as this one) and the ‘reality’ of self-expression and self-representation on the cultural level. In Anne Marie Stock’s words: “[c]ritical discourse remains fixed within national and regional paradigms, while globalization increasingly impacts [upon] that body of work known as Latin American Cinema” (158).¹²

The following discussion divides into two sections: in the first I further elaborate the theoretical model within which *City of God* is considered in the context of collective cultural memory. In the second section I look closely at three separate shots and/or shot-sequences from the film, in order to shed light not merely on the diverse ways in which memory operates or manifests in a contemporary, cinematically conditioned context, but also to illuminate the central contradiction of cultural heterogeneity inevitably circumscribed by its engagement on the level of medium specificity within the spatio-temporal realism peculiar to film—what Robert Stam, in the context of adaptation, calls “cinema’s variegated chronotopic capacities” (*Literature* 15).

These questions become especially urgent in light of a film like *City of God*, in its self-reflexive fictionalization of the ‘real-life’ world of favela drug culture, with its perpetual cycle of (ironically productive) violence—a set of culturally and historically specific meanings which may only *appear* to lend themselves to transmission as publicly available ‘memories’ via the film’s adroit exploitation of the new global film vernacular. My reading of this film therefore presupposes a larger argument about the irreducibly exteriorized, ethically charged and eminently *cinematic* nature of postmodern memory and thus of visually constituted identity, both individual and collective.

‘Prosthetic memories’, in Alison Landsberg’s theory, “are indeed ‘personal’ memories, as they derive from engaged and experientially oriented encounters with the mass media’s various technologies of memory” (148). In other words, the most immediate ‘experience’ referenced by prosthetic memory is this encounter with the unavoidable layers of telecommunicative mediation: the ‘memory’ itself is merely the audio-visual ‘content’ that is utterly visible and publicly available. In Paul Burgoyne’s words, “electronic or audio-visual *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) have created a kind of second-order memory system that is fast becoming a second-order reality” (225).

For an understanding of a film like *City of God* it is necessary to cross Landsberg’s notion of collective artificial memory produced through the consumption of pop cultural commodities—most notably mainstream films—with the *post-postcolonial* idea of ‘diasporic identification’ defined in the context of transnational cinema: “As a lived condition, diasporic identification entails an imaginative leap beyond the particulars of one’s own experience. It functions as the postnational version of the ‘imagined community’ that Benedict Anderson famously theorized” (Ezra and Rowden

8). In contrast to the nation, the transnational represents a new category of 'imagined community', one defined not even in terms of virtual parameters but in terms precisely of the productive *absence* of specific spatio-temporal limits. To put it yet another way: 'diasporic identity' is to space what prosthetic or 'post-'memory is to time: their intersection is crystallized in a film like *City of God*, producing (or presupposing) two distinct subjectivities: that of the viewer, charged with the task of decoding the film's specific meanings, and that underpinning the characters themselves. The first is a kind of 'transnational subject'; the second a specific product of diaspora. The question here is the relation between these two subjectivities, caught as they are in a specifically inflected version of the classic relation of identificatory intimacy and voyeuristic distance—an ontological gap that can be bridged only by means of film style, intimately connected to, if not dictated by, Rocket's narrative focalization.

GLOBAL CULTURE AND FILM STYLE

One of the benefits of globalization for Northern hemispheric cinephiles (in disproportionate compensation for Hollywood's culturally imperialistic tendencies) is the recent general increase in the dissemination of the products of 'world cinema' (see Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History* 704–6). This introduction of more 'foreign' (i.e. foreign language [see Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*; Egoyan and Balfour]) material into the purview of a North American-based popular culture has occurred alongside the burgeoning of a global youth culture whose superficial homogeneity—indeed, whose very existence—is itself a product of the fertile synergy of telecommunications media and generationally specific marketing. Although it seems clear that such a youth cultural identity formation is as much media construct as lived reality, there is no doubt that a whole new class—or generation—of ever more youthful consumers has emerged in the wake of the 1960s as a significant economic force (see O'Brien and Szeman 57–78; Medevoi 1–52). Historically, this class has been in the making since the Second World War:

The dominant perception of youth has changed over the last half-century, largely in response to the growth of teenagers and, increasingly, children as a huge consumer market. Whether this development has contributed to the *empowerment* of young people is open to question. (O'Brien and Szeman 66)

It is no accident that *City of God*'s first section is set in the late 1960s, when a youth-based counterculture was first going global, producing new subject positions out of the contradictory relation between freedom, empowerment and self-determination, on the one hand, and consumerism,

on the other. In the context of contemporary Brazilian cinema, however, one inevitably runs up against the social-cultural *difference* between the ‘typical’ North American teen-consumer and her/his counterpart in specific, developing-world, post-colonial subcultural formations, whose existence is paradoxically dependent upon and yet completely *outside* of the *Northern* American society of the spectacle. The boys and young men in *City of God* exemplify this paradoxical subaltern subjectivity; theirs is a world, and set of identities, after all, defined historically by the *lack* of the means to acquire specific commodities and consumer goods. Moreover, the favela depicted in the film is deliberately located far *outside* the city centre;¹³ these are not ‘inner-city’ gangs in any North American understanding of the term.¹⁴ The various characters and their interconnected stories do not convey a self-conscious alienation from the desired mainstream North American cultural values, ideologies or myths; *City of God* is concerned with a far more fundamental form of alienation:

The film . . . gives powerful expression to the feelings of class and racial disenfranchisement that create a subjectivity under siege in a society swamped by images of glamour and sex appeal and a rhetoric of advertising intent on the exploitation of mimetic desire. [. . .] Young people’s expectations are shaped in daily contact with a vision of consumption way beyond their reach. [. . .] *City of God* adds a new piece to the mosaic of violence composed by recent Brazilian cinema. It adds up to a picture of a consumerist society of scandalous social inequality. (Xavier 30)¹⁵

INTENSIFIED CONTINUITY AS CINEMATIC LINGUA FRANCA

The social reality represented in *City of God* is the ironic inversion of the self-contradictory subcultural reality of Northern hemispheric youth as represented in most Cultural Studies accounts.¹⁶ The young men and boys of Rio’s favelas live wholly outside of the bourgeois ideal the desire for which they desperately, if unconsciously, express in their self-construction as gangsters whose moral code is determined by the power dually conferred by the profits from the drug trade and by the gun. In *City of God* we see a hybridized, *globalized* youth culture, combining elements of North American and so to speak ‘indigenous’ Brazilian cultures. Meirelles’s film offers a powerful antidote to the Romantic mythology of childhood innocence in its representation of youth gangs and the drug trade in the favelas of 1960s and ’70s Rio; an antidote not undiluted, however, by a certain nostalgia conveyed in specific stylistic terms (as will be discussed later). For, even more notable than the graphic depiction of this seldom-depicted world is the manner in which

the filmmakers have appropriated specific stylistic tropes and strategies from the Hollywood model dominant in the late 1990s, exemplified by films as diverse as *The Matrix* (1999; Wachowski Bros.) and *Fight Club* (1999; David Fincher).¹⁷

As noted in the second chapter, Bordwell's 'intensified continuity'—the dominant style of contemporary American mass-market film—represents a (relatively) unified repertoire of stylistic elements: "Far from rejecting traditional continuity in the name of fragmentation and incoherence, the new style amounts to an *intensification* of established techniques. Intensified continuity is traditional continuity amped up, raised to a higher pitch of emphasis" (Bordwell, "Continuity" 16). To reiterate, intensified continuity is characterized by four stylistic tactics: rapid editing; bipolar extremes of lens focal length (wide-angle vs. telephoto/zoom lens); close framings in dialogue scenes; free-ranging (i.e. 'un-motivated') camera movement (16–21). To this list I would here add an utterly domesticated use of CGI special effects, characterized by the 'virtual camera' used to great effect in *City of God*. If classical Hollywood continuity style produces cinematic 'realism', then 'intensified continuity' produces the *new* 'realism' and the heightened mode of spectatorship this implies:

Intensified continuity represents a significant shift within the history of moviemaking. Most evidently, the style aims to generate a keen moment-by-moment anticipation. [. . .] Close-ups and singles make the shots very legible. Rapid editing obliges the viewer to assemble discrete pieces of information, and it sets a commanding pace: look away and you might miss a key point. [. . .] Television-friendly, the style tries to rivet the viewer to the screen. [. . .] [E]ven ordinary scenes are heightened to compel attention and sharpen emotional resonance. (24)

As much as post-Mulveyan identification, the new style is also about a kind of postmodern 'defamiliarization'. The viewer, it might be said, is sutured into the contradictory gap between spectatorial immersion and the often high degree of self-reflexivity characteristic of such films, all but guaranteeing that any extra-filmic political or historical consciousness will be subordinated to story, character and a new brand of verisimilitude, or 'reality effect.' After all, as John Belton reminds us, "a product of contemporary advertising and media manipulation, Hollywood fantasy understands that the truth is a product of just how *convincingly* things are presented" (qtd. in Gates 48). In the degree to which it articulates with Hollywood fantasy as a contemporary umbrella genre, precisely the same (tauto-)logic applies in the viewing of a 'non-Hollywood' film like *City of God*, where the 'ideal' viewer judges the film's representation of a specific 'reality' on the basis of her/his prior knowledge of precisely this kind of truth or reality constituted in and through cinematic representations.

Although film as cultural product is inevitably affected by social and cultural changes, those changes do not necessarily have a direct expression in film because of film's own conventions that override external influences. The aim of popular film is not to record reality but to process it through idealized characters, narratives, and themes into a fantasy that will bring pleasure to its audiences. (Gates 48)

In this context, 'fantasy' is just another way of talking about *ideology*.

What both Lucia Nagib and Ismail Xavier call *City of God*'s 'Neorealism'¹⁸ is "combined with a sense of the image as artifice, the narrative as a fast-moving train of emotions conveyed through elaborate fast edits and computer-created effects" (Xavier 29). Such effects nevertheless lack the defamiliarizing impact of the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekten*—an ironically revealing characteristic of much intensified continuity cinema in what it suggests about the political dimension of this postmodern style. For Nagib, "[n]one of the self-reflexive techniques used in the film creates a distancing effect" (249). For example, in his voiceover the narrator-character Rocket dictates

at whim the freeze-frames, flashbacks and fast forwards, zooms and long shots, thus exposing the mechanics of digital editing. [. . .] At no time, however, is the story called into question" (249); nor is the narrator's credibility ever in doubt. What Nagib calls Rocket's "self-reflexive position" in fact guarantees the film's postmodern 'realism'. (249)

Furthermore (as suggested previously), this quasi-godlike control is both motivated and, in effect, justified, by Rocket's selections as photographer, choosing and framing what the viewer sees, as the camera *within* the mise-en-scene periodically elides with the film camera's invisible narration from 'outside' the film's diegetic world. In these moments photograph and on-screen image—typically Angelica, his teenage love interest—are commensurate, hypostatizing the now classic trope of photo-as-memory. The film thus produces its own set of iconic images in these momentary interruptions of the narrative flow that nevertheless grant them their contextual meaning (see Draaisma 119–25).

While it can be argued that *City of God* epitomizes a specifically *Brazilian* inflection of Bordwell's intensified continuity, this is fast becoming (on the stylistic and 'grammatical' level) a kind of global cinematic *lingua franca*. As Bordwell implies, the amplified style of intensified continuity lends itself especially to the bread-and-butter Hollywood high-concept action film. Such films tend to be defined by a relatively high quotient of violence, whether stylized or more graphically 'realistic'. Ironically, intensified continuity's often hyperkinetic cutting in fact lends itself to a 'believable,' highly subjective representation of violence in which, in specific scenes, each separate shot is so brief that no single action is shown in its

entirety. In stylistic terms, then, the third section of *City of God* stands alongside such recent Hollywood action fare as the *Bourne* trilogy (discussed in Chapter 2) or the new James Bond series, as well as a certain tendency in international cinema, both 'art house' and otherwise.¹⁹ On the other hand, the representation of violence in Meirelles's film may be said to bear distinctively 'Brazilian' features. In Cinema Novo founder Glau-ber Rocha's revolutionary aesthetic axiom—formulated in response to the socio-economic situation in 1960s Brazil—"the most noble cultural mani-festation of hunger is violence" (Rocha 70). The violence so graphically represented in *City of God* is of course *not* the politically emancipatory or redemptive violence of which Rocha speaks; *that* kind of meaning could be read only as implicit in the film's language, as the emancipatory potential embodied in its visual style, in its hybrid—but highly legible—aesthetic. Nagib is therefore right in asserting that the "violence is contained in the *form* of the film, especially in the editing, and for this reason is all the more powerful" (245; emphasis mine). Casual analogies with Hollywood or 'MTV' style are dangerous; the filmmakers consciously avoid the glamorization of violence in their technical and stylistic choices. Indeed, intensified continuity style is as much about the *impression* of explicit action as any direct display (Oppenheimer 83).

