

The cutting edge:
deviant realisms and cinematic
disruption

Mary Watson
University of Cape Town
February 2007

The cutting edge:
deviant realisms and cinematic
disruption

Mary Watson

Thesis presented for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the Centre for Film and Media
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
February 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to The Sainsbury Trust for their generous support and making it possible to complete the Masters programme at Bristol University, even though I was meant to be researching this degree. My experience there transformed my academic interests.

I have experienced much support from the staff and associates of the Centre for Film and Media at the University of Cape Town, particularly Lesley Marx and Ian Glenn. Practically, the Mont Fleur workshop hosted by Research and Innovation, the 2004 staff seminars and the Nemisa roundtables provided useful opportunities to test some of the early drafts. I've also appreciated conversations and a generous sharing of resources with the other two in our "realisms triad" – Meg Rickards and Emma van der Vliet. Many, many thanks to Steve Williamson, DVD wizard.

In the earliest stages, I received support from Brenda Cooper and the muffin meetings, and also from my "therapy" group: Louise Green, Sandy Young and Kylie Thomas who helped turn such lonely work into a community. As always, I am grateful for the kindness and patience of family and friends: my family have been very supportive and encouraging; thanks also to the Seoighes for a room in the attic and gentle prodding with chocolate at Christmas time. Jane, Andrew, Martha, Catherine and Lauren – thanks for proofreading and more general cheerleading.

Thanks to Nashen Moodley, and also to the organisers at Sithengi for viewing access to films not yet released on DVD. Thanks to Jihan el-Tahri, Graciela Barrault and Valery for their enthusiastic assistance and introductions to Elia Suleiman. And also Dima Abu Ghoush whose passion for Palestinian film sparked my interest. I am grateful to both Teboho Mahlatsi and Elia Suleiman for making themselves available for interviews and for the openness with which they discussed themselves and their work.

Special thanks to John Higgins, my supervisor, who is always so calm.

I am most grateful to Cathal Seoighe for generating an interest and enthusiasm for this kind of splicing, for such very careful reading, for getting excited, and for telling me about peat bogs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	4
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE	
EDITING THE REAL: SEAMLESSNESS AND REALISM IN FILM	
Introduction.....	16
Editing and realism in film history: shot and sequence	18
Soviet montage and continuity editing	22
Continuity editing and classical realism	25
The normalisation of continuity editing	27
Realism and viewer expectations	31
Editing in time and space	34
Point-of-view and viewer position	39
Alternative approaches to realism: editing and discontinuity	46
Conclusion	49
CHAPTER TWO	
SURREALISM AND MONTAGE	
Introduction.....	54
Surrealist dreams: communicating vessels	56
Surrealism and film	59
Surrealist montage: the slit eye	66
Surrealism and psychoanalysis.....	69
The surrealist revolution	75
Conclusion	78
CHAPTER THREE	
MAGICAL REALISM AND FILM	
Introduction.....	80
Early magical realism: the metamorphosis of perception	82
Contemporary magical realism	85
Magical realism in film	89
Magical realism and adaptation	93
Magical realism and screen techniques	97
Magical realism goes to Hollywood	103
Conclusion	107

CHAPTER FOUR	
THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: THE DISCONTINUOUS BODY IN ŠVANKMAJER'S FILMS	
Introduction.....	110
The animated body and discontinuity.....	112
The fragmented body	114
Childhood and the mechanical	119
Live-action and animation	127
Repetition and substitution	131
Body and mind: <i>Lunacy</i>	136
Conclusion	139
CHAPTER FIVE	
MEMORY AND NARRATIVE IN <i>PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN DROWNING</i>	
Introduction.....	144
Speaking pain and trauma in South African Film	146
Mourning in <i>Portrait of Young Man Drowning</i>	152
Editing and memory.....	157
The township in space and time	162
Alternative continuities	166
Memory and hysteria	169
Conclusion	172
CHAPTER SIX	
THE PROMISED LAND: SPACE AND DISRUPTION IN <i>DIVINE INTERVENTION</i>	
Introduction.....	174
Introduction.....	175
Border spaces and narrative.....	177
<i>Divine Intervention</i> , discontinuity and space	182
Psychological occupation.....	186
Screen space as poetic space	191
Fantasy space	198
Conclusion	202
CONCLUSION.....	205
Filmography	209
References	212
Appendix A:	226
Appendix B:	224

SELECTED CLIPS ON DVD

1. The shower sequence – from *Psycho* 1960
2. The slit eye – from *Un Chien Andalou* 1929
3. Opening – from *Emak Bakia* 1927
4. "Eréndira was bathing her grandmother" – from *Eréndira* 1983
5. Opening – from *Black Cat, White Cat* 1998
6. Helen and Faust in the crypt – from *Faust* 1994
7. Birth of Otik – from *Little Otik* 2000
8. The dolls' house – from *Jabberwocky* 1971
9. *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* 1999
10. The watchtower – from *Divine Intervention* 2002
11. "Ninja babe" – from *Divine Intervention* 2002

The purpose of this DVD is to allow the examiner easy access to some of the material discussed in this thesis and it is not intended for any other use. The photograph on the DVD menu is of 'La Poupée' (The Doll) Centre George Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris (taken by Mary Watson-Seoighe, January 2005).

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Marion Crane (<i>Psycho</i> 1960)	52
Figure 2: Marion Crane (<i>Psycho</i> 1960).....	52
Figure 3: The slit eye (<i>Un Chien Andalou</i> 1929)	79
Figure 4: The androgen (<i>Un Chien Andalou</i> 1929)	79
Figure 5: The androgen (<i>Un Chien Andalou</i> 1929)	79
Figure 6: Kusturica's pig (<i>Black Cat, White Cat</i> 1998)	108
Figure 7: Inside the dolls' house (<i>Jabberwocky</i> 1971).....	141
Figure 8: The grinder 1 (<i>Jabberwocky</i> 1971).....	140
Figure 9: The grinder 2 (<i>Jabberwocky</i> 1971).....	140
Figure 10: Baby feeds (<i>Little Otik</i> 2000)	141
Figure 11: Baby Otik (<i>Little Otik</i> 2000).....	141
Figure 12: Township scene	173
Figure 13: Shadow and the funeral procession.....	173
(both from <i>Portrait of a Young Man Drowning</i> 1999)	
Figure 14: The watchtower (<i>Divine Intervention</i> 2002).....	204
Figure 15: "Ninja babe" (<i>Divine Intervention</i> 2002)	204

Abstract

At the core of this study is the question of how film conveys experience that resists representation through closed, linear narratives. This thesis explores two possibilities and relates them to each other: infusions of fantasy (or magic, the dream, the marvellous) which undermine realism and the use of disruption as a specific strategy for communicating disorder or elusive experience. It examines the expression of both fantasy and disruption with an emphasis on film editing. This study considers editing as the foundation of narrative structure in film, and explores the effects of alternative articulations of space, time and the body in film that deliberately subvert the norms of continuity editing.

The first chapter unpacks the concept of realism in relation to film and examines the dominant practice of editing, continuity editing, as one of the primary ways through which cinematic realism is constructed. Chapters two and three consider two alternative realisms in art: surrealism and magical realism, which both, in different ways, integrate the real and the fantastic, and explore the expression of these modes through film form. Without necessarily claiming a direct influence of surrealism and magical realism, chapters four to six read three examples from contemporary world cinema through the lens of these two deviant realisms. These chapters explore the representation of surreality in early French surrealist film and in the work of contemporary Czech surrealist, Jan Švankmajer; of township experience in South Africa in the transition years; and of space in the context of Palestine.

This study traces how disrupted editing in certain contexts complicates and refuses a coherent, linear narrative. It acknowledges a body of films that present deviant realisms through the subversion of the norms of continuity editing, and through the integration of the real and the fantastic, thereby rejecting the totalising effects of seamlessness, and reconciling experience and representation through non-linearity. Combined with injections of fantasy, disruption begins to offer new possibilities for the articulation and negotiation of subjective states and of disordered or traumatized social experience.

Introduction

In order to make a film, one must cut, stick and discard images. As a result of those operations, and of the work which is produced, there are always remainders, traces, and in a much more explicit and material way than in the case of spoken or written language.

(Wills 1996, p. 87)

Editing, in the context of film, usually refers to the process of joining shots in sequence. The term is also used to indicate the overall arrangement of images that determines how a film may construct spatial and temporal coherence. Mainstream narrative film establishes, or attempts to establish, coherence and seamlessness, through the dominant practice of continuity editing, and this is one of the key ways in which cinematic realism is constructed.¹ There is a strong emphasis on continuity within sequences; on the ordered chronology of sequences; and on the smoothness of the transitions between shots and sequences. But, by its nature, editing through emphasising linkage, alludes at the same time to the implicit gaps between shots; joining and arranging leave traces of what has been discarded and concealed, as Wills suggests. This thesis probes the ways in which editing can be used to disrupt the cinematic realism that continuity editing works to create and thereby establish alternative modes of representation.

This study traces multiple sites of disruption in the usual use of continuity editing. It draws together, in a suggestive montage, films that share an interrupted realism brought

¹ Bordwell and Thomson (2004, p. 310) summarise the function of continuity editing: “The basic purpose of the continuity system is to create a smooth flow from shot to shot ... Since the continuity style seeks to present a story, however, it is chiefly through the handling of space and time that editing furthers narrative continuity”. Pam Cook describes how continuity editing has been codified in order to bridge ellipses in space and time (1985, p. 213). Don Fairservice also discusses how editing achieves the perception of unbroken continuity (Fairservice 2001). Dancyger (2002) and Button (2002) both give more practical accounts of continuity editing in the service of narrative clarity.

on by a deviation from the norms of continuity editing. The places where cinematic realism falters and the seamlessness of conventional film narrative is fissured or disturbed, serve as encoded instructions – glitches in the matrix, as it were – for reading the relationship between film as representation and the object world it attempts to represent. Realism as a mode of cinematic representation has frequently been considered wanting.² Firstly, there is the shifting understanding of the term itself, which has inherited a slipperiness from its origins in literary realism, which is compounded by the way that film, through its moving images, resembles the world it attempts to represent. Various cinematic movements have emerged over time in dialogue with the unifying tendencies of cinematic realism as an aesthetic. Traced historically: *cinéma vérité*, surrealism, poetic realism, neo-realism, the cinefantastic all speak to realism as they forge a relationship between the aesthetic and the object of representation.³

This is perhaps motivated, at least in part, by a feeling that the totalising effects of seamless narratives often fail to represent certain experiences, contexts or events. The idea that narrative cinema is inadequate to account for much of contemporary experience is not new. Hayden White discusses the incompatibility of the contemporary world and traditional representation, particularly by focusing on modernist narratives:

The outside phenomenal aspects, and insides of events, their possible meanings or significances, have been collapsed and fused. The “meaning” of events remains indistinguishable from their occurrence, but their occurrence is unstable, fluid, phantasmagoric – as phantasmagoric as the slow-motion, reverse angle, zoom and rerun of the video representations of the Challenger explosion. This is not to say that such events are not representable, only that techniques of representation somewhat different from those developed at the height of artistic realism may be called for (White 1996, p. 29).

² Hayden White discusses how the “dissolution of the event as a basic unit of temporal occurrence and building-block of history ... undermines a founding presupposition of Western realism”(1996, p. 18). Laura Marks also questions the presumed relationship between realism and cinema (Marks 2000).

³ For a discussion of *cinéma vérité*, see Beitrose (1964); for poetic realism see Austin (1996); Vincent Floydd Rocchio (1999) discusses Italian Neo-realism and James Donald (1989) writes on the cinefantastic.

A cohesive narrative may attempt to circumscribe those experiences that cannot always be contained; to put experience into a neatly told story involves an attempt to master an unsettled underlying social anxiety and create the illusion of wholeness and resolution where, in reality, there is none. This suggests a further reconsideration of what realism means, and also of the formal techniques that constitute it. Canadian critic, Bill Nichols, in attempting to articulate a realism that represents a more inclusive experience, talks about a “reconstituted realism” that “derails narrative without destroying it” through the use of:

[r]etardations, delays, slippages, diversions, incomplete reasonings, unfinished arguments, partial proposals, competing claims, jarring or strange juxtapositions, fissures, jumps, gaps, or other perepetias... (Nichols 1996, p. 58).