With the framing scene of the film—a carnivalesque montage of communal feast, close-ups and frenzied chicken hunt, cut to the rhythms of samba music (Nagib 245)—we know that we are very far from Rocha's axiom: in the 'chicken's-eye-view' subjective camera, the 'aesthetic of hunger' is ironically inverted. Xavier describes this opening scene as "Rabelaisian", echoing Robert Stam's discussion of the 'carnivalesque' foundations of indigenous Latin American popular culture (Stam "Margins," 317–23).²⁰ In contrast to Cinema Novo and the legacy of political modernist film practice, postwar Brazilian commercial cinema (epitomized by the *chanchada* genre) sought to measure up at all costs to the aesthetic standard of Hollywood (Vieira 263). This desire was often presented in the form of an auto-parodic impulse within the films themselves, drawing attention to the inevitable disparity in production values between Brazilian and American popular cinema up to the 1980s (Vieira 263). In *City of God*, by contrast, the carnivalesque parody is also directed outward, at a global culture (and audience), marking the film as at once 'Brazilian' *and* transnational.

STYLE AND/AS MEMORY IN CITY OF GOD

In her insightful comparison of *City of God* and its source-novel (Paulo Lins's *City of God* [1997]), Nagib offers a persuasive reading of the film's 'mythical structure', with its "Paradise", 'Purgatory' and 'Hell' in relation to the three different phases in the history of the City of God shantytown" (247). This reading of the tripartite structure (coded in terms of

editing, camera work, sound and mise-en-scene) accounts for the diegetic presentation of the false utopia of the newly constructed 1960s Cidade de Deus favela as seen in flashback in the first section (following the opening framing scene): “We came to the City of God hoping to find paradise,” explains Rocket. Nagib’s reading also accounts for the visual disjuncture between the neat rows of subsidized houses of the original ex-urban 1960s favela and the subsequent, visually and spatially incommensurable, utterly *urban*, post-’70s incarnation of the Cidade de Deus—what Nagib calls a ‘neofavela’: a labyrinthine, vertically defined space that “buries alive the previous rural world”: “The slum had been a purgatory, now it was hell,” comments Rocket (247). Finally, to extend a point made by others: with the exception of a few scenes shot in Rio proper, or on the beach, the dominant spaces of *City of God* do not exemplify the diasporic chronotope of much transnational cinema (see Ezra and Rowden 7–10). Rather, they are the built-up, densely populated and squalid ex-urban spaces of the favelas outside Rio, constructed in the early 1960s by the Brazilian government for the express purpose of class-based segregation: physically marginalizing the poor, unemployed, dark-skinned people at the bottom of the social ladder.

Nagib’s socio-eschatological reading to one side, *City of God* has a complex three-act structure in which each section is separated from the others through clear stylistic choices, and the use of a digital intermediate to lend each section a distinctive tonality (Oppenheimer 83). Parallel to the historical trajectory of the soundtrack music (an effective mix of traditional Brazilian, Western rock and disco etc.), the style changes from one part of the film to the next: the 1960s section employs classical continuity, while the 1970s and ’80s sections display a gradually intensification of classical style. This stylistic development across the film has important consequences for the classification, representation and valuation of memory. The first section features highly legible editing, smooth and unobtrusive camerawork and virtually the only wide-angle shots in the film (Oppenheimer 84). The “warm, yellow” tonality here is also intended to impart a nostalgic quality to the setting, referencing the classic Hollywood Western (84). Nagib calls this the film’s ‘Golden Age’, as much for the prevalent colours of light and setting as for the resulting aura of idealized quasi-rural pastness. This aspect of the first section is ultimately ambiguous in meaning, however, in that any spectatorial nostalgia—for Hollywood’s as much as Brazil’s past¹—is conditioned by specific intertextual ironies, as will be seen later. Even identification with the ‘Tender Trio’—tacitly encouraged on the stylistic level²²—is ironically destabilized on the intertextual-semantic level. In the second section, the aura of nostalgia is updated via references in the mise-en-scene to already commodified youth subcultural signifiers specific to the period. This is expressed visually through a shift in tonality to more vivid colours, favouring blues and greens (84), as well as post-production effects like split screens. This middle section utilizes handheld technique, and camera movements, although freer, “still respect cinematographic grammar” in

order to establish a kind of tenuously positive atmosphere that dissipates in the last part, after Bene's death (84). In the final, 1980s, section, conventions are all but abandoned: the camera is almost always moving, often frenetically, favouring close and medium shots, jump cuts and whip-pans; the editing is much faster, pushing at the borders of legibility (84–86), producing what might be called a *controlled* incoherence. (David Bordwell argues that the rapid cutting characteristic of intensified style has not necessarily resulted in a “‘postclassical’ breakdown of spatial continuity” [Hollywood 123]. Of many possible examples of ‘failed’ intensification, Todd McCarthy remarks of *Armageddon* [1998] that director Michael Bay’s “visual presentation is so frantic and chaotic that one can’t often tell which ship or characters are being shown, or where things are in relation to one another” [qtd. in Bordwell, Hollywood 123]. One could also cite a film like *Johnny Mnemonic* [1995], Robert Longo’s first effort, whose climactic fight scene exemplifies virtually illegible spatial relations.) This final shift coincides on the level of story with the introduction of cocaine into the favela, and the ensuing struggle for power and all-out gang war with which the film culminates (84). The tonality here is again monochromatic but much darker than in the relatively idyllic 1960s section (86).

The three stylistically distinct sections are nevertheless connected at several points on the levels of both plot and cinematography by recurrent shots, motifs and set-pieces. This highly patterned and repetitive structure is effectively masked by the much-remarked ‘realism’ of the film’s overall style. For example, the film begins and ends with the hold-up of a propane delivery truck, with very different outcomes, underscoring the degree of change in the film’s representation of violent crime from the 1960s to the ’80s. At the same time, each of the three temporal sections ends with the shooting death of a major character: Shaggy, Bene, then both Knockout Ned and L'il Zé. Prior to their deaths, brothers Shaggy and Bene are both convinced by their girlfriends in post-coital trysts to abandon the gangster life in favour of a proto-hippy lifestyle of family, farming, “peace and love” (the film’s ironic mantra). This dream proves vain in each case, as the film reinforces the irony that the only escape from the favela—and thus the cycle of violence—is death. Finally, the second and third sections are linked by scenes in which a young man either contemplates or attempts to avenge a murder. Early in the 1970s section (after the third revisiting of the apartment scene), in the flashback that introduces the newly minted L'il Zé, we see and hear Rocket in voiceover passing up his chance to kill L'il Ze in revenge for his brother’s death. This is an ironically proleptic ‘echo’ of the second instance, at the end, when the young Otto kills Knockout Ned to avenge his father’s death in a bank hold-up, revisited in flashback. This last death, along with the Runts’ murder of L'il Zé, guarantees the perpetuation of the cycle of violence, even as Rocket’s clandestine front-page photo of L'il Zé’s bullet-riddled body guarantees him exemption, while bringing L'il

Ze (albeit posthumously) the fame he sought beyond the favela's borders. On another level, this three-act structure (see e.g. Neto 11; Andrews 7) is complicated and any potential linearity short-circuited by the film's other major structuring device: the disruptive distanciation effect of Rocket's flashback-narrative recursivity.

As suggested, the current proliferation of memory research entails a need for precision. Accordingly, for the purposes of this discussion, I will isolate two distinct (but interconnected) ways in which film as artificial memory manifests in *City of God*. First, there is memory represented via specific formal-stylistic features, a specific cinematic vocabulary or set of codes, typified by such temporally disjunctive strategies as the 'flashback'. In Maureen Turim's optimistic view, "[c]ultural difference can be the source of a new vision of flashback narration. Flashback films that come from third world countries break through the mold of political flashback films and seem to provide a constructive alternative view of historical memory" (Turim 243). *City of God* has an obvious flashback structure that tended to be the focus of the initial critical reception. This structure is represented microcosmically in the opening 360-degree 'Matrix-style' shot,²³ here motivated by the drive to dynamically represent the recursive non-linearity of narrative time. The film's story actually begins *in medias res* (as in Homer, right before the climax): from flashback to 'flash-forward' (to intermediate past) and back to the opening shot—the temporal transitions achieved through a circular trick shot plus CGI effects. According to Turim, "[s]ome flashbacks directly involve a quest for the answer to an enigma posed in the beginning of a narrative through a return to the past"; one type "is the narrative which employs a flashback just prior to the climactic revelation of the enigma, to provide a missing aspect of the enigma" (11). *City of God*'s opening offers an excellent example: the sequence with Rocket caught in the space between the rival forces of gang and police immediately precedes the story's violent and bloody climax and ironically hopeful denouement. The much-discussed 'bullet time' look of this shot was achieved through a combination of old-fashioned cinematographic trickery—a simultaneous "swish-zoom/dolly" repeated three times (Oppenheimer 89)—and a digital intermediate, in which the shot speed was increased and the background dissolve from present to past created (89). This much-discussed arcing shot, for all its self-conscious showiness, established on the film's micro-formal level the determining pattern of recursivity for the entire narrative—the recursivity, in short, of a certain view of memory as an infernal trap or vicious circle from which Rocket longs to escape.²⁴ It is this desire precisely that drives the narrative forward and, ultimately, back upon itself—even as Rocket's own narrative function is as 'embedded' narrator rather than as protagonist properly speaking. At the same time, this recursivity provides a narrative that objectively instantiates Rocket's subjective memory-in-action.



Figure 5.1 *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, 2002).

Second, there is memory as (cinematic) intertextuality, in which cinema's own past (and ever-present present) constitutes an archive potentially accessible within or through *any* film, but which tends to operate in specific, motivated instances of intertextual appropriation and recontextualization (e.g. Jameson's 'nostalgia film'). *City of God* is typically intertextual in its generation of meaning—where 'typical' in this case refers to films that conform to a category of transcultural cinematic intertextuality whose signifier derives largely in response to contemporary Hollywood and North American pop culture generally. A perfect, if perplexing, example of 'intertextual memory' occurs in the film's first third: the ironic appropriation of/homage to *Charlie's Angels*. Broadcast on the ABC network from 1976 to 1981, the original television show post-dates the 1960s historical referent of the film's first section, set in the newly constructed Cidade de Deus. Obviously not a specifically Brazilian intertext, *Charlie's Angels* is symptomatic of later twentieth-century North American popular culture, and, since its initial televisual incarnation, has become part of a multi-media youth cultural matrix.²⁵ Signifying as a kind of self-reflexive in-joke, this shot conveys a trans-diegetic intertextual meaning addressed to a spectator not limited to a specific regional-cultural frame of reference. The question is: why *this* intertext *here*, given that Meirelles and his cinematographer reportedly "wanted the assault on the gas truck to be like a stagecoach hold-up" in a classic Western? (Oppenheimer 84). The irony stems of course from the contrast between the iconic image from a popular 1970s American television

comedy-drama transposed into a cinematic re-creation of 1960s Brazilian hoodlums in a purpose-built ex-urban slum holding up a gas truck to help their friends and families. After all, as this pose illustrates, *Charlie's Angels* is famous for being one of the first network television programs to showcase women in roles traditionally assigned to men (see Read). In other words, this is a shining example of Jameson's resignified pastiche, the symptom *par excellence* of the postmodern distortion or erasure of historical consciousness (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 286). This is the 'bad' sort of historicity Jameson identifies as typical of this cultural dominant, characterized by an "indiscriminate appetite for dead styles and fashions" wherein—in the 'nostalgia film' proper—it is not the past that is represented so much as the present in the terms of the past, in the cinematic rendering of the (illusorily) proprietary notion of the ever-present present moment of consumption: the reification and therefore the commodification of the 'past' as image, or of the present in terms of an imagined past (*Postmodernism* 284–85).²⁶ The concept of intertextual pastiche helps to explain the significance of the nostalgia operating in *City of God*; Meirelles's film both is and is not a 'nostalgia film' in Jameson's sense: for, while it evokes a specific Brazilian past through commodified pastiche-images, it does not always do so in the terms of that past. (This does happen, however, with the film's incorporation of a television newscast in which the footage of the news anchorman is authentic while the interview with Knockout Ned is simulated—although the real footage of the real Ned is played over the closing credits.) As I have argued, *City of God* exploits the contemporary global film vernacular—call it 'transnational intensified continuity'—to represent and comment upon a highly specific past time and place, in a manner unavoidably critical and self-ironic, stylistically defamiliarizing but without the carnivalizing call to political transformation characteristic of 1960s avant-garde Brazilian cinema.

A more broadly relevant example of this category of cinematic memory comes in one transitional scene in which the film intertextualizes famous journalistic photos of the bloodied bodies of dead boy-soldiers in the favela drug wars of the 1970s and '80s. "City of God bears the traits of fiction and documentary. Along with the drama in a stylish and commercial narrative, the film presents journalistic images from the most traditional news programme on Brazilian TV" (Melo 479). This is one of several subsequent scenes that bear out the nihilistic promise veiled behind the nostalgic golden hues of the film's first section, with its penultimate shot of Shaggy's dead body, captured in the lens of a tabloid reporter's camera. As indicated previously, it is no coincidence, given Rocket's chosen profession, that the filmmakers here reference iconic images from contemporary media coverage of the favela drug wars. Tellingly, in his voiceover, Rocket remarks that the favela-dwellers got used to "living in Vietnam"—a cultural analogy concretized on the visual level. As Melo argues, however, "City of God is not clearly a hybrid. It does not create a truly dialectical tension between



Figure 5.2 *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, 2002).

documentary and fiction. It does not create space for critical interpretation in this respect, but rather blends both for the sake of a commercial strategy" (480). *City of God* is a 'hybrid' in the other, stylistic, sense, however. The foregoing are two very different, intentional and meaningful examples of intertextual/intermedial images for the recognition of which the average movie-goer must rely on tools—prosthetic memory-devices—like the DVD commentary track, or a website like the Internet Movie Database. Each example reveals, in Garcia Canclini's phrase, the film's aesthetic engagement with a peculiarly Brazilian "multi-temporal heterogeneity" (3)—glossed by Stam as "the temporally palimpsestic identity of Latin America, criss-crossed by elements from the constellations of cultures which embroider a harlequinade mix of multicultural elements" ("Margins" 361). Ironically, it is at this very point that the film risks tipping over into the most banal postmodern self-reflexivity. This constitutes a third way in which *City of God* engages with memory within its diegesis: photography as compensatory memory in the age of technical reproducibility.

The change in the representation of violence across the film is evident by the climactic scene in which L'il Ze commandeers a gas truck in a bid to escape Carrot's gang. In the film's opening section the 'Tender Trio' do not use their weapons—indeed, they never discharge them at people—brandishing them instead as obvious (and therefore parodic) phallic emblems. After the opening frame narrative with the runaway chicken, the film's critical alignment of camera and gun, from the intra-diegetic (Rocket's

photography) to the extra-diegetic (the film camera itself), develops gradually until the advent of L'il Ze as trigger-happy lord of the favela in the 1970s section. Photography is thematized from the start, however, incorporated into the fabric of the film in the form, for example, of the whirr of the camera motor heard over each freeze-frame as Rocket introduces the principal characters. The implication, so easy to miss as it is subsumed into the larger conventions of film narration, is that this is the manner in which Rocket remembers: via prosthetic ‘snapshots’ which are then reassembled in a variety of ways in order to facilitate narrative meaning. This alignment climaxes (literally) in the scene, reprised at the end, of Rocket poised to take a photo of L'il Ze and his gang, only—instead of the click of the camera shutter—we hear the crack of a rifle and see—instead of the expected freeze-frame image—another nameless death. By the film’s final scene Rocket has quite literally become the embodiment of ‘collective memory’ in the favela, as the controlling gaze of the camera (in both senses) temporarily supersedes the authority of the gun.

CONCLUSION: GLOBALIZED IDENTITY

It is clear that Brazilian cinema has evolved far beyond its historical roots, in line with a generally global transformation in style that favours a kind of hybrid of postwar modernism and commercial genre film. The fact that *City of God* is produced in Brazil and not somewhere else needs to be taken into account in a consideration of its transnational status. This is an obvious fact but one that must be re-emphasized every time we watch a foreign film (with subtitles) and assume that we understand the ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ *because* it is a film—that it has ‘translated’ with neither distortion nor loss. The all-but-unconscious notion of film as global *lingua franca* speaks to the presence of a *transnational* intensified continuity, as I have called it. This new style in turn provides a material form, a set of filmic signifiers for the representation of, subjectivities produced out of the history and the spaces of diaspora. As suggested earlier, migration and diaspora are the twin determinants of transnational cinema and subjectivity alike: categories defined in terms of movement, displacement, nostalgia and enforced hybridity (Ezra and Rowden 7–10).²⁷ We are returned, necessarily, to the questions of identity, alterity and ethicality implicit in any discussion of memory, at this crucial juncture in the emergence of a ‘transnationalized’ cinema.

All of the filmic examples in the foregoing chapters foreground the balance between objective and subjective narrative material within each film—a crucial relation in a culture that relies so heavily on mass media and especially cinema for historical knowledge, as well as the means to remember, reconstruct or disavow an individual past. Cinematic migration entails a necessary quantum of change or loss, which is determined

according to the degree to which a certain filmic 'language' remains legible or 'translatable' (in every sense of the word) across cultural-spatial and historical-temporal boundaries. In the cynical view, the mass media's global reach guarantees the perpetuation of a kind of global social order where the fantasy life of the few is idealized and fetishized by the many who look on from 'outside'. This situation is made more ironic and complex still by the fact that now those on the 'inside' are also able to 'look on' as spectators of their own lives of increasingly tenuous privilege within a world in which reality is in a very meaningful sense preceded by its representations: in which dreams, waking fantasies and especially memories would have no 'existence' without the technology of film to operate as both artificial memory and historical record and therefore—to the extent that such a thing can still be spoken of—as collective ethical conscience. After all, for many audiences in the developed world today the cinema screen is still the primary locus of encounter with those transnational identities desired by many but truly possessed by none.

Coda

Remembering to Forget: The Catachreses of Modernity

Modernity destroys memory while making it essential.

—Stewart Martin

FROM AN ARCHIVAL TO AN APOMNESIC SUBJECT

This book is written from the point of view that memory is fundamental to, constitutive of, modern life—although not perhaps for precisely the same reasons it was undoubtedly central to life in the premodern past, if only for the observable fact that memory, like the individual self, has changed. As Richard Terdiman contends, “[m]emory functions in every act of perception, in every act of intellection, in every act of language. So even framing the questions one might ask about memory is difficult. We might as well attempt to see vision” (9). Terdiman’s analogy is even more apt in the context of an ocularcentric modern age distinguished from previous eras, perhaps, by the way in which the image serves to occlude as much as it reveals, just as ‘memory’ as individual or collective prosthesis, as artificial, exchangeable commodity, made possible by visually based technologies like cinema, can be interpreted either as a barrier to ‘authentic’ remembrance or as the only brand on the market. This is no metaphor, of course, as the commodification of memory is only the most obvious way in which modern memory differs from its pre-capitalist modalities.

As the basis of contemporary social relations, exchange throws into relief the desirability of the Levinasian self-other relation as ethical ‘model’, despite its ‘impossibility’—impossible not merely because it militates against the individualist backbone of late capitalist ideology, but also because of Levinas’s rejection of the possibility of visual representation of an *other* who/which is not merely assimilable to the self or same. As observed, memory puts an additional twist on this old problem of both aesthetics and ethics; what I call here the madeleine-image performs its function as fetishized image-object while at the same time metonymizing the filmic image *per se* as commodity form *par excellence*. Therefore as we begin to read cinema in general as a primary modality of social or cultural memory it becomes easier to recognize when specific films or filmmakers attempt to counter

this seemingly universal condition of the cinematic signifier. The essentially catachrestic nature of this image, in its reification—the necessary forgetting of its commodity-fetish status—links it as much to a collective amnesia as to memory. Hence, the dominant trope in late or postmodernity is not metaphor or metonymy or even allegory but dead metaphor. The two major catachreses, then, are as follows: (1) the forgetting of the metaphorical origins of modern prosthetic memory as mode of writing and/or as storage place; (2) the linkage of memory and commodities in the necessary ‘forgetting’ of the (unknowable) origins of the real and virtual objects and images with which we construct our identities and realities.

In his historical account of significant ‘scientific’ theories of memory, John Sutton points out the very different implications of contemporary “metaphors of memory motions and dynamic traces” over against the persistence of premodern, spatial “metaphors of secure independent traces located firmly in a memory bank” (13). I suggest that this seeming opposition can also be mapped onto the long-standing artificial cultural divide between the sciences properly speaking and the arts or humanities (see e.g. Snow). The persistence of these metaphors—architectural (storage) and textual (writing)—into the twentieth century and beyond is due not only to the invention and rapid development of photography and then cinema, but also to the epistemological force of a constellation of negative themes—death, absence, otherness—which have continued to lurk in the interstices of the spectacle. This is one reason why spatial and textual (which together constitute the archival) metaphors of memory persist in the face of scientific research around non-visual or otherwise non-representational dynamic models. Sutton’s point leads to one other observation regarding what I call the paradox of the spatial memory model: memory guarantees a continuous subjectivity; continuous subjectivity in its turn precludes a static ‘archive’ of unchanging memories; hence, not the *reproduction* that the archival model implies (the mimetically accurate product) but the dynamic *reconstruction* of the content of an ‘original experience’ (the process itself) (Sutton 6). This seeming opposition between technically supported mimetic reproduction and dynamic, ‘organic’ reconstruction resonates across the history of the memory film up to the present, with each pole representing a different modality of ‘collective’ or ‘cultural’ memory, always already beyond the personal, individual or private as the domain of the original, authentic and therefore ‘true’.

Rather than a subcategory of consciousness, memory is granted the status here of a kind of matrix in which one of the fundamental concerns of narrative, reducible to the encounter of the self and other, is played out. And, as should be abundantly clear by now, this is a thoroughly artificial, ‘literary’ or cinematic notion of memory. It must be recalled as well that any mention of memory invokes its proper other, if only silently, by default: not forgetting *per se* but ‘un-remembering’, here renamed ‘apomnesis’—in consonance with rhetorical *apophasis* or ironic denial. My argument

throughout has been that one of the results of the emergence of what is called modernity is the inversion of this sequence from a positive modality to a (radically) negative one, a form of wilful *forgetting*: memory in its most radical function as the only means of ‘measuring’ the incommensurable gap between the self and an absolutely absent other. As we saw in the Introduction, even Augustine had to spare some of his awe for divinity for the mind’s ability to recollect something—itself—that it can encompass but not comprehend.