In his discussion of *Who Killed Vincent Chin* (1987), Nichols defers to these techniques because “realism alone clearly will not suffice” because of the “failure of the classic realist narrative modes to convince us of their commensurability with the reality we experience beyond them” (1996, p. 58). Following Hayden White, Nichols considers that “disasters, catastrophes and social holocausts” cannot be conceptualised in a “traditional historical understanding” (p. 58). Nichols’s terminology – delays, fissures, jarring – all coincide with White’s paraphrase of Jameson, referring to the psychopathologies of modernist writings and film: “artificial closures, blockages of narrative, deformation and formal compensations, the dissociation or splitting of narrative functions” (White 1996, p. 32). White considers these to offer opportunities to represent “traumatic events as being produced by the monstrous growth and expansion of technological modernity” (1996, p. 32). The unravelling of narrative described by Nichols, White and Jameson specifically involves disruptive editing techniques. These are the stories with “black holes” to which Mary Ann Caws refers in her discussion of textual interference. For Caws, interference or interruption is “something positive: it works towards openness and struggles against the system as closure, undoing categories” (Caws 1989, p. 6).

Continuity editing usually coheres and binds its representation, thereby positing a singular account of the world and attempting to erase any traces of things

that do not quite fit. With its clear causality, temporal linearity and invisible seams, continuity editing is one of the foundations of twentieth-century cinematic realism, and by formally interrupting narrative and resisting a linear history (if we accept White's conflation of historiography with narrative techniques in relation to the broader questions of recording the world) films that employ interrupted editing techniques simultaneously reject realism.

In a similar vein, I am interested in how editing and film form can suggest a material world infused with subjective experience and how this may function as potentially subversive expression. This thesis considers how the marvellous, the magical, the fantastic, the dream – which can be loosely summed up as phantasmagoria – may be communicated through disrupted narrative. My discussion of disruption refers to the specific kind of textual interference that marks the techniques and effects of surrealism and magical realism and is evident in the three case studies; disruption may be plotted along the aesthetic and the psychic, the social and the political.

Surrealism sought psychic disruption through aesthetic disjuncture, and the effect was to undermine the ordinary. While surrealism has always insisted on surreality as its primary aim rather than the aesthetics of art, it is through aesthetic disjuncture that surreality may be accessed. Later surrealism, exemplified in this thesis through the work of Jan Švankmajer, further insists on a redefinition of the quotidian through the articulation of unconscious thought. Both Švankmajer and Breton grant surrealism an underlying political significance; while the subversive quality of surrealism is not explicitly political, by redefining the quotidian through the dream, surrealism has political implications.⁴ Breton's attempt to explore the convergence of the political with the psychic, shows that there is a natural progression in his original conceptualisation of surrealism as a concern which emphasises the psychic, to the political and I discuss this in Chapter Two.

My interest in this aspect of surrealism coincides with broader questions about the relationship between interiority and exteriority. I argue that disruption is a means of reading the interior through the exterior and the effect is necessarily subversive. I explore

⁴ See Chapter Four, footnote five for Švankmajer's definition of politics, which is a broader, more generalised view.

different kinds of subversions – the subversive element in surrealism is not the same as in magical realism. Similarly, while all three case studies are clearly subversive, their aims and methods are different. While surrealism focuses on the psychic and works outward to the political, magical realism, on the other hand, has more consistent socio-political concerns, and disruption in these texts are usually more immediately political; my discussion of Teboho Mahlatsi and of Elia Suleiman focus more specifically on socio-political subversion by considering how political trauma impacts on social experience.

In some ways, this is a study of film borders, specifically the borders of the shot as each shot functions in relation to the next. It is also a study of how these borders may be stressed and the places where they rupture or fracture. I draw these filmic borders together for consideration with a different kind of border space: the places where the boundaries between the fantastic and real are blurred. Magical realism and surrealism, through their fusion of realism and fantasy, offer alternative ways of understanding the real through the presentation of its artefacts (objects) and its bodies. This fascination with objects is deeply connected to the modernist preoccupation with the mechanical and is further indicated in the mechanical nature of film, the monster that was being mastered in the early part of the last century. Continuity editing is effectively the taming of the beast, the unknown possibilities of the machine are harnessed and become as domestic as a vacuum cleaner, and is used to similar effect: erasure. But there is always debris, and my interests lie particularly in what falls between the cracks. An underlying thread of this study is concerns how objects may be represented as disruptive. Both magical realism and surrealism redefine objects, as I discuss later, and in all three of my case studies, there is clear evidence of how these filmmakers inscribe the objects in their films as disruptive. This is, in some ways, a defamiliarisation of objects which becomes possible through the use of discontinuity editing; these are two converging sources of disruption.

In editing, the “cut” refers simultaneously to the actual snipping or disconnection of film, but also to the joined film as the cut refers to the process of joining. It also refers to the whole film in terms of its stages: the rough cut, the fine cut, the director’s cut. Although the most basic understanding of editing is the joining of shots, editing also signifies a broader process of the arrangement of images to structure a film. Aumont, Bergala, Marie and Vernet (1992) distinguish between a narrow definition of editing

which can be summarised as “the organization of a film’s shots according to certain principles of ordering and duration” (Marcel Martin cited in Aumont et al. 1992, p. 38) and a larger understanding:

We therefore propose the following definition, which we will subsequently designate as the “large” definition of editing or “montage”: “Montage is the principle governing the organization of film elements, both visual and audio, or the combination of these elements, by juxtaposing them, connecting them, and/or controlling their duration” (Aumont et al. 1992).

Aumont et al. assign a specific meaning to the term “montage” to identify their broader understanding of the function of editing. In this understanding, editing (or montage) refers to the organising principle of film thereby implying that it is the structural foundation of film, specifically through its ability to juxtapose, combine and control images in relation to each other. Each image has a spatial and temporal dimension, and this study emphasises the narrative construction of film time and film space through the organisation and arrangements of shots and sequences. As Aumont et al. (1992) suggest, a discussion of editing may extend to the integration of music, sound and dialogue but this study focuses primarily on editing as visual combination and arrangement.

The term “montage” for Aumont et al. indicates this broader function of editing, but implicit in the above quotation is the idea that the terms editing and montage are in some ways interchangeable. While the term montage has been used as an alternative to continuity editing, particularly with regard to Soviet montage and associative sequences within continuity editing, Aumont et al. use the term more inclusively to refer to the combination of shots regardless of whether they are continuous or associative. My use of the term montage generally corresponds to the broader use by Aumont et al. and regards editing as montage unless specifically referring to “montage sequences” within continuity editing, or Soviet montage. There is also a more specific use of the term montage in relation to surrealism: this draws on surrealist practices of collage and montage in other art forms and in film, it integrates aspects of continuity editing while necessarily including elements of association or juxtaposition. Similarly, continuity editing signals a specific style of editing which I will discuss in Chapter One.

The first chapter considers cinematic realism and its history and locates it in terms of formal techniques, particularly continuity editing. In order to understand the significance of editing in relation to realism, I trace some of the key debates in film theory and history, including the tendency to an emphasis on camera or on editing, while attempting to unpack some of the different conceptions of realism. My emphasis in this chapter is on the construction of cinematic realism through continuity editing in mainstream cinema. Editing not only organises space and time, it also considers the graphic qualities of the relationship between shots; it pieces together the human figure and other bodies; it manipulates point-of-view and perspective through the arrangement of shots; and it constructs the underlying narrative pace and rhythm of the film. I examine conceptualisations of editing in order to explore how the idea of seamlessness has become normalised.

In Chapter Two, I examine surrealism and film: film was an important medium for the surrealists because of its resemblance to the dream. I consider the concept of surrealist montage, and relate this to editing through a discussion of *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). I also consider how psychoanalytic techniques potentially correlate with surrealist film form. Chapter Three traces the history of magical realism and draws on the link between the visuality of the earliest version of magical realism in Weimar Germany and film. I consider the ways the term has migrated from literature into film by identifying three specific applications of the term to film, but conclude that while there is an undoubted influence of magical realism on film, there is no definitive body of films that rest easily in this category.

The last three chapters consider specific case studies in which I examine the work of three filmmakers in light of surrealism and magical realism, and the relationship between film form and representation. My discussions highlight film editing and each chapter places particular emphasis on one specific aspect of discontinuity in editing: space, time and the body in frame. Chapter Four focuses on Czech animator and surrealist, Jan Švankmajer and I explore his surreality in relation to his representation of the body. The integration of different styles of animation, as well as the merging of live-action and animation facilitate the interrogation of the body on screen and communicate an underlying transgression. In Chapter Five, I highlight the temporal dimension of

editing in my discussion of memory and fantasy in relation to trauma in a recent South African film, *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* (1999) by Teboho Mahlatsi. The film is marked by a persistent interruptions which communicate a traumatic past and violent present. Chapter Six also examines intrusions of fantasy in relation to the representation of contested space in Palestinian film, by considering Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2003). I identify different layers of filmic space and consider these in relation to the socio-political experience in Palestine; I also consider the idea of "psychological occupation" as the place where the psychological and the spatial meet.

Disruptive narrative and deviant realisms can be found in numerous examples not included in this study: interrupted editing in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Fellini; interrupted realism in later Buñuel or in Neil Jordan's work, particularly in the context of postcolonial Ireland; infusions of dark fantasy in Powell and Pressburger and in the work of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro amongst many others. But each filmmaker in my selection has forged a specific relationship between form, fantasy and context that I examine; more importantly, the areas that I have chosen to focus on are further illuminated by considering them in relation to the others.

Rather than an overambitious totalising exposition, this study presents a suggestive juxtaposition of sites of disruption in film. In order to explore how these are realised in art, I consider the self-conscious play of montage and the deliberate integration of non-linearity and anti-narrative tactics. Zamora and Faris point out that "[i]n magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption" (1995, p. 3). Correspondingly, I consider underlying socio-political unsteadiness in relation to Jameson's "very provisional hypothesis" (1986, p. 311) which locates magical realism as an interstitial mode, potentially capable of reconciling disruptive experience with representation. The different areas of interest in this study all share a common concern with opposites, with borders and with juxtaposition. Like the surrealist obsession with integrating the dream and the quotidian, and like the borders that connect and divide Palestine and Israel, this study holds together for consideration the modernist with the postmodern, realism with the phantasmagorical, the objective with the subjective, and the political with the aesthetic.

Two distinct lines of enquiry meet in this study: realism and its variants such as surrealism and magical realism, and questions around the theory and practice of film editing. These are for the most part explored in terms of the formal construction of realism, and the textual strategies and techniques for deviations from established conventions of realism in film. I use magical realism and surrealism as a lens through which to read contemporary world cinema in order to explore how the form of the film functions to communicate elusive experience. This thesis does not present a case for any direct influence of surrealism or magical realism on contemporary world cinema but rather hopes to present a suggestive montage which allows different films to be read in the light of each other.

Chapter One

Editing the Real: Seamlessness and realism in film

This chapter discusses the relationship between editing and realism. I begin by tracing how film history and theory have drawn a distinction between editing and the camera by aligning editing with artifice and the shot with realism. However, the artifice of editing, its potential for illusion, can also be used to communicate a more convincing realism. The chapter tracks the relationship between editing and realism: it considers the realism/illusion divide in relation to the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès and then proceeds to Kracauer's distinction between the realist and formalist tendencies in film, drawing on Bazin. Briefly, I consider how Soviet montage and the beginnings of continuity editing conceptualised different relationships between editing and reality. Continuity editing is the foundation of classical and contemporary mainstream narrative film; its conventions are standardised, and in conjunction with viewer expectations, it creates the effect of realism in cinema by creating the illusion of seamlessness. I argue that the idea of seamless editing has extended to the conceptualisation of the process of editing itself. In this way, space, time, point-of-view and the position of the viewer are all manipulated through the conventions of continuity editing in order to achieve an illusion of seamlessness, and I analyse sequences from Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) and *Psycho* (1960) to illustrate this.¹ But these examples also indicate how classical Hollywood cinema permits deviations from the conventions of continuity editing without compromising the overall continuity of the film. Contemporary mainstream film, while

¹ Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson locate classical Hollywood between 1917 to 1960 (see Bordwell et al. 1985). Even though *Marnie* and *Psycho* were both made at the tail end of classical Hollywood, Hitchcock is one of the foremost filmmakers of the period.

maintaining continuity editing as narrative foundation, is normalising increasing amounts of interruption and thereby shifting viewer expectations of realism.