What J. J. Long calls ‘archival subjectivity’ or ‘archival consciousness’ names a subject for whom a lack of memory is compensated “by substituting the archive for interiority” (162). This is one version of the subject of modernity *per se*, “ineluctably dependent on external mnemotechnical prostheses” (163). But this terminology emphasizes the institutional, hegemonic aspect of artificial memory at the expense of that dimension of self constituted agentially and self-consciously in its interactions and negotiations with the external, objective world. Augustine’s meditative analysis of memory in *Confessions* book 10 leads him to abandon the “hopeless quest” to make, with memory’s aid, “an inventory of things that he has experienced in the world in an effort to rise above himself” (Stock 208). This *apomnesic* approach—really, a kind of forgetting-as-divestment—is thrown over “in favour of a pragmatic approach” through a revalued and inverted form of Platonic *anamnesis* (Stock 213); where the latter term implies the *recovery* of memories *not* present to consciousness, the neologism *apomnesia* describes the complementary process of active or wilful forgetting—to ‘remember away’. My argument here is that one of the results of the emergence of modernity is the inversion of this sequence from a positive modality (*anamnesis* as ‘un-forgetting’) to a radically negative one, a form of initially *wilful* forgetting: memory in its most radical function as the only means of ‘measuring’ the incommensurable gap between the self and an absolutely absent other (*apomnesia* as ‘un-remembering’, where the act of will involved effaces itself in the process, invoking inevitable comparisons with Freudian repression.) This is an approach to memory, in other words, that shares its *logic* with premodern apophatic theologies, if not the apophatic orientation toward a radically negative conception of God, whose operation is inseparable from the text in which it is expressed.¹ This is therefore not truly the opposite of Augustine’s complex, nuanced theory of memory so much as an alternative to it, the difference turning on the primary issue of the self’s relative autonomy in a world from which God—which is to say an *idea* or representation of God—appears to have withdrawn; which is to say *to have been* withdrawn. This is an absence whose presence echoes across the history of the postwar international art film, in its appropriation and resignification of key modernist literary themes. Yet Augustine’s theory of memory, predicated on his essentially *positive* relation to God, has an internal orientation one might assume is utterly lacking in the narrative dynamics of most contemporary memory-films. However, a

closer examination of representative literary and critical materials suggests that the notion of an achieved secularization of *every* feature of modern subjectivity is inadequate. The resulting ‘dialogic’ model of memory is seen in certain instances of the international art film, as it emerges after World War II to address (for a time) the aesthetic, epistemological and, ultimately, ethical vacuum left by Hollywood cinema and its legacy. In these memory-films, as we have seen, the ‘other’ in question remains resolutely ‘human’, even if, or perhaps because, it is revealed as a construct, an extension, of the self; even if it is revealed to be resistant, paradoxically, to the representation on which its existence depends. Only in a few rare cases does this other kind of film succeed in ‘giving the other its due’, negotiating the question of representability at the heart of a Levinasian ethics, interrogating identity without compromising alterity.

Such postwar art films, as we have seen, typically present the analysis of memory in the guise of a fictive and generally metaphorical underworld journey, in which the protagonist visits the land of the dead, his past, in which his own past—‘dead’—self may be present, in cinema’s collapsing of temporalities into one vast planar space within which one may peer into the distance of past or future alike, as if looking down from a great height, death now merely a matter of optics. The question remains, however, to what degree this spatial model accounts for an objective, historical past, outside the subjective purview of the ‘mental’ journey genre. As noted, this difference is no longer as clear as it might once have been. In *Burial Places of Memory*, Ronald R. MacDonald foregrounds the links between epic katabasis or underworld journeys (Homer to Milton) and the classical art of memory’s reliance on physical-architectural places. For MacDonald “the ‘places’ of memory (. . . *loci*) become the burial-places of memory only with the supervention of the idea of repression, an active forgetting, so to speak, as opposed to the merely passive decay of the memory trace” (10). But does a conventional, post-Freudian understanding of repression support this notion of “active forgetting” Macdonald rightly introduces? This is precisely where the neologism *apomnesia* proves useful, indicating as it does a ‘voluntary’ act of *un*-remembering—rather than mere forgetting, or the unconscious operation of repression. ‘Apomnesia’, as another name for mnemonic divestment, is to memory what rhetorical apophysis is to philosophical or theological discourse. The point, as in the Freudian-Derridean notion of ethical mourning (see Chapters 1 and 2), is to divest oneself successfully of a disturbing or ‘traumatic’ memory in the form of its traces or images; of that mnemonic content which as it were refuses to be forgotten. Thus the places of memory become the ‘burial places’ of memory once this potential for the active disavowal or, more properly, *divestment* of specific memory-traces or -images becomes possible, with the advent of a modern agential subject occasioned by new technologies of recording, representation and communication.

The emergence of this new, abject or apomnesic subject—in narrative fiction, if not in actuality—is also symptomatic of the failure of a necessary

anamnesis in the wake of defining events for the postwar, postmodern world. For Jean-François Lyotard, an “interdiction on anamnesis” was imposed on the postwar generation of Europeans, especially Germans, in order to guarantee the “quiet perpetuation of the ‘modern project’”:

Can there be progress without anamnesis? Anamnesis constituted a painful process of working through, a work of mourning for the attachments and conflicting emotions, loves and terrors . . . We have only gotten as far as a vague, apparently inexplicable, end-of-century melancholy. (qtd. in Santner 8)

Such a peculiarly late-modern melancholia appears in attenuated form in these key examples of the contemporary art film protagonist as a concatenation of banal traits of character; the attributes whose primary instance are the subjective memories that comprise the objective fabric of the diegesis. In league with the alienated protagonists of the new American ‘smart film’ (whose advent they herald), this narrative subject is also the direct descendant of the protagonist of the classical European art cinema, avatar of a peculiarly European postmodernity: a historico-epistemological epoch emerging in the postwar period and defined by Peter Schneider in the Lyotardian terms of the end—through fragmentation, skepticism and deconstruction—of the so-called ‘modern project’; an epoch

constituted by a labour of mourning not only for past dreams and quests for hegemony but for dreams of redemption as such, even if they are cast in the rhetoric of liberation . . . [. . .] ‘Above all it has become evident that most of these liberation dreams, like all dreams of European hegemony, are and have been, with shockingly few exceptions, dreams of mastery and power’. (qtd. in Santner 164–65, n. 13)

THE ‘COLLAPSE OF MEMORY’: FROM COLLECTIVE TO TRANSCULTURAL MEMORY

Where historically conventional (post-classical) narrative film tends to reinforce received notions of ‘what memory looks like’, ‘what it is like to remember’ etc., the art film, by contrast, has defamiliarized received habits of spectatorship by offering radically different representations of such subjective ‘interior’ processes, laying bare modernity’s grounding myth of ‘interiority’ in their self-reflexive emphasis on the medium itself. It is no longer as easy—or perhaps it is impossible—to locate and define a clear stylistic or thematic (not to speak of industrial) division between an ‘art film’ and commercial cinema modes, as was possible for Bordwell, Deleuze or Turim, in their various taxonomical projects from the late 1970s on.

On the face of it, the notion of an exteriorized, public, ‘collective’ memory complicates the notion of a truly interior, personal, private memory, the widespread nostalgia for which only serves, ironically, to shore up its status as founding modern metanarrative. ‘Collective’ memory also precludes the legitimacy of seemingly related concepts, such as a ‘collective unconscious’. For Andrew Hoskins, “[c]ollective memory . . . is the product of a negotiation between individuals and their wider surround at a given time and in a given context” (Hoskins 2–3). That is to say, ‘memory’ today is *produced* in the act of recollection: it is *both* ‘brought forth to be displayed’ *and* created (but not *ex nihilo*). “In this way, the term social memory . . . is more appropriate, for it is not bound by the collective, but exists in and beyond the individual and the group and is dynamic within societies and across them” (Hoskins 3). Hoskins’s notion of the “collapse of memory” finds an interesting parallel in Rushkoff’s *Media Virus* (after Paul Virilio) in the collapsing of the difference or *distance* between memory and history, personal and public, individual and social: the “speed and distribution [of contemporary media forms] allow for participatory, culture-wide events to unfold in the present tense” (xii)—what we have been calling for some time now ‘real time’. “History becomes now” (xii), in a collapsing of the temporal gap, thanks to quasi-instantaneous coverage, ‘embedded’ reportage, etc. that also results (since the first Gulf War at least) in the collapsing of conventional distinctions between positions of necessarily limited subjective experience and objective knowledge, producing what Rushkoff calls the “participatory spectacle” (xiv).

As suggested in Chapter 3, the centrality of speed, novelty and shock—the ‘traumatic’ quality of modernity—is not unique to the late-1960s proto-digital period: Georg Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin and others overlap in their conceptualizations of modernity

as an increase in the speed and intensity of stimuli. Time emerges as a problem intimately linked to the theorization of modernity as trauma or shock. Time is no longer the benign phenomenon most easily grasped by the notion of flow but a troublesome and anxiety-producing entity that must be thought in relation to management, regulation, storage, and representation. One of the most important apparatuses for regulating and storing time was the cinema. (Doane 33–34)

Doane’s image recalls the centuries-old metaphor of memory as storage-place or library, combined with the taking literally of the metaphor in the word ‘cinematography’: ‘writing’ with/in light. Memory in these catachrestic terms thus accounts for both the formal means of recording and of storing knowledge of the past, or ‘memories’ as content. In the twenty-first century, cinema’s role *vis-a-vis* memory continues to be to provide us with the means to remember, even as the commodified content of much popular cinema militates against this very process.

As the present study attests, the discourse of cinema studies today is rife with references to the transnational, extraterritorial and diasporic: cinema as global *lingua franca*—a notion fraught with contradiction. In *Regarding the Pain of Others* Susan Sontag, in a moment of uncharacteristic agreement with pro-postmodernist critics, denies that there is such a thing as collective memory, only a collective or consensual will to value one thing over many others (85; see Jameson, *Reading* 202). But Sontag, unlike theorists as different as Jameson or Baudrillard, grossly underestimates the role that representation has played and continues to play in modernity: there may be no ‘collective memory’ in the sense of veritable cognitive phenomena, only myths, fictions (like Jung’s ‘collective unconsciousness’, so easily confused with prostheticized social memory)—but myth means ideology, in the form of a vast, ever-expanding archive of images, and in this very tangible sense there is a kind of ‘collective memory’. In the twenty-first century, *all* memory is collective memory, as long as it is recognized that this is always already ‘inauthentic’, artificial or prosthetic; all *mnesis* is *mnemotechnic*. Moreover, no memory is impersonal or objective: all memory, even, or perhaps especially collective social memory, is subjective in its meaning (see Bukatman 79). However—and here the contradictions of modern memory really become evident—no memory is purely personal, or private. For the very same reasons, all memory is public, exteriorized; signifying on the social before the individual level. Furthermore, all memory (in this sense) has an irreducibly material form; memory is image, in a direct refutation of a position, going back in modern times to Proust and Bergson, that memory is somehow independent of the material forms that body it forth or precipitate its return—a position that today seems almost Romantic in its dependence upon an interiority *independent* of the cultural forms that allow it to be (see e.g. Bergson 135–36). Moreover, as noted in Chapter 4, in terms of its later modern manifestations this is no longer memory at all but *counter-memory*, in either a pejorative or progressive sense: collective amnesia versus consensually revisionist historical discourse.

While modernity may encourage a certain amnesia in its subjects, prosthetic memory technology, from the archive to the personal handheld device, is itself incapable of forgetting: as *Blade Runner*’s conclusion poignantly demonstrates, the only limit to artificial memory is ‘death’. Barbara Mennel recognizes this “conflict between affective human and technological memory” as an important theme in the SF memory film since Godard’s *Alphaville* (1965) (135; see also Van Dijk 9–15). Even Marshall McLuhan, while lauding the mass media as ‘extensions’ of the human sensorium also lamented them as ‘amputations’ of specific sensory faculties; that is, the proliferation of visual images that is the society of the spectacle—like the ‘matrix’ in the eponymous film—make us blind to whatever ‘true’ or more ‘authentic’ human life might still perdure beneath the surface (see Rushkoff 21). This idea clarifies Alison Landsberg’s contention that prosthetic memories are like a literal *prosthesis*: “these memories are actually worn on

the body; these are sensuous memories produced by an experience of mass-mediated representations. And, like an artificial limb, these memories often mark a *trauma*" (149). But it is necessary to see that this counter-memory is at bottom a compensatory structure, whose value depends on how one chooses to read it. Neither properly 'personal' nor properly 'collective', this social-cultural memory is primarily compensatory in its function, because it is archival in its nature.

In contemporary popular cultural terms, the revaluation of memory and history—what Andrew Hoskins calls 'new memory', which amounts to the collapsing of 'History' into personal, subjective memory, via the 'new image'—shores up the perpetual present moment of consumption as the only meaningful temporality; past and future become mere image, commodities with no absolute value. At the same time, ironically, anxiety over the impoverishment or loss of historical consciousness characteristic of this commoditized life-world drives consumer appetite for more 'historical content'. Here my more cynical reading intersects with a diagnosis of the post-modern like Jameson's, which vacillates between performative celebration of the status quo and 'lament' for what has been lost. What *other* kinds of prosthetic memory are available, then, in non-mainstream cultural products? What is the place of contemporary (post-) art cinema in this revaluation of technology's role in the mediation of ethical relations? Finally, as the age of cinema itself becomes history, how in the future will the culture's privileging of individual identity as pre-eminent commodity be served by the moving image?

Since its inception, cinema has evolved into not merely a 'reflection' but an indispensable index of human experience—especially our experience of time's passage, of the present moment, and, most importantly perhaps, of the past, in both collective and individual terms. If a legitimate cinematic alternative continues for a time to exist and thrive, outside of or to one side of commercial film and its amnesia, its contradictions and catachreses, this other cinema signifies only to the extent that it allows for alternative modalities of memory, and a radically exteriorized, cinematic picture of the self and the obligations of memory: the only 'unconscious' an optical one; the past an ever-shifting panoply of images, perpetually present, before our eyes; the truly other, always elsewhere.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. With anthologies (e.g. *Theories of Memory: A Reader* [Johns Hopkins, 2007]), a new journal (*Memory Studies*: first issue 2008), and academic programs (e.g. Newcastle University's MA in 'Writing, Memory, Culture'; the new Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory at the University of London; etc.), Memory Studies is already well established as one of the most urgent contemporary interdisciplinary fields.
2. It therefore goes without saying that I am in agreement with Maureen Turim's contention that "the powerful imaginative impact of the representation of memory" is due to "the strongly eidetic [quality of] ... flashback films" (208). See also Deleuze, who, in *Cinema 1* speaks of "the rise and inflation of images both in the external world and in people's minds" (206).
3. Elsaesser reads "the return of history as film" in two distinct senses, the first "speaking about the specific role of the moving image in the representation of extreme historical events such as genocide, civil war and other man-made disasters", the second "naming the fact that much of our collective or cultural memory of the twentieth century is now constituted by precisely the filmic and photographic record that has been preserved or passed on" (168; see also 172).
4. For a historian's view on this point, see Judt 1–22.
5. E.g. Van Dijck. See especially ch. 1: "Mediated Memories as Conceptual Tool" (1–26).
6. See e.g. Berman; Habermas; Cahoon. On the postmodern see e.g. Hassan; Jameson, *Postmodernism* (particularly "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, 1–54); Calinescu; Lyotard; Hutcheon, "Postmodernism."
7. Barbara Mennel points out the need to counter the dangers of "looking back at the history of film from our vantage point and presuming a linear development from its inception to the prevalence of visual culture in contemporary society" (3).
8. For a different reading of the *Phaedrus* see Carruthers 16.
9. On Augustine's theory of signs (in *De Doctrina Christiana* and elsewhere) see Brian Stock 7–9.
10. "A trace is left in our psychical apparatus of the perceptions which impinge upon it. This we may describe as a 'memory-trace'; and to the function relating to it we give the name of 'memory'" (Freud, "On the Interpretation of Dreams" 687).
11. Freud writes in "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad" of "the forms of auxiliary apparatus which we have invented for the improvement or intensification of our sensory functions" (430).

12. See e.g. Yates, 1–26; Debord; Crary; Jay 383–84.
13. “[T]he cinematic presentation of the flashback affects not only how modern literature is organized and how plays are staged, but perhaps also how audiences remember and how we describe those memories” (Turim 5).
14. See e.g. *Wild Strawberries*, where this quest is succinctly fused with art cinema’s tendency to self-reflexivity in the dream scene where Isak is asked to identify the sample on the microscope slide. As the subsequent p.o.v. shot reveals, he sees only his own eye within the lens.
15. Regarding the difficulties of defining the contemporary (i.e. post-1976) ‘art film’ see e.g. Bordwell, *Narration* 205–33, “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice”; Durovicová; Grossvogel; Sconce.
16. I refer the reader to Turim’s detailed analysis, which I will not recapitulate here (210–16).
17. See Kovacs; Bordwell “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice”; Deleuze; etc.
18. See e.g. Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 206–8; Kovacs 54; Bordwell, *Narration* 228–29.
19. See also ch. 10 “Art-Cinema Narration”, in Bordwell, *Narration* 205–33.
20. While occasional reference will be made here to Deleuze, in general, because his theory of film subordinates formal-stylistic analysis to an idiosyncratic philosophical discourse, this work has no more importance to my argument than Bordwell’s work on the art film from 1970s and ’80s (the same period as Deleuze), which in fact anticipates many of Deleuze’s observations about the art film-classical Hollywood distinction, grounded in a rather more accessible neo-formalist terminology.
21. For dissenting views: see Turim 14–16; Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 105–16. Turim’s argument does not refute the fact that cinema has only one ‘tense’; rather, it stresses that film encodes ‘pastness’ differently (uniquely), according to its specificity as a medium.
22. Cf. Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 48.
23. Re the function of ‘focalization’ in flashback films see e.g. Turim 211.
24. A thought anticipated by Derrida in *Archive Fever*: “[t]he theory of psychoanalysis . . . becomes a theory of the archive and not only a theory of memory” (19).
25. See e.g. Carruthers regarding medieval ‘random-access’ memory’ (RAM) systems (7).
26. *Confessions* Book 10 is a significant text for Derrida’s work on memory in the 1980s and ’90s: see for example Derrida *Memoires* and “Letter to a Japanese Friend”. Book 9 is also evidence that Heidegger’s phenomenology of time is no modern invention: see Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*. Parts of the following section are adapted from Kilbourn, “Architecture and Cinema”.
27. In addition to the initial article, Landsberg published a book—*Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). I cite the original article throughout, as the initial thesis remains unchanged.
28. “Where literature is valued for its social functions, [certain] works . . . provide the sources of a group’s memory. Societies of this sort are ‘textual communities’, in Brian Stock’s phrase, whether those texts exist among them in oral or written form” (Carruthers 12).
29. “[As Augustine’s] analysis [in book 10] proceeds, the metaphor of static containment is increasingly at variance with his understanding of the dynamics of recollection” (Brian Stock 216; see also 226).
30. In this sense, postmemory is ‘postmodern’ memory insofar as it names the ‘trauma’ of *not* having experienced trauma.

31. Jeffrey Pence also uses the term ‘postmemory’ in the specific context of an analysis of video as the link between “the postcinematic to the postmemorial”—but without mention of Hirsch’s work (237–56).
32. All of these questions and many others are addressed in the 2003 collection, *Memory and Popular Film*.
33. Stewart Martin also uses the term ‘new memory’ in reference to Benjamin’s analysis of photography, especially (22). See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of Benjamin’s significance for the status of memory in contemporary film.
34. See: Habermas on Christianity as already ‘modern’ with respect to a Roman pagan past (1749).
35. See: Bazin; Metz, “Semiotics” and “Denotation”; Prince “Discourse”.
36. The best literary instantiation of the dream of immediate presence to mind as a living hell might be Jorge Luis Borges’s 1942 short story, “Funes the Memorious” (131–37).
37. *Katabasis*: from the Greek: a going down; used in reference to any underworld journey undertaken by a hero in quest of special knowledge.
38. Cf. Jay re “the *topos* of the ‘wandering Jew’ [which] could be assimilated to that profoundly antiocular image of the labyrinth, in which infinite temporal deferral replaced timeless spatiality and unmediated presence” (549). See also Kilbourn, *The Negative Ground of Fiction*.
39. What Tarkovsky, in his exnominative universal humanist diction, labels a ‘spiritual crisis’ (Petrie and Johnson 256).
40. This is in addition to or coterminous with “the stroll, the voyage and the continual return journey” that often characterize the postwar art film (*Cinema 1* 208).
41. In *Wild Strawberries*, for example, “Bergman is still striving for a mimesis of the troubled psyche [while] Resnais, along with his scriptwriters, is motivated by a more concrete contextualization of this troubled psyche as being produced by contemporary political situations” (Turim 226).
42. Regarding the contemporary cinematic ‘mental journey’ cf. the *itinerarium mentis* of early Christian Neo-Platonic literature (Freccero 33; 70).
43. For a useful contextualization of “vulgar Freudianism” characteristic of 1930s and ’40s melodrama and symptomatic of the broader culture, see LaPlace 153.
44. Re Lacan see e.g. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I”. See also Fuery and Fuery, esp. ch. 2, “Seeing the Self in the Baroque Mirror: Lacan and the Visual” (22–42); and Jay, esp. ch. 6, “Lacan, Althusser, and the Specular Subject of Ideology” (329–80).
45. My reading of *Wild Strawberries* and *A Christmas Carol* as paradigmatic (but different) ‘psycho-katabases’ is also the focus of a paper by Mark D’Amico, one of the students in my winter 2009 graduate seminar on memory in art film narrative.
46. Even the much later *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), which veers into ‘David Copperfield’ territory in its second half, completely avoids any straightforward closure and attendant sentiment in its ending.
47. Marianne’s flashback to her last conversation with her husband, Isak’s son, throws the representation of Isak’s memories and dreams into heightened relief. The film’s only conventional flashback, it conforms to the classical style, with a clearly instrumental purpose in the narrative. Unlike Isak’s memory-sequences, this flashback is preceded by a straight cut motivated by Marianne’s dialogue at this point. On this level, at least, the film partakes of two different codes of realism: that of classical style and that of the art film idiom as it was developing in the postwar period.

48. See e.g. Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials”, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 99. See also Chapter 3, this volume.
49. See e.g.: Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Cf. also Critchley; Critchley and Dews.
50. Deleuze’s term (see Bogue 142).
51. See *The Enneads*, esp. 5th Tractate, ch. 5: “in the realm of Being, the trace of The One establishes reality: existence is a trace of The One” (398); see also 401; Levinas, “Other” 358.
52. Cf. Prince: “pictures cannot express negatives” (“Discourse” 94).
53. See also Metz, “Semiotics”; Pasolini 169–70; 223.
54. “The cinema is certainly not a language system (*langue*). It can, however, be considered as a *language*, to the extent that it orders signifying elements within ordered arrangements different from those of spoken idioms—and to the extent that these elements are not traced on the perceptual configurations of reality itself (which does not tell stories). Filmic manipulation transforms what might have been a mere visual transfer of reality into discourse” (“Semiotics” 74). Film is *like* a verbal language on the syntagmatic level of the linking together of shots and shot sequences into meaningful patterns that together constitute a narrative. On the paradigmatic level, however, film differs from language (and other arbitrary semiotic systems), in that a potentially infinite number of images could be chosen for any given position in the syntagmatic chain. Alongside of this Metz asserts that the ‘language’ of film as such is a *narrative* language/discourse: its primary purpose is *story-telling* (“Semiotics” 69).
55. Prince problematizes the axiom in Metz “that filmic representation is a matter of *symbolic*, rather than *iconic* coding and that a viewer, rather than perceiving a film, ‘reads’ it” (“Discourse” 103).
56. See e.g. *The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*; Usai; Willis.
57. As Christian Metz remarks elsewhere: “One of the functions of narrative is to create one time in another time” (qtd. in Turim 10). Here Metz is referring to both novelistic and film narrative, but it might be more precise to say that one of the functions of *film* narrative specifically is to create *another* time in *one* time.
58. “Speech genre” for Bakhtin denotes not the Saussurean ‘parole’ as individual communicative act, but the communicative utterance with all its irreducible social and ideological constraints. For Bakhtin, what Saussure overlooks is that, “in addition to the forms of language there are also forms of combinations of these forms”—what Bakhtin calls speech genres (Holquist xvi). See also Morson and Emerson 289; 297.
59. The fact that, in a pre-digital era, photography is a photo-chemical process does not preclude the taking-literally of photography as a ‘writing with light’.
60. For a related use of this term in relation to Benjamin’s influence on Sebald, see Martin 18–30.
61. Frow seems to be the first to suggest the connection between medieval and Renaissance memory systems (as outlined by Mary Carruthers) and contemporary memory as an irreducibly mediated, cultural phenomenon.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. James Quandt’s formulation of Resnais’s “central theme” (45).
2. “Narrative closure is the point where order is restored in the universe of the plot” (Kovacs 77). As Barbara Mennel points out, for example, science