Introduction

Russian theorist, Jurij Lotman, pinpoints one of the issues that has vexed discussions of cinematic realism:

The world of cinema is extremely close to the visible appearance of life.

The illusion of authenticity, as we have seen, is one of its integral properties. But this world has one rather strange feature; it always consists, not of all reality, but of a segment carved into the shape of the screen (Lotman 1976, p. 23).

Film theory and history have attempted to negotiate the divide between the illusionary and realist potential of the screen. Both of these terms, illusion,² can be understood in too many ways; sometimes they indicate opposing tendencies and at others, as the quotation from Jurij Lotman suggests, they converge. This chapter explores these concepts, particularly different understandings of cinematic realism, in relation to film editing. One of the classic discussions of realism considers the different effects of an emphasis on shot and on sequence.³ Focusing on the unbroken shot highlights its photographic qualities, thereby emphasising the camera's ability to reproduce the appearance of the world in a moving image. The sequence, a combination of shots arranged together, is necessarily more compromised by human interpretation.⁴ The artifice of editing, through its attention to form, has been associated with illusion and

² Pam Morris (2003) discusses the slipperiness of the term "realism".

³ See Daniel Morgan's essay on Bazin for an argument for the continuing value of classical theories despite advances in digital technology (Morgan 2006).

⁴ The photographic qualities of the camera of course involve some selection and interpretation; rather than a rigid divide between camera and editing, views here have tended to emphasize one above the other. See Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' for a discussion on the photographic image (1967). See also Maya Deren 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality' (2004) for a discussion which simultaneously values the photographic qualities of the camera, but uses motion effects to explore and reveal the nature of movement. See also Higgins (1991).

fantasy, while the unmediated shot has been considered to have a closer relationship with reality.⁵

But editing can also be used in order to effect realism. The illusion of cinema can refer to the spectacular or fantastic content, but it can also indicate the realistic impression that cinema can project, and this owes much to the use of specific editing techniques. Because this study is especially concerned with the deliberate breaking down of realism and the possible emergence of variants of fantasy in relation to editing, it is necessary to ground the broader discussion through an examination of how editing has been established as the foundation of realism in the last century. There are two key developments in the history of editing and both of these effected divergent forms of realism: Soviet montage and continuity editing. These paths forged distinct relationships with reality and editing and continue to dominate the contemporary understanding of the history and function of editing. But as these forms were consolidated, some experimental forms emerged and moved away from these techniques in search of disruption – this is evident in Dada and surrealist films. Surrealism in particular drew on and undermined dominant techniques in order to communicate its concerns around the unconscious, the dream and the marvellous.⁶ While the heritage of editing is usually traced back to Soviet montage and Griffith's innovations in continuity editing, surrealism may be seen as the rebellious younger sibling, which has left its own legacy of disruption and discontinuity, allowing alternatives to realism to emerge. Later chapters explore the significance of surrealism, while this chapter considers how editing has been employed in the service of realism. My examination of editing as foundation of realism in this chapter discusses how continuity editing has been conceptualised, and in particular, how the concept of seamlessness relates to ideas of the editing process as “natural”. Seamlessness – the idea of editing as invisible and continuous so that it does not interrupt the viewer's experience of the film – is the definitive characteristic of the way in which continuity editing creates the effect of realism in fictive cinema as it communicates spatial and temporal coherence

⁵ This coincides with Bazin's distinction which recognises two basic categories in discussions of realism in film from the 1920s to 1940s: “the resources of montage” and “the plastics of the image”. These relate to his recognition of two distinct trends in cinema, those “who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality” (Bazin 1967, p. 24).

⁶ See Chapter Two for a discussion of surrealism and discontinuity editing.

and a unified perspective. This chapter considers how small disruptions in editing were absorbed by classical Hollywood cinema and how contemporary mainstream film increasingly incorporates narrative disruption.

Editing and realism in film history: shot and sequence

Film theory and history frequently refer to the distinctive approaches of the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès as the origin of the divide between fantasy and realism in cinema; Kracauer draws on this distinction in order to clarify his divide between the “realist” and “formative” tendencies in cinema (Kracauer 1960, p. 30).⁷ Lumière and Méliès are usually cited to illustrate the persistent rift in cinema caused by these conflicting impulses and evident since its inception.⁸ The preoccupation with capturing reality on film is usually traced back to the Lumière brothers, and this is contrasted to the more fantastic alternative initiated by Méliès. But rather than pinpointing them as separate, the work of these two early filmmakers reveal the extent to which realism and illusion are intricately bound up in each other. The distinction between Lumière and Méliès also begins to explain film form and its relationship to the representation of reality through a contrasting emphasis on either editing or the capacity of the camera to document the world. But even as editing and camera have been viewed as opposing approaches to realism, the relationship between shot or sequence and realism is more nuanced than is immediately evident.

In terms of style, the Lumière brothers are recognised for recording the world around them through short vignettes. These are drawn from their daily lives: workers leaving the Lumière factory in *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), a baby eating

⁷ Méliès is best known for *Le voyage dans la lune* (A Trip to the Moon) made in 1902 although he made hundreds of films. The Lumière brothers are usually credited with what is considered the first film, *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895).

⁸ For a discussion of the Lumière brothers and Méliès see Armes, *Film and Reality* (1974); Wexman, *A History of Film* (2006); Fairservice, *Film Editing* (2001); Bordwell and Thompson *Film History* (Bordwell and Thompson 1994, ; 2002). In addition to Kracauer, these writers also discuss the early filmmakers in relation to realism and illusion. Heath refers to Lumière as a specific example of naïve realism which considers the camera able to reflect reality – “nature caught in the act”, as one of the early spectators is reputed to have said (Heath 1981, p. 25).

its breakfast in *Le Repas de bébé* (1895), a train entering the station in *Arrivé d'un train en gare à La Ciotat* (1895). Méliès, on the other hand, is considered the father of illusion. In order to achieve his illusions, Méliès switched off his camera and then turned it on to an altered mise-en-scène, thus editing in-camera and urging his images to perform in ways permissible only through tricks of technology. The Lumière Brothers, whose interests were far more prosaic, let the camera run. But Lumière and Méliès did not develop their particular styles of film simultaneously. Méliès responded to the Lumière initiative and should be considered as a further step in the development of cinematic language and its complex relationship with reality.

These two strands are marked as distinct impulses and by pinpointing the beginning of cinema as the beginning of the divide, film theory has narrated the inevitability of these opposing impulses as well as the idea that they are irreconcilable; fantasy and realism, Lumière and Méliès, story and documentary are established as dichotomies. But their separateness has never been entirely sustained. Illusion was present in the Lumière films too: *Demolition d'un Mur* (1895) plays out the demolition of the wall, but is followed by the reverse projection showing the wall rebuilding itself. Furthermore, the narrative element to these short films begins to interpret the experiences of their subjects and the line between document and fiction blurs even more.⁹ Film editor Don Fairservice (2001) points out that the first film, the workers leaving the Lumière factory, begins with the opening of the gates and ends with them closing, thereby imposing a structure to the scene of the workers leaving to go home. Some of the later films show even more evidence of being staged, and this is particularly evident in *L'Arroseur arrosé* where a gardener is squirted by a boy. Furthermore, these short films, emerging from a tradition of ocular toys of illusion, sought to communicate the marvellous and spectacular nature of cinema.¹⁰ Tom Gunning (2004) reads early silent

⁹ Gunning discusses Maxim Gorky's response to the Lumière films – he was struck by the combination of realistic and non-realistic elements as it indicates a “life deprived of words and of the living spectrum of colours” (Gunning 2004, p. 865). This suggests that rather than a window to another world, early film was more like a trick mirror in a funfair hall.

¹⁰ See Bordwell and Thompson (1994) for a discussion of the zoetrope, praxinoscope and kinoscope, none of which were concerned with document. The development of cinema appears to be less linked to a desire to document and record reality than to a particular relationship between scientific innovation and entertainment.

cinema as a “cinema of attractions” thereby emphasising its spectacular appeal.

Conversely, Méliès’s use of the illusion of film in the service of advertising suggests a more pragmatic approach than is usually attributed to him.¹¹

The Lumière/Méliès myth of origin highlights two factors of importance to this study: from the very beginning of cinema, realism and illusion were entangled. And from the very beginning of cinema, editing has been contrasted with the shot, in this case a proto-long take, and this indicates the formal distinction between realism and fantasy that has underpinned discussions of cinematic realism from early film theory. One of the classic ways of configuring the divide between realism and fantasy, that is, through the distinction between shot and sequence, emerges in an embryonic form with Méliès and Lumière. Considered in this light, the Lumière/Méliès schism is a useful myth of origin whose true benefit is illustrative rather than definitive as it identifies a cinematic schizophrenia from the earliest inception which serves to weight it with the gravity of history.

It is therefore possible to extract at least two related approaches to realism in cinema, and also in film theory, as it developed over the last century: an emphasis on the shot and an emphasis on the sequence. This distinction resonates with what Kracauer has termed the “realist” and “formative” tendencies in cinema (Kracauer 1960). Kracauer’s famous distinction identifies a core tension in film and is frequently used to indicate opposing urges to film as a document of reality and film as illusive. The realist tendency indicates a concern with cinema’s ability to document the world and values the verisimilitude of the image while the formative tendency is more concerned with form, which manipulates and interprets, in order to explore the aesthetic potential of the medium. This can be related back to the split between fiction and documentary cinema but does not necessarily suggest a neat binary opposition between story/formative/sequence set up against documentary/realist/shot. Rather, to consider these together allows for an understanding of the extent to which they are not distinct and illuminates the ways in which they tend to bleed into each other.

¹¹Roy Armes (1974) discusses how Méliès sold mustards and corsets in his “gay, burlesque little films” (pp. 27-8).

While the divide between fiction and documentary is important, there is no simple correlation between the two approaches to realism and these two modes of representation. Documentary cinema can show evidence of a concern with form, and fiction has at times preferred to rely on what the camera sees rather than on how images may be arranged in sequence, as discussions around deep focus suggest:

As practised by Toland and others, deep focus cinematography constituted perhaps the first coherent alternative seen in American films to the editing-centred film theories of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Kuleshov. Whereas to the Russians, the content of the shot was subordinate to the feelings generated by its juxtaposition with those preceding and succeeding it, in deep focus cinematography the individual shot and action recorded within it came to be of primary importance (Ogle cited in Williams 1980, p. 198).

Ogle contrasts the use of deep focus to the juxtaposition of images by referring to Gregg Toland, Orson Welles's preferred cinematographer. The emphasis on camera as a means to realism holds the integrity of the shot as paramount and allows reality to be "revealed" through techniques such as deep focus, long takes and fewer shots. This minimizes the interference of the apparatus, asserts the content as more real, and is thought to allow for a less mediated representation by allowing the viewer freedom to interpret the images. The shot is consolidated as a record, capable of capturing an objective reflection and offering it up to the viewer. When Bazin (1980) suggests that deep focus, lateral depth of field and the long take are preferential techniques for creating the effect of realism in cinema, he implies a particular kind of realism. Bazin's discussion of the long take and depth of field in relation to realism refers to a deeper psychological realism that is considered an improvement on the way that montage, particularly shot reverse-shot, had been used. For Bazin, the increased potential for psychological realism was linked to more ambiguity and increased activity from the viewer (Higgins 1991).