- fiction films from *Metropolis* to *The Matrix* have exploited religion in narratives which therefore promise an un-ironic ‘redemption’ (144).
3. It should be noted here that the invocation of a ‘messianic’ tendency does not imply the imminent advent of a messianic being, redeemer, or saviour, in any transcendent sense—or even less any faith in such an apparition. As Derrida states in *Archive Fever*, “[m]essianicity does not mean messianism” (36). In terms of the future as by definition unknowable, radically distinct from past or present: “it is a question of this performative to come whose archive no longer has any relation to the record of what is, to the record of the presence of what is or will have been *actually* present. I call this the *messianic*, and I distinguish it radically from all messianism” (72).
 4. See also *Cinema 2 5*.
 5. See e.g. Mazierska; AlSayyad; *The Cinematic City; Cinema and the City; Cities in Transition; Screening the City*.
 6. “The moment that memory becomes an art, writing remodels it in its own image and likeness” (Bolzoni xviii).
 7. “[I]t is not possible to think without an image. [...] Memory, even the memory of objects of thought, is not without an image. [...] One might be puzzled how, when the affection is present but the thing is absent, what is not present is ever remembered. For it is clear that one must think of the affection, which is produced by means of perception in the soul and in that part of the body which contains the soul, as being like a sort of picture, the having of which we say is memory. For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings” (*De Memoria* 29–30).
 8. Regarding the myth of Orpheus see books 10 and 11 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*.
 9. The effect is achieved with a close-up of the actor’s hands in surgical gloves plunging into a vat of *mercury* (Williams 124). Mercury: Hermes: Heurtebise.
 10. It is important to see that the Princess is to death what Goethe’s Mephistopheles is to the Devil: she is both death personified (Orpheus’s death) and an emissary of Death proper; as Heurtebise explains, she is “one of the forms of death” (see Williams 130).
 11. Re the “personification of death as a sexual woman” in *film noir* (with which *Orphee* is contemporaneous) cf. Turim 180. Re the Christian Neo-Platonic notion of the ‘second death’ of the soul see Freccero 102. Orpheus’s second death in the film is already the ironic inversion of what this term meant for Dante: i.e. a kind of (ironic) redemption vs. eternal damnation.
 12. Cocteau himself denied that the Princess is a form of Death: “the Princess is no more Death than an air hostess is an angel” (158).
 13. As Williams argues, “Orpheus’s natural enemy, along with prosaic reality, is the presence of real women”—Eurydice, Aglaonice—“in contrast to the otherworldly Princess, his Death. Which is to say, negative reality is almost always codified in the film as female” (134).
 14. Williams suggests this connection with Benjamin but does not elaborate (128).
 15. See especially Bergson, *Matter and Memory*.
 16. For Kovacs, *Marienbad* exemplifies what he calls the “radical continuity” of certain postwar modernist films: “Resnais’s goal was to suspend the flow of linear time for the sake of an almost spatial surface where past, present, reality and imagination are brought onto the same continuous level, where getting from one dimension to another means a continuous flow” (130).
 17. As Augustine says: time is itself an extension of the mind, and the mind is memory (220). For Augustine, memory is ‘self’: “I do not understand the

- power of memory that is in myself, although without it I could not even speak of myself” (223).
18. See: Bazin; Metz, “Photography”; Prince, “Discourse”.
 19. See also the Introduction; Augustine (10.8 216).
 20. “In [the] process of *Trauerarbeit* it is not a matter of decathecting a lost love object in accordance with the dictates of the pleasure principle but, rather, of performing a more primitive elegiac procedure whereby an infantile sense of omnipotence—primary narcissism—is fragmented by the realization that ‘I’ and ‘you’ have edges, that ‘you’ have a life and a will that are irreducibly separate from my own” (Santner 19).
 21. I refer the reader here to Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958).
 22. Jay also points out that, despite Proust’s “d disdain, critics have found cinematic techniques in his work” (183 n. 113).
 23. Directly inspired by W. G. Sebald’s 1990 novel *Schwindel. Gefuble*, whose English title, *Vertigo*, is likely not coincidental.
 24. See e.g. the opening chase scene in *The Matrix* (1999).
 25. This effect is also exploited in the last third of *Alphaville* (1965), in what is in many ways Godard’s answer to *Orpheus*. There is more than a little of the underworld journey in Lemmy Caution’s ‘strange adventure’ in the de-humanized dystopia of the title.
 26. The scene at Veronique’s school, of Veronique watching Fabbri in the mirror looking at her looking at him.
 27. According to Petrie and Johnson, this “favourite Dostoyevskian theme of ‘the double’ . . . came into Russian literature through German Romanticism” (257).
 28. “*Mirror* is also the story of the old house where the narrator spent his childhood, the farmstead where he was born and where his father and mother lived. This building, which over the years had fallen into ruins, was reconstructed, ‘resurrected’ from photographs just as it had been, and on the foundations which had survived. And so it stood exactly as it had forty years before” (Tarkovsky 132).
 29. See also: the traditional age of Christ at the time of the crucifixion: 33, or one third of 100. Dante’s *Commedia* has 3 parts or cantos, each with 33 *cantiche* or chapters, totalling 99.
 30. Soviet-era critic Dmitri Salytsky reads all of Tarkovsky’s films, including *Mirror*, according to what amounts to a psycho-katabasis model (Petrie and Johnson 232–33).
 31. Cf. Those films, like Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall* (1977), in which the protagonist enters into his childhood world “as the displaced representation of his younger self” (Turim 229).
 32. Cf. Visual culture intertextuality in *A Christmas Carol* (1951). Re the ‘Ghost of Christmas Past’ sequence where Scrooge and the Ghost stand in a long shot in the snowy landscape outside Scrooge’s boyhood school cf. Currier and Ives, “Publishers of Cheap and Popular Pictures” (1835–1907): Winter scenes, commonly used on Christmas cards, were especially popular. Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* was originally published in 1843. “The printmaking firm of Currier & Ives produced some of the most iconic and popular American art of the 19th century. The company, headed by Nathaniel Currier (1813–1888) and James Merritt Ives (1824–1895), specialized in publishing hand colored lithographic prints that were sold inexpensively to the growing American middle class” (“Currier and Ives Online Gallery”).
 33. “And I thought of all I had missed in my country, of the things I would not have omitted to note and treasure, had I suspected before that my life was to veer in such a violent way” (261).

34. Tellingly titled “Wonderful Life” in Japanese, in homage to Frank Capra (Ellis 33).
35. Wenders’s cinematographer on the film was octogenarian Henri Alekan, who had also been Cocteau’s D.P. on *Beauty and the Beast* (1946), considered to be one of the most beautiful black-and-white films ever made. Alekan gives his name to the circus in which Marion, Damiel’s human love interest, works as a trapeze artist.
36. Wenders adopts a less ambivalent attitude toward this dichotomy in *Until the End of The World* (1991), whose narrative clearly takes the side of the written—or type-written—word, over visual images *vis-a-vis* the mediation of memory and dream.
37. See also Halbwachs; Nora; Frow. Re Homer as ‘collective memory’, see Graf 128.
38. The paradigmatic instance of this synoptic gaze across space and history may be the view of the Promised Land granted Moses from the summit of Mount Pisgah in Deuteronomy 34:1—a vision truly of the future as absolute tense: not his own, but his people’s.
39. My wing is ready to beat, / I am all for turning back. / For, even staying in timeless time / Would not grant me much fortune. [Mein Flugel ist zum Schwung bereit / ich kehrte gern zurück / denn blieb ich auch lebendige Zeit / ich hatte wenig Zeit.] (Benjamin and Scholem 80).
40. A comparable effect is achieved in the film set-within-the-film, in which extras dressed as Nazis and ordinary wartime Berliners mingle between takes.
41. Cf. Graf, who also likens the film’s multi-track use of sound to a “modern-day tower of Babel” (119).
42. See Graf re the etymology of ‘angel’ from the Greek *anghelos*, messenger (114–15).
43. Graf otherwise glosses the significance of the film’s incorporation of archival footage of destroyed Berlin on the diegetic level as the angel’s supernatural ability to jump at will “from one era to the next” rather than in terms of the film’s highly self-reflexive engagement with memory and history (116).
44. In this light Orpheus is far more conservative in his adherence to the original myth. E.g. his response when Eurydice disappears for the second time: “It was inevitable”.
45. I owe this observation to my friend and former mentor, Richard Cavell.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. *The Manchurian Candidate* deals with a U.S. Government-backed Communist plot to use ‘brain-washing’ techniques to manipulate a Korean War hero in order to destabilize the American political system.
2. As Bordwell and Thompson infer, *The Godfather Part II* is an ‘art film’ while *Part I* is a textbook example of classical style (*Film History* 484).
3. I must credit Stefan Sereda for this term.
4. See e.g. Freder’s hallucination sequence in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927).
5. The ASL in *The Bourne Identity*, for example, is under four seconds; in *The Bourne Supremacy*, under two seconds (Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art* 246).
6. It might also be the final part of ‘andare alla ventura’, to trust to luck, as well as ‘soldato di ventura’: mercenary (soldier of fortune).
7. See also Barbara Mennel, who traces the fascination among young men of various cultural backgrounds with *Scarface*—“the ur-text of the ethnic

- gangster film”—to Mario Van Peeble’s *New Jack City* (1991), in which the characters are shown watching De Palma’s film repeatedly (158).
8. See Wollen re Godard’s ‘counter-cinema’.
 9. “The shift from the typically modernist preoccupation with epistemological uncertainty . . . to the ontological doubt that results when one thinks through what epistemological doubt entails . . . announces postmodernism” (Bal 117).
 10. Cf. Brecht, “Organum” 179–208.
 11. Ingeborg Hoesterey explicitly connects intertextuality and “cinematic memory” in her discussion of *Europa* as an example of “cinematic pastiche” (60).
 12. See also Mennel, who reads *Europa* (*Zentropa*) somewhat reductively as a simulacral postmodern “retro-rubble film” that fails to engage directly or meaningfully with the immediate postwar period (116–17).
 13. Galt notes that, in addition to second-person voiceover narration, the Hollywood film *Berlin Express* (1948) is also intertextualized in *Europa* in terms of character, plot and setting (on board a train) (7).
 14. Galt discusses *Europa* here as an example of a “genuinely European film” (4).
 15. See also Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life* (2002), where these relations are explicitly thematized.
 16. See also the trope of continually waking up into yet another dream (or nightmare)—what dream theorists call “false awakenings”—informing the narratives of a diverse array of films: e.g. *Groundhog Day* (1993; Harold Ramis), *Living in Oblivion* (1995; Tom DiCillo), *Abre los ojos* (1997; Alejandro Amenabar) (remade as *Vanilla Sky* [2001; Cameron Crowe] and *Waking Life* (2001; Richard Linklater).
 17. Regarding Von Trier’s likely ‘influences’ see also Kennedy 68.
 18. The main action in Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* (1979) also takes place in a comparably allegorical, extra-territorial space called ‘the zone’.
 19. See also *The Third Man* (1948; Carol Reed), which famously depicts postwar Vienna as a city divided into four zones, each administered by one of the occupying forces. See Chapter 1 of this text.
 20. “Whereas in classical cinema, back projection remains invisible, and superimposition is visible only because it does not threaten the coherence of realist space, in [*Europa*] both effects are visible, and both are used to fracture the integrity of the narrative space of the film” (Galt 12). See also Kennedy 69.
 21. In his recent book, for example, Joseph Kickasola devotes only a single page to the topic of memory in Kieslowski’s films.
 22. Not included in the film.
 23. See also *Cinema 2* (116–17) regarding flashbacks in the films of Resnais.
 24. Egoyan: “‘Christina’s uniform becomes what video technology was in the other films’ [...] ‘[In] order to preserve the memory of someone, you go to this artificial means’, which ‘is not a video or a photographic reproduction, it is a theatrical one’” (qtd. in Coates, “Egoyan” 29). In Patricia Grubin’s words, Francis “compulsively revisits the simulacrum of [his murdered daughter’s] innocence by obsessively watching an exotic dancer whose plaid-skirted costume recalls the dead child’s school uniform” (249–50).
 25. Cf. Koreeda’s *After Life*, where the viewer—with the caseworker characters and, ultimately, the filmmaker—bears witness to people’s memories, to their lives and to their (variously successful) attempts to ‘take responsibility’ for those lives.