Colin MacCabe, in his study on Godard, pinpoints what is at the heart of Bazin's concern with realism:

In his defence of realism, Bazin is not arguing about film's ability to represent social reality; this is not an argument about whether Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*

is realistic, rather its is an argument that cinema inevitably represents the reality of Laurence Olivier playing *Henry V* before the camera (MacCabe 2004, p. 63). Bazin's interest in the camera's ability to document the world is stripped down to the essentials: the obvious, but easily overlooked, ability of the camera to capture an image of the world before it. Realism in film has been underscored by the tension between this understanding of the fidelity of the camera – the idea that an image can capture the reality before it, whether it is fiction or not – and the arrangement of images in sequence which create meaning in conjunction with other images. Editing has been viewed as artifice because “the resources of editing take the activity of film away from the real world, propelling it to ‘art’ and ‘combination’” (Williams 1980, p. 21).¹² Editing can be considered an external force which imposes a logic and order on the images and therefore potentially compromises the objectivity of the image by manipulating the viewer through the arrangement and organisation of images. It obscures the relationship between representation and reality by imposing an interpretation. But to regard editing as an external logic imposed on the material could implicitly suggest a purity of the shot: the belief that the authenticity of the image derives from its ability to reflect the real without any mediation; that the image indicates the thing itself. This prods at the hornet's nest at the centre of the debates around realism: there are various understandings of what realism is and how it may be achieved. This study considers specific ways in which alternatives to realism are uncovered and conveyed through interruption and interference editing techniques in contemporary world cinema.

Soviet montage and continuity editing

The emphasis on editing as an approach to representing reality does not emerge from a coherent position as there are many different ways of conceptualising editing as exemplified by the contrasting techniques of Griffith and Eisenstein. Both Soviet

¹² Christopher Williams discusses this in relation to Grierson. Grierson recognised the advantages of editing and montage sequences in his films but he held to the belief that the documentary image was better able to signify the real (Williams 1980).

montage and continuity editing in early Hollywood developed particular approaches to realism through film form. Both emphasise editing but they offer vastly different ways of conceiving of how it should work. Continuity editing is usually considered the foundation of contemporary mainstream editing and realism in cinema, and is traced back to Griffith's innovations in editing (Dancyger 2002). Following Griffith, certain methods have been standardised in order to communicate the images as seamlessly as possible. These include the orchestration of longer and closer shots: Griffith's contribution was to invest film language with a dramatic function; his innovations in editing began to communicate emotional and psychological verisimilitude.¹³

Three of the key figures in Soviet montage, Eisenstein, Vertov and Pudovkin, have varying ideas of how editing should function. Fundamentally, Soviet montage ascribes a more associative function to editing but there are different ways in which this has been understood. Pudovkin claims that the "foundation of film art is editing" (Pudovkin 1935, p. xiii). His formulations around film construction are premised on the idea of a film as "built" through the sequencing of shots; "soulless photographs" (1935, p. 2) are considered dead material until animated through the editing process. Pudovkin therefore views editing as an external logic that is imposed on the shots as it animates them. Pudovkin's conceptualisation of editing as linkage contrasts to Eisenstein's emphasis on collision and conflict; what he termed a "montage of attractions" (Eisenstein 1943, p. 166). Eisenstein conceived of montage where editing, as a dialectic, is the logic of film, as meaning arises through juxtaposition and allusion. Here editing is the internal dynamic through which film meaning is determined. For Eisenstein, montage was a way of communicating reality through its ability to represent while simultaneously breaking down and reconstructing.

Christopher Williams recognises how Eisensteinian montage can also be considered a form of realism:

[F]or Eisenstein and others who have drawn on Marxist ideas it is necessary to displace the real world, which is itself a bourgeois ideology, and to replace it with

¹³ See Dancyger (2002) for a discussion on Griffith's developments in editing in terms of realising drama. See also Fairservice (2001) and Reisz (1953).

a range of other possibilities. This displacement, however, is itself carried out in the name of realism” (1980, p. 21).

This suggests a different kind of realism, one that rejects what is usually considered real as illusion or façade and instead aims to uncover an alternative. Eisenstein’s realism rejected the mimetic qualities of film in favour of accessing experience that might not be immediately available.¹⁴ Vertov, who developed the concept of the “kino-eye” shared Eisenstein’s disdain for mimesis and instead sought to capture “life itself” (Michelson 1984, p. xxxvii). Again, this suggests an attempt to represent experience which eluded a straightforward representation.

The conceptualisation of editing and reality in Soviet montage therefore contrasts with how it is understood in Hollywood cinema. In Hollywood, it is illusion that constitutes realism. Here, believability becomes the measure of realism. This follows an idea of realism as an imitation of reality, which is contrasted to the belief in the integration of reality. Classical Hollywood narrative tells stories in what is best described as a realistic way, thereby smudging the idea of realism into what appears to be real. Bazin’s description of realist cinema as “any system of expression or narrative procedure tending to make more reality appear on the screen” (Bazin 1976, p. 27) indicates a core confusion – what does it mean to have more reality appear on screen? “Realism” is deployed in too many different ways, plotted along too many axes. The term attempts to pin down the elusive; it indicates a shifting referent. The exact parameters of verisimilitude in film shift and blur when considering the different levels at which film can operate. Bazin says of the shifting understandings of realism:

[The *realist* tendency] has been through many mutations, but the forms in which it has appeared have survived only in proportion to the amount of aesthetic intervention (or discovery) – conscious or not, calculated or innocent – involved.

There is not one but several realisms. Each era looks for its own, that is to say the

¹⁴ Wollen (1979) writes about how the realism issue is caught up in Eisenstein’s work. On one hand, it was “proclaimed in principle as arch-realistic” and on the other it was quite removed from reality (p. 56).

technique and aesthetics which can best capture it, arrest and restore whatever one wishes to capture of reality (Bazin 1980, p. 41).¹⁵

The approach to realism through editing is further complicated by different positions regarding what constitutes a more accurate representation of reality. Emotional, psychological verisimilitude and dramatic intention are all different ways of measuring a representation of reality. Then there are also additional film elements like mise-en-scène, film stock and subject matter which communicate something about the fidelity of the represented world, further dividing discussions of realism into form and content. Despite the antithetical aims of an emphasis on sequence and on shot, there are stylistic devices that may converge: both, to varying extents, involve an effacement of filmic technique. Unpacking conceptualisations of editing begins to map out the complex terrain of representation and screen technique.

Continuity editing and classical realism

Editing is most immediately recognised in filmmaking as the practices of joining shots in order to structure a narrative. These practices have become standardised, particularly through continuity editing. Continuity editing has frequently been associated with realism in cinema and particularly with classical Hollywood cinema. For Stam, the effects of the “classical realist” text are constructed through:

... a set of formal parameters involving practices of editing, camerawork, and sound which promote the appearance of spatial and temporal continuity. This continuity was achieved, in the classical Hollywood film, by an etiquette for introducing new scenes (a choreographed progression from establishing shot to medium shot to close shot); conventional devices for evoking the passage of time (dissolves, iris effects); editing techniques to smooth over the transition from shot to shot (the 30-degree rule, position matches, direction matches, movement

¹⁵ I have worked from two different translations of Bazin’s essay on William Wyler. The first, translated by Hugh Gray, is reprinted in Christopher Williams’s 1980 realism reader, and the second, translated by Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo is collected in *Bazin at Work* (Bazin and Cardullo 1997).

matches, inserts to cover up unavoidable discontinuities); and devices for implying subjectivity (interior monologue, subjective shots, eyeline matches, empathetic music). The classical realist text was “transparent” in that it attempted to efface all traces of the “work of the film”, making it pass for natural (Stam 2000, p. 143).

Because film can appear to mirror the world through resemblance and an attention to detail, the emphasis of the relationship to reality shifts from the fidelity with which the text details the world to the extent to which it hides the mechanisms by which it details the world. The deployment of the term realism in cinema can in this way become a measure of something else: what it means to have more reality appear on screen, as Bazin (1976) puts it, is often to absorb and contain the mechanisms by which the world is portrayed.¹⁶ Again, by concealing its devices, and absorbing deviance into itself, film leads viewers to accept the unity of its representation. By standardising the way that films are put together, it is possible to blur the transitions between shots, between sequences. In this approach, the criteria for realism in classical cinema become less of a dedicated attempt to render a true to life depiction than to hide the devices that alert the viewer to the artifice of film. Robert Stam (2000), although identifying that camerawork and sound function along with editing in order to create an illusion of reality, details in his description mainly the editing techniques that were standardised in order to communicate the classical Hollywood text.

There are overlaps between Stam’s description of the classical realist text and Bordwell and Thompson’s many descriptions of the classical Hollywood text.¹⁷ While the conflation of the classical realist text and classical Hollywood has been questioned, it remains useful for describing a systemised approach to seeing film.¹⁸ But this does not need to be a reductive grid where certain films are forced to fit a definition or meet a checklist of basic requirements; it is not a mechanical conformation of all films made in Hollywood until the 1960s. “Classical Hollywood” which – whether rightly or otherwise

¹⁶ Heath (1981) discusses the containment of techniques, rather than effacement, in ‘Narrative Space’.

¹⁷ See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985), Bordwell and Thomson (2004), Bordwell and Thompson (1994) and Bordwell (1996).

¹⁸ Christopher Williams (2000) questions the way in which MacCabe’s classical realist text and Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson’s writing on Classical Hollywood cinema merged into one (p. 207).

– has been conflated with “classical realist” may be more fluid, less static, than is sometimes perceived, but it still serves to demarcate a particular attitude towards film production, as well as providing a discursive framework for considering techniques in cinema history. It is more useful to view classical Hollywood in terms of a set of established expectations.

In his criticism of the unquestioned acceptance of “classical continuity editing” Williams asserts that only the most naïve viewer would not notice film technique, that appreciation of technique is itself part of the enjoyment of watching film (2000, p. 213). Certainly, all filmmaking is artifice and even the most carefully concealed techniques are revealed if one looks too closely. However, through standardisation, techniques and devices that are not meant to draw attention will remain in the background thereby facilitating a viewing that does not encourage an awareness of form. The experience of watching many mainstream films is not marked by paying attention to editing – the ideology of good cutting is that it draws attention away from itself, away from the facticity of film. Bad cuts are the cuts that are noticed; good cuts are modest and demure, creating a sense of drama and rhythm, providing shape, pace and structure, communicating space and time, but never drawing attention to themselves. They facilitate the communication of a totalised text whose joins are seamless and invisible. This, like the idea of editing as intuitive, mysterious and organic, is another way of constructing a mythology around the technical construction of realism.

The normalisation of continuity editing

The relationship between the filmmaker and the apparatus further illuminates the relationship between film and its resemblance to reality. Although there are various conventions and practical considerations that determine how a cut works, production lore suggests that editing is conceived of as an intuitive logic, rather than any kind of empirical knowing. Editing as an “instinctive” activity, involving some kind of “mysterious” communion with the material underpins much of the discourse around it. For example, Anne Coates – one of the grand figures of Hollywood editing – describes

the process as “instinctive. You make it up in your head. In the bath” (Oldham, 1995, p. 166). The idea of editing as mysterious or magical born out of a gut feeling is the basic premise of many film editors.¹⁹ Mary-Anne Doane writes of the naturalising discourse surrounding sound editing which is considered by practitioners as an unspeakable knowledge – a knowing accessed through intuition, acting in concert with the material and resisting description (Doane 1980). She points out how this functions to totalise the impressions of sound, the viewer perceives its function as a composite whole rather than in bits and pieces. Similarly, the idea of seamlessness as an aesthetic choice in editing, becomes part of the conceptualisation of the whole process of editing and of the editor:

Underappreciated. Most people don't know what editors do. People in the movie business don't know what editors do. Editors are perceived as special people who work in dark rooms away from the madding crowd... we're in our dark cutting room all day, appearing only at night with the rushes. We are kind of gray eminences on the production, not really seen as part of the regular production crew (Lottman cited in Oldham 1995, pp. 232-3).

As cuts are the invisible part of the film, the editors are the invisible people in the film process who have access to some kind of arcane knowledge.

Film editor, Walter Murch (2001), identifies a key cutting point as the moment when characters blink. This naturalises the cutting process, making it as obvious as blinking; Murch considers that blinking is “somehow geared more towards our emotional state” (2001, p. 62). The impetus to cut is then something that is not imposed on material from the outside, but occurs organically, from the actors, but also from the editor, who is in tune with the actors and the celluloid.²⁰ This way of conceptualising editing bridges the

¹⁹ This emerges strongly in the writing of Walter Murch, an editor and sound editor who has featured in two books about editing. Murch wrote one, *In the Blink of an Eye* (2001) and the other by Michael Ondaatje, *Conversations* (2002) is a series of conversations which resulted in their U.K. book tour of 2002; it also refers to his film *The Conversation* (1974). Murch is something of a celebrity editor, an unusual beast since the work of editors is usually to hide their techniques rather than distinguish themselves to audiences through clever cutting.

²⁰ An interesting point here is the shift from film cutting to digital editing. Film cutting is more physical – it involves more physical action, takes up more physical space and the film is previewed by hand-cranking the machine which is a different experience to hitting a play button. In my observation, editors prefer to have some knowledge and experience of the physicality of cutting on film in order to make sense of the more abstracted digital technology, and similarly, editing software like AVID, Final

divide between the editor and the material who become unified in an action that is seen as natural and expected. This is not unusual: filmmaking is often considered in terms of the relationship of the apparatus to the body, in some ways, it considers the apparatus as an extension of the body. Tarkovsky, for example, speaks of the “blood vessels” (1987, p. 114) of film, thereby imbuing it with life and making a connection to the corporeal. Coates talks about the ways in which her editing works to find the “heart” in a piece which again attempts to naturalise the process and conventions of editing (Oldham, 1995, p. 154). It also attempts to account for how editing is instinctive: if it is in the body, then it must be a natural, even primal, logic that allows these cuts to depict a realistic view of the world.

The ways in which editing is drawn into the body are echoed in discussions of the ways in which editing works to mimic mental processes. Lindgren (1963), like Bazin, considers that editing can function to simulate psychological perception, so that what the viewer is presented with is a “normal” trajectory of piecing together visual information in a way that mimics the processes by which we perceive the world:

The fundamental psychological justification of editing as a method of representing the physical world around us lies in the fact that it reproduces this mental process in which one visual image follows another as our attention is drawn to this point and to that in our surroundings. In so far as the film is photographic and reproduces movement, it can give us a life-like semblance of what we see in so far as it employs editing, it can exactly reproduce the *manner* in which we normally see it (Lindgren 1963, p. 62).

Lindgren explains the normalisation of Hollywood mainstream editing as a cinematic realisation which follows the logic of perception. Bazin identifies that classical editing “implicitly corresponds to a particular natural mental process that makes us accept the sequence of shots without being conscious of the cutter’s hand at work” (Bazin 1997, p. 7) and suggests that the viewer’s awareness of the shots is diminished because of this. The viewer – and filmmaker – is therefore less likely to question the logic as imposed because it resembles a natural process. This line of conceptualising editing – as natural

Cut and Premiere all use the language (for, example, “bins”) and left to right working style of manual cutting.

because it coincides with the body and is psychologically justified – works to align realism with film processes because it suggests that this is how “normal” translates to film language. Moreover, as the conventions of editing become established they forge a dynamic relationship with viewer expectations. Edits that conform to these conventions are more likely to go unnoticed by a viewer who has become familiar with a dominant film language. This constructs a circular argument as the idea that continuity editing is somehow normal becomes the reason for establishing it as the norm. But Bazin also considers that “analytical cutting or classical editing was founded on the illusion of psychological realism” (Bazin 1997) and argues that breaking down the scene into composite parts over-determines the film’s meaning. Opting for minimal editing and allowing the viewer to decide how to watch, is according to Bazin, no less psychologically grounded (1967). Similarly, Bazin’s discussion identifies deep focus as more conducive to realism because of the way it allows the eyes to change focal point, thereby working in communion with the body in order to effect a realistic representation. Again there is that understanding of realism of film as grounded in natural processes and therefore sustaining a kind of natural order. There is a strong connection between this sense of film as following some kind of natural order and the illusion of realism in film. They both suggest a tendency towards cohesion, a totalising impulse that does not accommodate any irregularities. These ways of articulating the filmmaking process presuppose its unity of expression and ability to represent a coherent reality. This is the premise by which seamlessness can be read into continuity editing.

But the idea of editing as intuitive or instinctive coincides with the totalising effect of seamlessness in relation to broader questions of realism. In his study on cinematic realism, Iain Aitken describes how totality in film was “important” for Bazin: because like all the theorists within the intuitionist realist school, he believes that the summoning up of micro-totalities is important in a world in which modernity has chipped away at our experience, desire and need for totalising modes of experience... the realist film image is also capable of rendering this other essential aspect of the intuitionist realist credo – an experience of totality... (Aitken 2006, p. 179).

Aitken in his discussion of totality in relation to Bazin, Kracauer and Grierson suggests that the seamlessness of film creates not only a sense of realism in film, but attunes one to a more transcendental realism as it functions in an intuitive way.

Realism and viewer expectations

The idea of realism in film has shifted across different times and contexts but viewer expectations remain a constant determining factor. Standards of realism from classical to contemporary Hollywood have changed; the contemporary viewer is less likely to be persuaded by the realism of classical Hollywood than of contemporary Hollywood. Elements of film such as acting, mise en scène and to some extent, editing trends and techniques, have developed over the decades and viewers have become accustomed to a different, but related, realist aesthetic.²¹ Conventions and standardised practices are determined by the constancy in reception: it is only through repetition and familiarisation that something may be established as the norm. Therefore, if we accept that realism is, in part, determined by the use of particular film conventions, the influence of viewer expectations in determining realism becomes clear: the effacement of technique corresponds to the viewer's familiarity with particular effects and conventions. But the relationship between the viewer and the realist film is not limited to becoming accustomed to a particular aesthetic. The way that the viewer is positioned in relation to a film impacts on how it may be received as realist.

As the following sequence analyses from *Marnie* (1964) and *Psycho* (1960) begin to demonstrate, film works to position the viewer in particular ways in order to create and maintain the illusion of realism. The 180-degree line that classical editing maintains, is reminiscent of the proscenium arch of naturalistic theatre – the viewer is invited to the inside of an invisible wall thereby reinforcing the impression of realism.²² The shifting position of the viewer from silent to sound cinema, from classical to contemporary

²¹ See Phillips (2003) for a discussion of viewing expectations in relation to early cinema.

²² Most discussions of the conventions of continuity editing explain the 180-degree principle. See Fairservice (2001) and Bordwell and Thompson (2004) for example.

cinema signifies a different approach to cinematic realism as the language of film developed alongside the emerging technological processes. In early silent cinema, the position of the viewer resembled that of the theatre spectator as the framing was often a direct translation of a filmed stage. The viewer observed the screen as though it were a stage and it was the development of continuity editing combined with the advent of sound perspective that allowed the range of viewer positions to shift until the viewer was inserted inside the *mise en scène*. The accustomed location of the viewer inside the film text sets up expectations of what is real and what is not.

Some deviations from continuity editing are absorbed by viewer expectations. While continuity editing suggests a cinema with no interruptions, where all cuts match and attempt an anticipatory logic, we find that there are interruptions at this level: there may well be some jump cutting or crossing the line without the overall realism of the film being compromised; the montage sequence in mainstream film functions as acceptable deviance. On a small and perhaps obvious scale, the jump-cut is an example of an edit that potentially interferes with the viewer's expectations. It interrupts a cohesive perspective by following one shot with another which falls within the same 30-degree axis of action.²³ The viewer's sense of a coherent point-of-view is jarred by the use of a shot that does not preserve continuity in perspective. Similarly, the 180-degree line preserves spatial continuity by structuring the onscreen space in a coherent way. But the 180-degree line is also important for maintaining continuity in point-of-view. Crossing the line interrupts the fluidity of the viewer's reception of film by bouncing to the opposite perspective. Editing conventions allow for a character to break the axis of action by moving across the screen, thereby taking the viewer along and revising how the viewer is perceiving space in film. Crossing the line and jump cutting are more obvious examples of a disconnection with realism as a result of interruption in the text, but this disruption works at more subtle levels too. There are more embedded ways of undermining the realist effect through more subtle distress to the coherent point-of-view of the imaginary observer, for example, disrupting identification and alternating between a subjective audience position and an estranged one as a means of dramatically engaging

²³ For a detailed discussion of these rules and conventions see Bernstein, *Film Production* (1994) as well as Fairservice (2001), Button (2002) and Dancyger (2002).

the viewer and then distancing them.²⁴ Similarly, there are subtle ways of undermining the usual temporal and spatial dynamics of film, and an exploration of these is one of the primary aims of this thesis. Therefore, the variations in the standardised system function as deviant according to the extent to which they are outside of the parameters of viewer expectations. But these kinds of deviances can be absorbed without comprising the overall realist effect of a film; viewer expectations can accommodate minimal disruption. Furthermore, realism can be plotted along emotional, psychological, dramatic and social axes and the unresolved debate about the kind of verisimilitude that constitutes realism complicates a simple understanding of classical Hollywood as realist cinema.

Within continuity editing, there is room for montage sequences that are not directly part of things, but even these do not really disturb the flow of the narrative. In classical Hollywood, viewer expectations incorporate the montage sequence – usually to indicate passing time but possibly with a dramatic function – as long as it accords with established patterns of how this may work.

Two things the editor must guard against. Firstly, a montage sequence operates, so to speak, on a different plane of reality from straight narrative. If it is to fulfil its practical function of unobtrusively filling certain gaps in the story, then it must do so quickly. A montage sequence which becomes unduly long unnecessarily interferes with the conviction of the rest of the narrative and thus destroys the effect it was made for. Secondly, the montage sequence must be conceived as a whole... music is generally used to bind the whole series of images together and to underline the rhythm of the passage of events. A badly planned montage with bits of realistic dialogue alternating with superimposed general images can become a confusing affectation (Reisz 1953, p. 114).

Karel Reisz's *The Technique of Film Editing* was written in the 1950s, revised with Gavin Millar, and has been reissued many times. For the most part, it reads as a quaint example of an outdated approach to editing, a British editor's bible, along the same lines as the American editor's "how to" manuals from classical Hollywood. Today it is still revered by editors even though its "rules" for cutting are not taken at face value. The

²⁴ Later chapters explore examples of these.

book reveals a lot about how editing was conceived in the 1950s, which sheds light on the relationship between the rules of continuity editing and its relationship to realism. It also indicates, to a large extent, that little has really changed in terms of the basic principles of the practice of continuity editing. Reisz clearly values minimal disruption: continuity-link montage,²⁵ or time-lapse sequences, are there for a purely practical use and should not impose on the narrative. If these techniques become obtrusive, then the realism of the film is compromised. Classical realism therefore makes allowance for some deviance within its standardised system; deviations are absorbed into the overarching continuity of the film.

Editing in time and space

One of the distinguishing features of film is its movement through time and space both within the shot and in sequence. The spatial-temporal movement of film determines to a large extent the relationship between film and reality.²⁶ Editing conventions and practices work to construct a plausible sense of time and of spatial geography. While the temporal aspect in editing is important in determining the rhythm and pace of the film, the affinity for real time within the shot and the contrasting ellipsis, or possible expansion of time, through editing negotiates how realism works at this level.

Continuity editing has standardised various techniques for communicating a fluid sense of time and space in film. It needs to orientate the viewer within the boundaries of the fictional world as well as convey the sense that this world is “real”. The onscreen world must be constructed as implicitly continuous but presented by means of the finite frame. Therefore, editing needs to link up off-screen and onscreen space in a way that

²⁵ A specific example would be the Vorkapich, named after the editor who popularised this technique. Evan Lottman describes this: “superimposed shots of spinning locomotive wheels, newspaper headlines whirling around and coming at you. They used to say, ‘We’ll do a Vorkapich here’ or ‘We’ll Vorkapich out of this.’ I thought this technique was kind of old fashioned and corny” (Oldham 1995, pp. 222-3). Reisz makes a distinction between this kind of montage sequence and the montage sequence which works towards a dramatic effect by examining a montage sequence from *Citizen Kane* (1941).

²⁶ See Noël Burch for a discussion on how different kinds of edits work to sustain spatial temporal continuity (Burch 1973); Stephen Heath discusses narrative space and coherence (Heath 1981).

coheres for the viewer by constructing whole space out of the component parts that are visible to the viewer. The most conventional method by which this is achieved is to introduce a scene using an establishing shot, and then arrange the subsequent shots in order to cue the viewer to identify the space and how it works. The classical technique is to move from long to close as this communicates the story by establishing the scene in space. The viewer infers a spatial relationship by filling in the blanks of the spaces that are not seen. Similarly, directional matches, that is ensuring continuity in screen direction, and eyeline matches create and preserve spatial continuity as they cue the viewer's reading how characters are positioned in space (Burch, 1973).