26. The subtitle translation of the secret, “Leave with me”, is not a secret at all, properly speaking.
27. “In spite of all the barriers erected to insulate the Laurent’s bourgeois fortress from the threat of the Other, the television [in their living room] functions as a permeable interface between the external and internal worlds, broadcasting shadowy images that cast the family’s private drama of retribution in a more global light” (Osterweil 33).
28. This, for Turim, is “the image of memory offered by holocaust films” (231).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The Latin *translatio* translates the Greek *metapherein*.
2. One of the (numerous) ways in which Jacques Derrida translated the word ‘deconstruction’ was ‘translation’ (“Letter” 270). See also his essay, “Signature, Event, Context”.
3. See also Terdiman, who exploits the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to make sense of significant social and epistemological shifts resulting from what he calls the “memory crisis” in nineteenth-century Post-Revolutionary European culture (5).
4. See e.g. Doel and Clarke for a brief summary of the major readings of *Blade Runner* up to the early 1990s.
5. Cf. Doel and Clarke, whose reading differs from mine on this point (141).
6. See e.g. *Total Recall*; *Johnny Mnemonic*; *Minority Report*; *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; etc.
7. ‘Esper’ is possibly derived from E.S.P (‘extra-sensory perception’), but it may also allude to *esperanza*, Spanish for ‘hope’, the root of *Esperanto*: the artificial ‘universal’ language, whose lexicon draws on all the major European tongues. (‘Hope’ is not utterly alien to *Blade Runner*; witness Roy’s ‘sacrifice’ at the end, when he gives Deckard his life, even as his is rapidly slipping away [Doel and Clarke 160]).
8. According to the OED, ‘*Lingua franca*’ is Italian for ‘Frankish tongue’: a (now historical) “mixture of Italian . . . French, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, and Spanish, used in the Levant”, the regions bordering the eastern Mediterranean, between Greece and Egypt.
9. It is clear that the specter of linguistic globalization has not gone away; if anything it has proven to be only more complex, as a recent issue of *The Guardian Weekly* makes clear. In the English Language Teaching Community supplement in the May 23–29 issue (titled ‘Learning English’), the nicely juxtaposed featured articles include a piece on growing fears in countries like Norway, Denmark and Sweden that their respective “mother tongues [will] fall out of use in business and academia” precisely because of the near-universal fluency in English in which their citizens take pride. The other article documents the recent rapid spread of English in India as a direct result of “social inferiority as much as practical need” among the new, young entrepreneurial class. (It may also be the indirect result of 200 years of British rule) (1–2).
10. The film’s taglines include: “If you want to be understood . . . Listen”; “Tragedy is universal”; “A global disaster”; “Pain is universal . . . But so is hope.”
11. This is Derrida’s formulation: “God, as the deconstructor of the Tower of Babel . . . interrupts a construction. The deconstruction of the Tower of Babel, moreover, gives a good idea of what deconstruction is: an unfinished edifice whose half-completed structures are visible, letting one guess at the scaffolding behind them” (“Roundtable” 104).

12. Re the origins in Weimar Germany of such a “split subjectivity under the sign of pleasurable self-alienation” (Elsaesser, *Weimar* 50) see also Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction”. This is the basis of what Elsaesser, after Peter Sloterdijk, calls the “enlightened false consciousness” of the era as the first ‘society of the spectacle’ (50).
13. This is a common understanding or ‘translation’ of what Derrida meant when he claimed that there was “nothing outside the text” (*Of Grammatology* 158).
14. Itself an adaptation of both a television series and a best-selling novel (see Stringer 296–305).
15. In both the source novel and original Japanese film adaptation, the girl is named Yamamura Sadako (298).
16. For an in-depth discussion of this reading, see Giroux.
17. Curiously, the same length of time the newly dead must spend at the Limbo-Waystation in *After Life*.
18. As Mulvey puts it: “The obvious link between [Marx and Freud’s] concepts of fetishism is that both attempt to explain a refusal, or blockage, of the mind, or phobic inability of the psyche to understand a symbolic system of value within the social and the psychic spheres” (8).
19. Metz clarifies why in cultural analysis it is always necessary to go beyond psychoanalytic theory: “Psychoanalysis . . . is contemporary in our Western history with the technological arts (such as cinema) and with the reign of the patriarchal, nuclear, bourgeois family. Our period has invented neurosis (at least in its current form), and the remedy for it . . . It is possible to consider psychoanalysis as the founding myth of our emotional modernity. In his famous study of the Oedipus myth, Lévi-Strauss has suggested that the Freudian interpretation of this myth . . . could be nothing but the last variant of the myth itself. . . . [M]yths are always true, even if indirectly and by hidden ways, for the good reason that they are invented by the natives themselves, searching for a parable of their own fate” (90).
20. See especially Ch. 2, “The Commodity as Spectacle” (25–34).
21. In Marx’s perspective, this means that the commodity, as sign, also has a social value even while, thanks to reification, the relations between people under capitalism have a material basis (see 167)
22. The analogous theme of image-as-virus structures *Videodrome*, but without a comparable chain-reaction effect across cultures.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Chris Darke traces the origins of ‘surveillance cinema’ in general (and Michael Haneke’s *Cache* specifically) to Fritz Lang’s *Mabuse* film cycle, culminating in the 1960 film, *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (21). An interesting exception to this model is *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006; Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck). Winner of the 2007 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, *Das Leben* is a nuanced fictionalization of life in mid-1980s East Berlin, where the Stasi—East Germany’s Secret Police—enforce a surveillance state whose concomitant paranoia is quite independent of capitalism’s interpellating influence. The manner in which the film depicts the operations of the GDR’s state security system, however, reinforces a meta-cinematic critique of surveillance that transcends the ideological specificity of the film’s subject: the (highly improbable) crisis of conscience—and ideology—of a ruthlessly efficient Stasi officer (Darke 20).
2. According to Darke, “[s]urveillance was in cinema’s genetic make-up from the start” (21).

3. Elizabeth Ezra and Jane Sillars refer to “the post-spectacular, media-saturated society of surveillance, in which ‘onlookers’ routinely overlook their own responsibility as witnesses” (220).
4. There are (at least) three distinct temporalities in the film: (1) the ‘real time’ of lived life recorded on videotape; (2) the compressed ‘limbo time’ of in-between life-after-death-before-death-proper, in which it is possible for Watanabe to watch all 71 years of his life in ‘real time’ on video in one day; (3) the ‘eternity’ of death proper, which is not represented.
5. Cf. Ezra and Sillars, 217 and Grosvogel 40–41. Further, Megan Ratner points out “Haneke’s clever reversal of surveillance’s usual function as a form of protection for the prosperous to [sic] a menace. Left with little in the way of power, the dispossessed use technology to get something of their own back. The audience is implicated also, since Haneke turns the conventions of contemporary film upside-down and inside-out, using the medium itself to pose questions about what is going on in *Cache* and who exactly is taking advantage of whom” (Ratner, par. 3)
6. Cf. also Critchley and Critchley and Dews.
7. Deleuze’s term (see Bogue 142).
8. For more detailed accounts of the history of *ars memoriae*, or the art of memory, see Bolzoni; Yates.
9. Mattias Frey makes a similar point in “*Benny’s Video*” (33).
10. An observation not intended to diminish Ozu’s acknowledged influence (see later discussion; e.g. Ellis 33). Ellis also notes a likeness in *After Life* to the films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien, who other critics also include within Ozu’s stylistic orbit.
11. Osterweil adds that the Laurent’s apartment, “encased [sic] with bookshelves . . . stacked from floor to ceiling . . . is a near exact replica of the studio set” of Georges’ highly rated TV literary talk show (33). Regarding the already ‘conventional’ Baudrillardian reading of Haneke see Frey, “*Benny’s Video*” 35, and Frey “Disturbance”.
12. Pence further explains that, “In general, video’s exemplary status as a ‘do-it-yourself’ practice presaged and permeates our contemporary valuation of ‘interactivity’. In their ubiquity and solicitation of particular subjective dispositions, video images offer a prosthetic alternative to previous models of memory. In this sense, video links the postcinematic to the postmemorial” (242).
13. As the frequently highly self-reflexive use of DV and handheld cameras in *Inland Empire* (2007) indicates, this is no longer true of Lynch.
14. Cf. *Cache*, which, in Ezra and Sillars’s post-post-colonial reading, “forces us to think about what we allow inside and what we insist remains outside; the ways we psychologically, physically (and legislatively) construct and imagine the idea of ‘home’. What does it mean to construct a home as a place of safety, a refuge that shuts out the world, the past?” (215–16). Cf. the powerfully understated final shot of the teenage Christina’s family house in Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica* (1994)—another film about the interconnections among looking, traumatic memory and ‘home’.
15. Cf. *Cache*: “in Haneke’s work, video becomes the obstinate witness to the everyday denial of intolerable realities and memories” (Beugnet 228).
16. Regarding the *Lost Highway* as moebius strip see Henry and Herzogenrath.
17. This model of reading runs counter to the received, Indo-European linear left-to-right, beginning-to-ending model that has dominated occidental culture since the early modern period. Contemporary conventions of reading are the product of modernity—of the invention of printing, and, consequently, of a certain shape of book and a certain attitude toward the disposition of letters on the page, etc.

18. Although still too dependent on psychoanalytic tropes—which fail to address the radical exteriorization of subjective interiority constitutive of film as a medium—O’Connor is among the first to address at any length the Mystery Man’s essential “association with media technology” (24).
19. Cf. Ivan Karamazov’s encounter, in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, with the seedy stranger who may be the devil, or an hallucination, or both. Regarding the Mystery Man as an avatar of the devil, see Wallace and Wells.
20. See e.g. Lynch’s typical use of violence. In *Lost Highway*, especially, there is a clear causal link from one act of violence to the next, driving the narrative not to its conclusion in any conventional sense but rather back to its start. Regarding the Mystery Man as “groundless ground” of the narrative, see Celeste.
21. As several critics note, the Laurents’ Paris apartment is at the corner of the *Rue des Iris*. “[The] iris motif gestures to the ‘iris’ as an organic or manufactured optical device. Much of the cinema of looking, from *Rear Window* . . . to *Peeping Tom* . . . plays with the ambiguity of the eye as symbol: both looking out and shutting off the inside: penetrating yet vulnerable to penetration; an aperture to be opened and closed. Most of all, the iris motif indicates the ways in which the film is very much about opening one’s eyes, and opening up the camera lens to new perspectives” (Ezra and Sillars 219).
22. I owe this observation to Katie Hoogendam, a member of my graduate seminar in which she presented on personal and collective amnesia in *Cache*.
23. “Most troublingly of all, Haneke shows us vital scenes from the point of view of this blank, affectless video-avenger; he invites us to share his destructive gaze” (Bradshaw 7); see also Ellis’s review of *After Life*, where he refers to the tapes Watanabe watches to remind him of his life as “celestial videotapes” (35).
24. For Robin Wood, “[t]he lie of a young French child has been magnified into an emblem of French colonial guilt and has passed from the personal to the symbolic” (40). Therefore it is not enough to point out (as Wood does) that the burden of guilt placed upon the adult Georges is too great in proportion to his ‘crime’: this is the film’s Kafkaesque dimension.
25. To date the best work on the film in this regard is in the recent ‘Dossier’ in the journal *Screen*. See especially Ezra and Sillars, Beugnet; Silverman.
26. Cf. Max Silverman: “Haneke plays on the ambiguous nature of the image and the gaze: on the one hand, they domesticate, normalize, exoticize and objectify the world for easy consumption; on the other hand, they have the power to unsettle this new form of voyeurism” (247).
27. On this point my reading diverges from Beugnet, who argues that the dream sequences are “images from a different visual order . . . the only moments where the past—memory or fantasized reminiscence—resurfaces . . . conveyed with the depth of field and visual lyricism that is denied to the rest of the film” (230).
28. The ‘afterlives’ are not merely those of individuals’ memories—for which oblivion becomes a greater threat than death itself—but of the nation as a whole. According to Jonathan Ellis, Kore-edo’s original intention had been to present “a ‘history’ of modern Japan from the Kanto earthquake in 1923 through the war and the postwar economic miracle right up to the present wave of immigration from Iran and Asia”. Yet, as the conception developed, however, he realized that the human ‘microhistories’ were more interesting than the backdrop of twentieth-century Japanese history (35).
29. Cf. Deleuze, who answers in Augustinian terms the question “Can the present [in cinema] stand for the whole of time?” (*Cinema 2* 100). For a different view, see Turim 15–16.