But space is not simply physical, it also organises ideas, characters and action in a film and can therefore be arranged in order to communicate a more symbolic layer. This is evident in many of Hitchcock's films which, despite his adventurous and innovative streak, remains rooted in the Hollywood tradition of editing. For example, in *Psycho* the opening sequence in the bedroom establishes Marion's character as well as resonating with the other bedrooms in the film, both the anonymous bedrooms of motels where bad girls hide, as well as the inner sanctum in the Bates's house. The motel and the house are contrasted visually with each other, with the house established as an ominous looming presence; the abode of the unpleasant, unseen mother. Arbogast enters the house and is killed for it, while Lila's discovery of the house is literally a discovery of Norman. She finds his different selves through the physical space, for example, his little boy self, until she finds what is hidden in the aptly named fruit cellar. The house and motel function as the collision between festering womb and unsound mind and communicate some of the thematic concerns of the film.

These spatial associations are linked to the editing in film in various ways. The way the characters are located spatially is determined by editing. The function of editing with regard to space also determines how the viewer enters into the space of the film and into the action that takes place between the characters. The following scene from *Marnie*

shows how continuity editing establishes the space, the interaction between Mark Rutland and Marnie, and arranges the space at a more symbolic level too.²⁷

Transcript 1: Instinctual behaviour (*Marnie*)

	Shot	Sound/Dialogue	Edit
1	Establishing shot exterior Rutland building; car park empty but for one car.	<i>Marnie</i> theme music	Straight cut (all cuts straight unless otherwise indicated)
2	ELS Marnie walking down corridor		
3	MLS Marnie approaching office door. She knocks.	Knocking; Mark: Come in Mrs Taylor.	
4	MS Marnie closing door	Marnie: Good afternoon Mr Rutland.	
5	MLS Mark behind desk, zoom		eyeline
6	MS Marnie walking to desk		
7	MS shelf of artefacts and figurines, pan POV		eyeline
8	MS Marnie looking at artefacts		
9	As 7, but closer	Mark: Are you interested	eyeline
10	As 6, she looks at him and back to the shelf	in pre-Columbian art, Mrs Taylor?	
11	MLS Mark, looking at shelf	Mark: Those were collected by my wife. She's dead. The only things of hers I've kept.	
12	MCU Marnie,		
13	CU of a framed picture of Sophie	Mark: And that's Sophie.	Cut on Marnie's open mouth; graphic match; eyeline
14	MCU Marnie	Mark: She's a jaguarandi.	eyeline
15	MCU Mark	South American. I, uh, trained her.	eyeline
16	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Oh, what did you train her to do?	
17	MCU Mark	Mark: To trust me.	eyeline
18	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Is that all?	eyeline
19	MCU Mark	Mark: That's a great deal –for a jaguarandi.	eyeline
20	MCU Marnie	Mark: Shall we get to work?	Eyeline

²⁷ For interesting discussions on *Marnie* and *Psycho*, see the compilation of Raymond Bellour's essays (Bellour and Penley c2000).

21	MS Mark and Marnie, each on edge of frame	Mark: You can use the typewriter over there. I want an original and one copy of this. If you can't decipher any of this, speak up. I typed it myself and I'm a very creative typist.	
22	Zoom to MLS. Marnie turns, walks to desk while reading. Mark watches her from behind. She sits at the desk	Marnie: Arboreal predators of the Brazilian rain forest.	Match cut
23	MCU Mark sitting down at desk	Mark: Before I was drafted into Rutland's, Mrs Taylor, I had notions of being a zoologist.	Jump-cut, but relieved by difference in shot scale
24	MS Marnie at typewriter, side view	I still try to keep up with my field. MT: Zoos?	
25	MCU Mark, closer	Mark: Instinctual behaviour.	eyeline
26	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Oh. Does zoology include people, Mr Rutland?	eyeline
27	MCU Mark, closer	Mark: Well in a way. It includes all the animal ancestors from whom man derived his instincts.	eyeline
28	CU Marnie	Marnie: Ladies' instincts too?	eyeline
29	CU Mark	Mark: Well that paper deals with the instincts of predators.	eyeline
30	CU Marnie, closer	Mark: what you might call the criminal class of the animal world.	eyeline
31	CU Mark, ring showing	Lady animals figure very largely as predators.	eyeline Long pause at end of shot
32	CU Marnie. She looks at him and slowly looks away		
33	CU Mark, smiling slightly, fingering his neck		eyeline
34	MS Marnie inserts sheet of paper into typewriter		
35	MLS Mark. Window lights up with lightning	Music starts. Sound of thunder	

The space is organised along classical lines in this scene: it opens with an establishing shot showing the exterior space of the scene, and the anticipatory logic of continuity editing combined with viewer expectations locate it as such. The next two shots continue to locate the film in space by showing Marnie walking through the general office area, but also give temporal clues as the building is empty; this is clearly the Saturday afternoon that Mark mentioned in a previous scene. By showing Marnie approaching

Mark's door after the shot of her walking down the corridor, the viewer pieces the two together and begins to gain a relational understanding of the onscreen space and is able to infer how off-screen space works. In this way, editing helps to map out the spatial geography of a film and allows the viewer to gain a sense of the integrity of the film world. Within Mark's office the editing establishes the office as a complete space primarily by linking three areas: the door and the small desk area where Marnie types; Mark's desk; the display shelf where his dead wife's objects are arrayed. The space is divided and the scene uses these spatial divisions in order to communicate the tension between the characters: for the most part, Marnie remains in one corner of the office between the small desk and the door while Mark commands the centre and blocks the access to the display shelf. The scene is made intimate through the edit and tight framing; the editing reduces the size of the office by cutting between Mark and Marnie in their corners and this is emphasised by the way that the cuts become closer. The wider shots at the end of the scene give an idea of the size of the office, which is much bigger than it initially appears. The establishment of Mark's space at the centre of the office, barricaded behind his desk and Marnie, who is both the intruder and the wild animal, relegated to one corner of the screen, is the spatial realisation of the dynamic between them. Mark is in control, he has the dominant position, it is his office, and Marnie is the lady predator, the object of his scrutiny. The use of shot reverse-shot editing for their dialogue entrenches them in these positions and prevents Marnie and the viewer from accessing the other side of the office which is set up to represent Mark's dead wife; that would be, quite literally, crossing the line.

In the transcribed sequence, there are only two shots of Mark and Marnie together. In shot 21, the two of them are at the edge of the frame, divided by a tall lamp and this taut composition holds the tension between them. In shot 22, Marnie walks away, while Mark watches her intently. The content of the dialogue is about Mark's interest in taming wild animals, particularly lady predators of the criminal class and this shot communicates Mark's casually aggressive pursuit of her as he watches her from behind. Otherwise, the scene holds them entirely separate and within their allocated spaces. But even though they are kept separate by the shots, the framing becomes closer thereby punctuating the subtext of their conversation, and suturing the viewer into their

dialogue. Marnie's hysterical response to the thunderstorm sends her to the door, and from this position, Mark leads her across to the other side of the room. The editing gets tighter here as the shots get closer, until Mark and Marnie kiss in an extreme close-up which focuses on their mouths, followed by a jump-cut. The effect is discomfiting since the viewer is too close and too intimate. After the kiss, a tree smashes through the window, shattering the dead wife's things. By the end of this scene, Marnie and Mark are positioned together in the previously unseen section of the room – the dead wife's domain – and are at the start of the next phase of their relationship with Mark's prophetic words: "It's cold and damp here. I must get the maintenance people in". This scene from *Marnie* demonstrates how Hitchcock successfully communicates interiority and underlying tensions, as well as furthering the plot, within the constraints of continuity editing. In *Vertigo* (1958) and *Spellbound* (1945), Hitchcock communicates unstable mental states by integrating interruptions and drawing on techniques from surrealism. These are isolated from the rest of the narrative and announce themselves as dream experiences or interior states.

The potential for editing to disrupt is embedded in the establishment of continuity at various levels including thematic continuity, graphic continuity and through the creation of patterns and motifs. For example, the image of Marnie receding into the distance in *Marnie* is repeated throughout the film and resonates with the idea of her as elusive, on the run, and tracked by Mark. Editing works to establish motifs and patterns through the ways in which certain images are sequenced and repeated throughout the film. A broader pattern emerges as images, shot constructions, props or character actions are repeated in order to create specific effects. Graphic continuity through the use of motifs and repetition can be used in order to consolidate the effect of realism but also to undermine it, as some of the later chapters explore.

Point-of-view and viewer position

In film, there is an overall point-of-view which structures how the narrative is told and received. Point-of-view mediates between the telling and the reception of the story, and

informs how a viewer may be positioned in the narrative.²⁸ The arrangement of shots in sequence, therefore, both disseminates and withholds information and determines how the viewer receives that information. One key mediating factor emerges through the idea of the “imagined observer”, or the “invisible-observer” as David Bordwell (1986, p. 24) terms it, which is used to ascribe a coherence to the perspective of shots. The default position of the viewer corresponds to the point-of-view of the imagined observer.²⁹ This is not a random perspective, but a coherent position which is constructed through shot and sequence. According perspective to the shots, and arranging these in sequence, can position the viewer as an engaged observer, align the viewer with the characters or distance the viewer from the text. The viewer may be invited to identify with a character, to share subjectivity, or may be positioned on the outside of identification.

Branigan’s typology of four different kinds of shots is a useful way to consider the mediation of point-of-view (Branigan 1984). He recognises objective shots that operate from outside of the film’s diegesis and indicate the perspective of an omniscient narrator. Externally focalised shots indicate a character’s awareness of events but not their experience. Then there are two levels of internally focalised shots: the first indicates the characters’ subjective experience, such as their psychological perspective or their dreams, while the second shows their point-of-view (1984). These help to describe the different strategies for allowing the viewer a varying degree of access to the story. They also work in concert with each other in order to communicate a holistic narrative point-of-view which serves to embed the viewer within the film. This overarching point-of-view is dynamic and fluid and if it is not organised for narrative cohesion, it threatens to

²⁸ Bazin offers one way of understanding the relationship between the organisation of point-of-view and editing. By recognising editing “as a compromise between three ways of possibly analysing reality” he implicitly recognises its treatment of point-of-view and space as integral to representation (1967, p. 92). The first, a “logical and descriptive analysis”, is contrasted to the second two which are accorded psychological functions connected to a manipulation of point-of-view, which is linked to the manipulation of space, both as it is received by audience and perceived through character. The consequent “psychological heterogeneity and material discontinuity” describes the ambiguity of the realism effect as it works towards a unity of expression and material illusion as well as psychological verisimilitude.

²⁹ While various theorists have disputed the way that the imagined observer has been conceptualised, it remains a useful way of describing how point-of-view coheres. One of the main problems with it appears to be that it has been conceptualised too narrowly and therefore has been used in a too literal, reductive way rather than as a useful tool of analysis. Murray Smith sums up Currie’s argument against the imagined observer hypothesis but also suggests ways that it can be useful (Smith 1997).

disrupt. While perspective and point-of-view are important in determining identification, it is the establishment of a fluid and coherent point-of-view – for some, the imagined observer – which sustains the illusion of realism by allowing the viewer a unified perspective. Disrupting perspective here would result in an irregular viewer position and would jar the illusion of reality.

The editing in the famous shower sequence of *Psycho* deviates from established techniques of the time and this communicates a heightened condition, which is outside of the ordinary. While it does not operate from the point-of-view of either of the characters, it does suggest something of their awareness – external focalisation in Branigan’s terminology – which places the viewer in a position where they are primarily watching Marion, but have access to her reactions and this allows a more complete sense of the story. The sequence contains 45 cuts, most of which occur in one minute. The cutting of the film mimics the cutting of her body: Marion is effectively dismembered by the editing of the film. The effect of this is that there is a kind of violence inflicted on the viewer who is positioned inside the sequence. The frequency of the knife coming down on Marion highlights the violence and shock of the act.

Transcript 2: The shower sequence (*Psycho*)

	Shot	Sound/Dialogue	Edit
1	MS legs getting into shower. Pulls curtain		Straight cut (all cuts straight unless otherwise indicated)
	MS Curtain closing	Curtain close	
2	MCU Marion in shower. She turns on the water and looks up	Soap unwrapping	eyeline
3	MCU Shower head from Marion's perspective	Water running from shower	
4	MCU Marion from front, scrubbing		
5	Marion from side + shower jet. She turns		
6	Marion from side, slightly closer		Jump-cut
7	MCU showerhead, side view		
8	MCU Marion		
9	MCU Marion but in corner of frame. She goes out of frame and shadow moves in from the opposite side. Slow zoom to "Mother" – she wrenches curtain open, knife raised	Violins begin	Jump-cut

10	CU Marion turns and screams	Screams and shrieking violins begin	
11	CU Marion screaming		Jump-cut
12	ECU Marion's screaming mouth		Jump-cut
13	Mother stabbing		
14	MCU Marion in corner of frame	Screams and violins continue	Match-on-action: hand slashes down
15	Mother with hand raised		
16	MS, High angle. Mother's arm reaching to Marion. They struggle		
17	ECU Marion's face		
18	Indistinct shot: Marion's hand as she struggles. High angle		
19	Marion's face, ECU		
20	As 18		
21	Mother with knife raised		
22	CU Marion turning face		
23	Mother slashes		
24	Marion		
25	Mother		
26	Marion's torso		
27	Knife		
28	Marion torso and arm		
29	Marion's head turning		
30	Marion's legs, moving		
31	CU Marion's head, side view		
32	MCU Marion reaching to wall		
33	MS Marion's legs		
34	Marion's head on edge of frame		
35	Mother leaving the bathroom		
36	CU hand on wall, slowly sliding down	Music changes	
37	MS Marion in corner of frame. She slides down wall and reaches out her hand		
38	MCU hand grabs curtain		Match cut (awkward)
39	MLS Marion crouched in bath pulls curtain		Match cut
40	MCU curtain rail hooks pop		Match cut
41	Curtain falls on Marion as she falls		Match cut
42	Showerhead, directly above, as 3		
43	MCU Marion's legs. Pan, then zoom to water swirling down plug hole		
44	Camera swirls around CU of Marion's eye and zooms out to Marion awkwardly positioned and dead on floor		Dissolve; graphic match
45	MCU of showerhead (as 7)		

46	CU Marion's face, then slow pan across bathroom, into bedroom to money wrapped in paper. Then to house through window	Mother! Oh God Mother, Mother! Blood. Blood!	Violins shriek
----	---	--	----------------

The reverse-shots between Marion and the showerhead at the beginning of the sequence, and then the return to the showerhead at the end, have an important structural function. By locating Marion in relation to the showerhead, Hitchcock sutures the viewer inside: the showerhead and the MCU shots of Marion create an image dialogue and therefore establish the sequence as dynamic. It also builds the showerhead into something of a presence – an indifferent figure watching over her, initially causing her great pleasure as her open-mouthed, shampoo-advert enjoyment clearly indicates. The continued jet of water at the end of the sequence emphasises the recent emptiness and new sudden stillness as it relentlessly continues to spray, but this time without the volleying between it and Marion. That the final shot of the showerhead is preceded by the swirl like pan out of the dead Marion’s unseeing eye and then followed by a pan from the same shot of the eye contrasts with the earlier reverse-shots between Marion and the showerhead as it highlights her lifelessness and inability to participate in the suturing effect of shot reverse-shot. Silverman calls it an “inanimate eye now closed to all visual exchanges” (Silverman 1986, p. 226) and this necessarily alters the way in which the viewer is positioned in the film.

Hitchcock uses jump-cuts as a particular strategy for creating a small disjuncture in the viewer’s experience of identification. The jump-cut between shots 5 and 6 is not particularly jarring; it blends in fairly well for a jump-cut. But by jumping this cut, Hitchcock is deliberately toying with the viewer’s position within the sequence: it makes for a mild jag in the viewer’s perception of the scene which suddenly hops between shots. This is contrasted to the more violent use of the jump-cut between 10, 11 and 12 where the effect is an interrupted zoom into Marion’s screaming mouth which communicates her horror and requires that the viewer also inhabits this horror. If shot reverse-shot sutures a viewer inside the action through its resemblance to stitching, this particular use of the jump-cut does something similar but in a much rougher way. It takes the viewer closer to the expression of horror, but leaves out parts of the zoom thereby forcing the viewer across large, horrific gaps.

The coherence of the overall point-of-view of the scene is not immediately apparent. The sequence does not use point-of-view shots but instead uses shots that almost correspond to a point-of-view. For example, the shot of the showerhead as directly overhead follows Marion's eyeline as she looks up, but unless she throws back her head at a ninety degree angle, which is unlikely, it cannot be her point-of-view. Similarly the shots of Marion in the shower and particularly of Mother from the shower's perspective suggest the characters' points of view, but cannot be pinned down as such because they shift too easily: either of shots 13 or 15 could be Marion's point-of-view but they cannot both be; it is not certain which one is because her exact position in the shower is hard to pin down. This is compounded by the blurred effect of the shots, for example, the indistinctness of Mother suggests that we are seeing from Marion's point-of-view but the eyelines and angles do not always support this. This is a perceptual trick; the viewer is taken close to a character's point-of-view but the viewer and character points of view are not quite aligned, which suggests an off-kilter perspective.

From 10 to 34, the cutting is very quick and some of the shots are only a few frames long. Not allowing the viewer to take in and consider what is happening as we see different body parts flashing too quickly, forces the viewer to inhabit Marion's confusion and panic. We never see her being stabbed, only her different body parts dismembered by the cutting of the film. In Silverman's analysis of the shower sequence in relation to her discussion on suture, she comments that the "whole process of identification is formally insisted upon by the brevity of the shots; the point-of-view shifts constantly within the extremely confined space of the shower, making Marion the only stable object, that thing to which we necessarily cling" (1986, p. 226).³⁰ Since the sequencing of point-of-view usually functions to communicate a perspective that the viewer can inhabit and thereby engage with the scene, Silverman is pointing out that the disrupted point-of-view in this sequence undermines a coherent perspective in order to communicate the psychological reality of the sequence. By forcing the viewer to "cling" to Marion, and then using the

³⁰ For discussions on suture, in addition to Silverman, see also Heath 'On Suture' (1981) and Jean Pierre Oudart 'Cinema and Suture' (Oudart 1977-78). For a summary of these and of Žižek's discussion of suture, see *Projecting a Camera* (Branigan 2006).

film in order to cut, the violence and psychological horror of the sequence are brought home.

The quick, fragmented editing of the stabbing contrasts strongly with shots 37 to 45, as the sequence becomes much slower and more continuous. This emphasises the brutality of the shots of brief, disconnected body parts. Hitchcock uses match cuts consecutively in the next few shots as Marion pulls the shower curtain down from the railings and this places emphasis on continuity. The first match, the hand grabbing the curtain after reaching out to it is awkward and this is very effective as it highlights the sense that her hand was perhaps reaching out to the viewer in shot 37, rather than to the curtain. The angle of the hand around the cut is not entirely continuous, thereby emphasising the desperation of the act – because it is an attempted match, it really highlights the way in which the edit does not match. The use of a graphic match and a dissolve between the eye and the plughole creates a strong link between the two: the dissolve ensures a gentle, fluid transition while the graphic match, much like the use of rhyme in poetry, invites the viewer to consider the two images in relation to each other. Throughout, the sense of the shower as more than a neutral background is maintained – this begins with the way that the showerhead is given a sense of importance through the use of shot reverse-shot, the way the film places her eye and the plughole together for consideration and also as she pulls the shower curtain over her as she dies. The sequence extends plausibility with time as it expands and fragments the slashing to communicate a sense of brutality and of suspense; time moves at an ordinary pace at the beginning, faster in the middle and slowly at the end.

The *Psycho* shower sequence also indicates another important aspect of editing in creating and sustaining the illusion of realism: cutting the body. Editing works to establish the coherence of the body on screen by piecing it together in a plausible way. Many of the editing conventions such as match cuts and directional editing work to preserve the integrity of the body and the illusion of the complete body.³¹ Hitchcock departs from these conventions in this scene in order to communicate the violence of the attack on Marion without the use of graphic portrayal of the stabbing itself. By not

³¹ Chapter Four, which examines the work of Jan Švankmajer, explores the relationship between the body, editing and surrealism.

depicting the scene in a literal way, he opts for a different kind of verisimilitude. The violent nature of the scene allows Hitchcock to deviate temporarily from realism – the distress of the attack masks any discomfort that the departure from realism may cause and the scene does not compromise the overall realism of the film.

Alternative approaches to realism: editing and discontinuity

Having argued that one of the key elements of realism is the effacement of technique, I will now consider the converse claim to realism: film that takes full cognisance of its artifice. The idea that realist film resembles reality is negated when the measure of realism is the extent to which a film does not claim to indicate an unmediated version of the world. Classical realism in cinema is fundamentally illusionary and Hollywood fantasy functions in much the same way as its realism. There is little structural difference between the two – the filmic construction of Hollywood fantasy is usually cosmetic.³² While various cinematic elements such as art design, computer-generated images and special effects may be used to construct fantasy texts, they tend to abide by the narrative and technical rules of realist texts which involves the hiding of mechanisms.

An alternative claim to realism is often made through the marked presence of form in the film narrative, where acknowledgement of the mediation indicates greater fidelity to the real world. Ironically enough, the announcement of mediation can sometimes function to assert the film as truth: if it says that it is telling a story, then it is truthful, so we can believe it. This is mostly evident in documentaries, particularly *cinéma vérité* where announcing the presence of the filmmaker through the “participant camera” is seen as more truthful than trying to pretend that a film is not a representation, but is also sometimes evident even in mainstream filmmaking practices.

These two different claims to realism can be traced back to the two distinct historical trends discussed earlier: Soviet montage, particularly Vertov’s *Kino-Pravda*

³² There are countless examples here: the *Star Wars* series, the different *Harry Potter* films, and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy are probably the most popular for now – they all follow a three-act narrative structure and preserve narrative continuity.

(exemplified by the *Man with the Movie Camera*) and its legacy in cinéma vérité which has since metamorphosed and been appropriated, in part, by new forms like reality TV and mockumentary; and Griffith's influence which has developed classical Hollywood cinema and still continues to be the foundation of mainstream film and most narrative cinema. But there are forms of realism which do not easily fit into either. Dogme 95, for example, works towards a form of realism predicated on a minimalist approach to film: it rejects what it considers to be superfluous elements like sets and non-diegetic music in favour of long takes and improvised performances. There is an inescapable awareness of form and a rejection of the illusion of realism found in Hollywood cinema.³³

A further complication is the increasing use of fragmentation in mainstream cinema. While many of the continuity practices are sustained in contemporary mainstream cinema in order to communicate coherent narratives, this has since been complicated by what is considered to be the influence of MTV in editing mainstream film, which results in a more interrupted narrative.³⁴ However, as with earlier deviations from seamlessness, these interruptions are usually absorbed into the narrative without much compromise to the realism of the film. A heightened sense of the spectacular in mainstream film helps account for these deviations. Viewing conventions are gradually changing. Just as the interruptions to classical narratives, for example, in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles 1941) and *Psycho* through the use of dramatic montage occurred in a graduated context thereby decreasing the strangeness of it, the narrative shifts in contemporary representations are making piecemeal adjustments to the expectations of the contemporary viewer. These adjustments make for kaleidoscopic shifts: while the more subtle narrative arrangement remains intact, new narrative conventions are slowly absorbed into viewing habits. As the Vorkapich gradually fell into disfavour and appears as highly unrealistic to a contemporary viewer, a different trend in editing has emerged without compromising the use of continuity editing as the foundation of mainstream film syntax. This is related to the way that the mainstream absorbs and appropriates innovations from the experimental. Švankmajer, who calls himself a “militant surrealist”

³³ For a discussion of Dogme 95, see Hjort and MacKenzie (2003), and for a discussion of mockumentary, see Roscoe and Craig (2001).