30. Cf. Grossvogel regarding Haneke's appropriation of Brechtian techniques (41).
31. "By allegorizing the dilemma of postcolonial France through an Oedipal drama of suspicion, betrayal, and deception, Haneke sets the stage for a taut thriller that pivots upon the return of the barely repressed" (Osterweil 39).
32. Jonathan Ellis rightly points out that "most of the memories chosen in *After Life* draw on the kind of sensation cinema has always had to find alternative ways of evoking" (37).
33. Ellis continues: "Cinema works like memory; perhaps it is the best artistic expression of it. [. . .] Reality, Kore-eda seems to suggest, is little more than a reference point most of us leave behind when constructing a sense of ourselves through memory" (36).
34. Not to mention stylistically distinct from the short memory-films, which, to contradict Ellis's argument again, are actually far more 'amateurish' than the videotapes, which are not so much badly made as purposely boring.
35. There is of course another significant intertext with Kurosawa's *Ikiru* (1952), the story of one Watanabe, a lifelong bureaucrat in a municipal office who is diagnosed with terminal cancer, at which point he realizes that he has spent his entire career doing nothing and strives in the time remaining to him to find some meaning in his life.
36. In Ellis's eloquent phrasing, Mochizuki in effect "takes Limbo with him to eternity" (37).
37. "Haneke has provided an ending that can be seen both as hopeful and as an expansion of the conflicts previously shown" (Grossvogel 43). The terms 'utopian' and 'paranoid' in this relation come from Silverman (220).
38. It does not necessarily follow from this, however, that "the ontological status of the [video] messages . . . [is] not the point", as Ezra and Sillars claim (217).
39. For Beugnet, in *Cache* "the enigmatic gaze of the victim of historical amnesia initially comes to resemble the 'fixed and objectified framing' of the oppressor" (228). For Silverman, *Cache* "reverses the gaze of the western colonizer and exposes the hidden fears and fantasies still at play today in a postcolonial re-run of the colonial encounter" (245).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Marking the inauguration of the Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory at the University of London.
2. Demetrious Matheou continues: "[Walter] Salles agrees: 'The desire to unveil the fabric of Brazilian society, the use of a blend of actors and non-actors, the idea of filming with urgency and an acceptance of the imperfection of the creative process—all these are the legacy of cinema novo'" (9). Regarding the history of Brazil's film industry in relation to the internal political situation, on the one hand, and external cultural influences, especially Hollywood, on the other, see Johnson and Stam 244–80; Espiritu 279–98.
3. "With *City of God*, Meirelles joins a distinguished tradition of social criticism and engagement in Brazilian and Latin American cinema that's now being revitalized" as, variously, the Latin New Wave or the New Brazilian film following on from the 1960s 'Cinema Novo'—Brazil's answer to the various European 'New Waves' (Neto 11; see also Andrews 7, Nagib 248; Alvaray 48–65). In any case, *City of God* tends to be held up as an example of a 'New Realism'—even a new *neo*-Realism (Oppenheimer 82, 90; cf. Xavier; Nagib). In an interview, filmmaker Walter Salles remarks that the "desire to unveil the fabric of Brazilian society, the use of a blend of actors and non-actors, the idea

of filming with urgency and an acceptance of the imperfection of the creative process—all these are the legacy of *cinema novo*" (Matheou 9). More radically than the French *nouvelle vague*, by which it was partially inspired, Cinema Novo sought to "fuse political and esthetic avant-gardism," defining itself primarily in ideological, aesthetic and industrial opposition to Hollywood, while simultaneously challenging Brazil's own commercial film industry (see Stam, "Margins"). Cf. Menne regarding the potential for 'inverted nationalism' in such resistance to Hollywood's hegemony: "any cineaste who renounced in filmmaking practice the tendencies of the Hollywood imperium, a locus classicus of American globalization, gained membership in this new nation that was non-Hollywood" (72).

4. Joao Marcelo Melo goes further, claiming that, "[in] a sense, *City of God* is an American film made in Brazil—since its visual exuberance and narrative are influenced by the American gangster genre in films by directors such as . . . Scorsese and . . . Tarantino" (475).
5. See e.g. Oppenheimer 87.
6. As Backstein asks, "[i]f Rocha was concerned that the privileged classes of Europe and the U.S. would use Brazil's destitute citizens as a source of fascinating entertainment, how would he have regarded a film that focuses on the thrill of the gunfight, a seemingly endless collection of expendable criminals, and a protagonist who uses their dead bodies as a tool to further his own career and sell newspapers? While Rocha's intensely confrontational and difficult films, wonderful as they are, were never the best vehicles for reaching a mass audience, Meirelles's engaging imagery and fast-paced alternative can threaten to overwhelm its very real socio-political concerns" (39).
7. See also Bordwell, *Hollywood* 117–57. In any case, *City of God* is completely stylistically distinct from an earlier example of Brazilian film like Paul Leduc's *Barocco* (1988), described by Robert Stam as presenting its "marvelously heterogeneous cultural materials . . . through a style which recalls the 'art film' at its most brilliant . . . but also at its most austere. What works in Resnais as an aestheticized version of European formality, becomes somewhat stilted in the context of Latin America. The impassive camera frames it's 'objects'—human and material—through a cool, glacial distance, in a style reminiscent of an art documentary made for Arte or Canal Plus" (Stam, *Literature* 361).
8. See e.g. Sontag *Pain* 110–11; Garcia Canclini 6–7; Stam "Margins": "[Manuel] Puig shows us a Latin America metaphorically 'betrayed by Rita Hayworth' in that first-world cultural domination has engendered a feeling that real/reel life . . . is somehow 'elsewhere', to be found only in the cultural 'centers' of Europe and North America, and not on the 'periphery' of Argentina or Brazil" (318).
9. Regarding the complications around these designations specific to Latin American cultures, see Garcia Canclini 1–11.
10. In the Paolo Lins novel on which the film is based, the protagonist wants to be a writer. In the film he yearns to become a photographer, "partially because photography offered more cinematic possibilities" (Oppenheimer 83).
11. Brian Johnson makes the similar point that in "*City of God*, photography serves as a compound metaphor, with cinematographer Cesar Charlone flaunting his own cowboy marksmanship. This is a movie about shooting, and shooting" (44).
12. As Ella Shohat explains, "Third-Worldist nationalist discourse has often assumed an unquestioned national identity, but most contemporary nation-states are 'mixed' formations. A country like Brazil, arguably Third World in

- both racial terms (a *mestizo* majority) and economic ones (given its economically dependent status), is still dominated by a Europeanized elite” (46–47).
13. The filmmakers did not use the actual ‘Cidade de deus’ but another, less dangerous favela (Backstein 39).
 14. In this light the gangs in *City of God* have more in common with those depicted in French-Algerian *banlieue* films (e.g. Mathieu Kassowitz’s *La Haine* [1995]).
 15. In an interesting counterpoint, Nigel Andrews critiques the director’s earnest “insistence [in an interview] on the film’s global implications and resonance”: “‘The middle class in Brazil not knowing what happens ‘on the other side’—[is] the same [as] you in the first world not knowing what’s happening in the third world. You want globalism in the market but not global responsibility socially and in humanitarian terms. You lift your hands in horror at Osama bin Laden and terrorism instead of trying to understand the problems lying behind it. It’s the same thing in the *favelas*. Our government doesn’t reach out with help or understanding, it just sends in the police. So really it’s not a film about Brazil, it’s about mankind.’” The reviewer does not clarify things much, however, when he argues that, “if the film has a universalizing power it’s surely because at heart it’s so searingly, site-specifically about Brazil” (7). Cf. Megan Ratner: “First-world living promotes a comforting fairy-tale that if we all work hard, very hard, the rewards of the market can be ours. But even the most upbeat free-marketeers can’t ignore the increasing chasm between the ultra-rich and the rest of the world. It’s not hard to see the incipient effects of Brazilianization, Michael Lind’s term for a ‘fissioning along class lines’: the haves prosper in a world of private services and communities while the have-nots scramble and claw for what’s left. For those outside the real or virtual gated communities in the economic strongholds that now pass for civilization, the struggle is nothing short of desperate” (par. 1).
 16. See e.g. Ian Borden’s key point re a paradigmatic first-world youth subculture: “Skateboarding . . . brings together a concern to live out an idealised present, trying to live outside of society while being simultaneously within its very heart” (292).
 17. The very films and filmmakers invoked by Michael Atkinson in his *Village Voice* review: “Meirelles indulges in extraordinary visual torch-juggling: panicky digital dollies, post-*Matrix*-style circumambulations around frozen moments, the p.o.v. of a ricocheting bullet, jazzy blaxx-era freeze-frames, massacres shot from overhead as if by satellite cameras, suddenly sped-up motion, abject strobe frenzy. It’s one of the very few films to use the crack-thwack-thump of David Fincher-style CGI visuals to actually expand its emotional palette—and not sour its verisimilitude with grandstanding” (“Boys from Brazil” 136).
 18. Several critics draw a comparison between *City of God* and the social-political engagement of Italian Neo-realism. Nagib remarks in this respect that the film’s brand of ‘realism’ is clearly *not* the result of a mere attempt at copying reality” (244).
 19. Interesting examples of intensified continuity in the international art film can be seen in two very different Wong Kar-Wai films, both made in 1994: *Ashes of Time* (recently re-released as *Ashes of Time Redux*) and *Chung King Express*.
 20. If Marcel Camus’s 1959 *Black Orpheus*, “inspired by a Brazilianized version of a Greek myth, visualized death as the twisted and phantasmic embodiment of a carnival figure, *City of God* (taken from a semiautobiographical novel), passes over carnival entirely—and death comes from the barrel of a gun” (Backstein 39).

21. Tellingly, neither the director nor cinematographer reference the Brazilian Western, or ‘Northeastern’, a specific genre in the popular *chanchada* tradition (Vieira 263).
22. Ironically, cinematographer Cesar Charlone explains, speaking of the film’s golden-hued first section: “because the younger kids looked at these guys as heroes, we frequently shot the trio from low angles to give them a slightly heroic air” (Oppenheimer 84).
23. As Bordwell shows, this was a shot dating back at least to Hitchcock’s *Vértigo* (1957), where it was established as a motif for isolating and drawing attention to a pair of lovers embracing, an individual etc. (Bordwell, *Hollywood* 144).
24. “Like Alejandro González Iñárritu’s *Amores Perros*, *City of God* is a narrative tango, circling back on itself to revisit pivotal moments” (Atkinson, “Boys from Brazil” 136).
25. See, among other things, the two recent feature-length films, *Charlie’s Angels: The Movie* (2000; McG) and *Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle* (2003; McG).
26. As John Berger notes, Susan Sontag had made this point already in the late 1970s in her book *On Photography* (59).
27. Cf. Menne, following Arjun Appadurai, for whom the “twin engines of globalization” are “media and migration” (87).

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. The literature on negative or apophatic theologies is vast. See e.g.: Mortley; Derrida, “Speaking”; *Languages of the Unsayable*; Marion; Hart; Sells; Gasché; etc.

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