³⁴ See Dancyger (2002) for a discussion of the influence of MTV styles on film editing.

(O'Pray, 1990), is perhaps most popular for his one-minute short film, *Meat in Love* (1989), which aired on MTV. There is a correlation between the use of fragmented narratives in mainstream cinema and the depiction of subjective or psychological states, for example, Aronofsky's representation of addiction in *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), of Nolan's piecing together of lost memories in *Memento* (2000). Continuity editing is interrupted in order to represent moods and states that are otherwise difficult to represent. In principle, this is not too dissimilar to the use of interruptions in classical Hollywood films in order to depict dreams and psychological states. However, the contemporary use of fragmentation and discontinuity in mainstream cinema employs a particular kind of aesthetic which has become increasingly popular with films like *21 Grams* (Alejandro González Iñárritu 2003) which does not tell its story in a linear order and *Fight Club* (David Fincher 1999) which incorporates interruptions, some of them for just a few frames. These examples, *21 Grams* in particular, have opted for a "grittier" realism, which is effected by the use of a grainier film stock. The use of fragmentation is emphasised and this is different to the way that classical Hollywood absorbed deviance into a greater pattern of continuity. These films exemplify the appropriation of discontinuity and fragmentation into the mainstream, thereby taming them and decreasing their subversive potential.

In other contexts, there is a rejection of continuity editing as inadequate to represent experience.³⁵ The use of discontinuity editing outside of the mainstream has harnessed the breaking down of these conventions in order to depict experiences which resist being told and to allow stories to emerge through interrupted narrative. James Donald observes:

[F]ilm's 'suturing' of the spectator was held to sustain broader social relations of power. The corollary of this seemed to be that to break this link by exposing the illusionist conventions of cinema narrative and the contamination of the pleasures it offers might throw at least a small spanner into the ideological works of capitalism and patriarchy (Donald 1989, p. 226).

³⁵ See especially Chapters Five and Six.

Donald attributes political consequences to embedding the imagined observer within the film and by interrupting continuity editing it becomes possible to dislodge the viewer from this position. Discontinuity editing has the potential to undermine the totalising impulses of continuity editing through its revision of space, time and viewer perspective or point-of-view. Without making a reductive equation between anti-realism and a political perspective, there is a clear association of continuity editing with mainstream cinema, its politics of production and with broader socio-political erasure. Frequently, these interruptions flirt with fantasy, the imagination and dream and in this way, the breakdown in editing becomes a site where the subjective intersects with the political. This will be discussed in greater detail with regard to Palestinian and South African film in later chapters.

Conclusion

The need for a representation that is in tune with experience has traditionally prompted two different kinds of realism through the effacement of and emphasis on technique. But the structural elements of continuity editing, in other words, the conventions that constitute seamlessness, have always had the potential to be broken down and undermined in search of alternative ways of representing reality.³⁶ The reasons may be political: a rejection of the totalising impulses of continuity editing which is linked to the broader issues around the politics of film production. Or they may be aesthetic, or even a search for a different kind of real as the surrealists demonstrate. This thesis considers film technique, primarily editing, in relation to broader questions of verisimilitude and a different kind of realism than is usually adopted by mainstream film. It considers the argument that reality is too elusive to be depicted by established techniques, thereby

³⁶ This is particularly evident in Godard's counter-cinema. Wollen (2004) schematises and describes the features of counter-cinema which highlights gaps and interruptions, a lack of closure, a breakdown of identification, a foregrounding of cinematic language and a multiple diegesis. Many of these features persist in a trend that has developed parallel to mainstream cinema, including surrealism and many examples from contemporary cinema.

making a case for a fragmented representation which better encapsulates experiences of reality.

For Eisenstein, the representation of reality emerges through “collision” rather than imitation or any attempt to integrate. Significantly, Eisenstein locates editing as the determining factor in the representation of reality by focusing on juxtaposition and association as representation. Soviet montage does not emphasise seamlessness, but advocates a playful and self-conscious cutting which draws attention to the combination of images. This is most evident in avant-garde cinema where filmmakers deliberately move away from the systemised approach of Hollywood film. While it may appear that there is a neat division between continuity and discontinuity where one correlates to realism and the other anti-realism, there are necessarily elements of both present in each. As discussed, classical continuity editing employs interruption as a device and contemporary cinema increasingly weaves fragmentation into mainstream narrative.

More recent shifts in representation through technical advances such as MTV editing and the use of digital technology also trace a changing attitude to the depiction of reality. Alternatives to realism have emerged through discontinuity editing and through interruptions to continuity editing, but also through a more subtle rearrangement and alteration of conventions. Consequently, continuous, unified representation may be disturbed overtly through the use of interruptions and jump-cuts, thereby consciously breaking the illusion of coherence. But there is also a more covert challenge to the conventions of continuity editing through adjustments on a much smaller scale resulting in an ostensibly unified expression which, beneath the surface, is undermined.

The relationship between editing and reality therefore works within continually conflicting and shifting processes. Editing shapes the movement of the film as it establishes the structural progression through the sequencing of shots. Narrative cohesion is achieved as each shot joined to another forms a relationship with what precedes and what follows. This is extended to all shots having a relationship with each other, influenced by where they occur in the film, and by the patterns that are established. In this way, the relationship between shots does not simply indicate a linear progression but is plotted across multiple points – the potential for an alternative narrative logic is thus implicit; it is possible to construct a fluid narrative without relying on the standardised

conventions of temporal and spatial continuity. The mapping of spatial geography and progression through time is incorporated into the function of joining shots. This, along with rhythm, pace and perspective, all work towards or against sustaining an illusion of close resemblance to reality and implicitly demarcate not only what is seen but how it is seen.



Figure 1

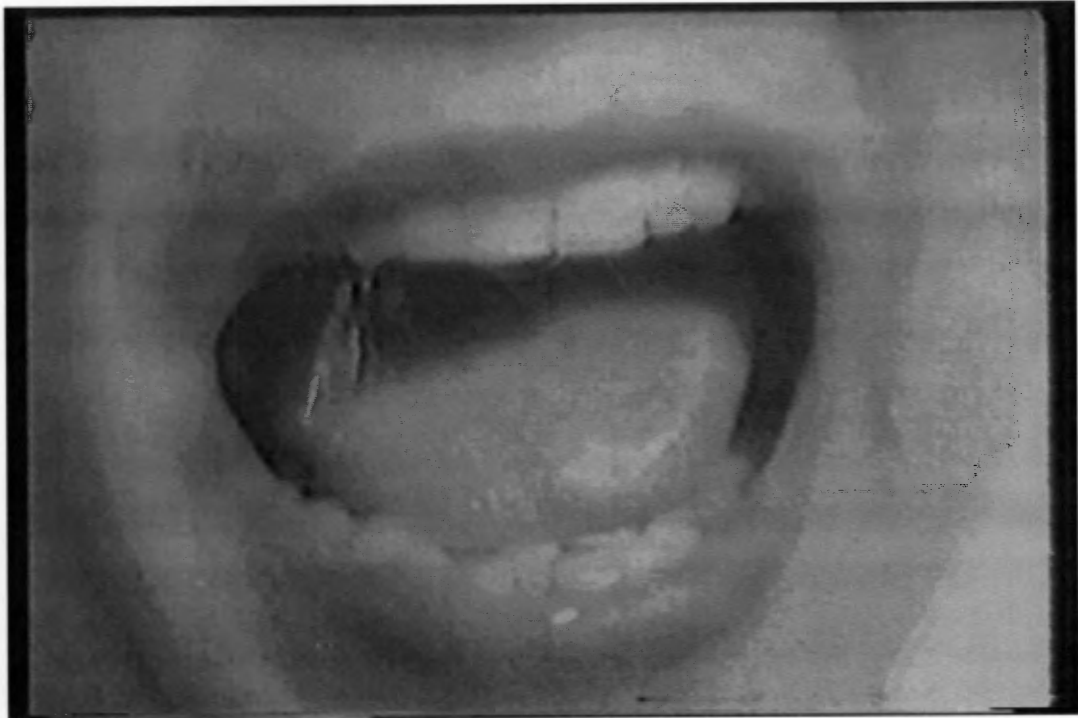


Figure 2

Chapter Two

Surrealism and montage

In this chapter I examine surrealist montage as a specific expression of editing. Surrealist montage highlights disjuncture through the presentation of a reconstituted whole; it requires that the image be read as the sum of its parts and the film as the sum of its, often incongruous, images. I consider the surrealist affinity for cinema through an emphasis on dream. Breton's hypnagogic encounter with a sentence, first described in his 1924 manifesto, highlights the significance of the dream and I discuss this in terms of surrealist montage. Through the use of continuity and discontinuity editing in concert, surrealist disruption is encoded into the narrative of Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); I compare this to Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926) which had a mixed reception as a surrealist film. Through an analysis of *Un Chien Andalou*, I explore how surrealist montage is taken up by film editing. The narrative construction of surrealist film parallels certain psychoanalytic techniques, and I consider how surrealist strategies, for example the fixation on the object, coincide with the interest of the surrealists in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic processes such as displacement and condensation thus potentially provide a template for how editing may work in surrealist film. Finally, I consider the significance of surrealism as subversive expression through its manifestation of interior processes as it depicts the objective world.

Introduction

On a small square of paper, stuck on like an afterthought, the content page of Arturo Schwarz's study on Man Ray entitled *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination* contains the following explanation:

Erratum: The Publishers regret that illustration no. 47 on page 47, 'Jazz' 1919 has been printed upside down (1977).

Mistakes, not unlike parapraxes, in the surrealist game of chance, potentially open up a new perspective. For Freud, parapraxis – which includes bungled actions, the slip of the tongue, mislaying things and forgetting – indicate the small ways in which everyday behaviour can veer off course as a result of a gap between conscious intentions and unconscious thought.¹ Parapraxis functions between two levels: the intended action and the faulty action. As a result, parapraxis insists that we read the two in relation to each other. While the picture itself might not mean anything when viewed upside down, the error itself points to a moment of vacillation, whether conscious or not, about how to read that particular image. Having seen the erratum, it is difficult to consider Man Ray's *Jazz* as right way up without also considering it upside down; my reading of it is suspended between the two.

Similarly, surrealist montage – the juxtaposition of images both within the frame of composition and across or between frames – demands that an image be read in light of other images; images may become corrupted by each other. Montage, and its variations, such as bricolage, collage,² and assemblage form a fundamental part of surrealist expression across different media. Surrealist technique therefore places an emphasis on piecing fragments together in order to constitute a reformed whole. Montage as art technique mirrored and enabled the most basic surrealist preoccupation: the joining together of disparate elements, particularly dream and waking life. Breton suggests that surrealist montage allows for a destabilised perspective:

¹ Freud's discussion of parapraxis can be found in 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (2001b).

² Marjorie Perloff in her discussion of the origins of collage as a "systematic play of difference" (Perloff 1986, p. 53) also discusses the relationship between collage and montage. She considers montage as an offshoot of collage and says that they could be considered two sides of the same coin even though montage emphasises continuity while collage emphasises fragmentation.

The enterprise consisted of nothing less than to reassemble these disparate objects according to an order which, while differing from their normal order, did not seem on the whole to do them any violence; to avoid all preconceived designs as far as possible; and, with the same eye with which from one's window one watches a man with an open umbrella walking along a roof, with the same mental reaction that allows one to think that a windmill may serve as a perfectly convenient head-dress for a woman, ... to assert by means of the image other relationships than those generally, or indeed, provisionally established between human beings on the one hand, and, on the other, things considered as accepted facts (Breton 1972d, p. 26).

Surrealist film developed as a thread in a greater fabric of surrealist expression and retains strong links with poetry and painting. Film was considered a means to broaden what could be achieved by painting, to move beyond the frame of the painted canvas and to work with movement, light, space and time (Wollen cited in Donald 1998, p. 29).

In cinematic history, surrealism runs a parallel path to the development of classical Hollywood, which consolidated continuity editing techniques.³ In its aim to find some kind of “surreality” – the coexistence of the quotidian and dream life – surrealist montage offers a specific understanding of the role of editing in the integration of the real, the dream and the marvellous through the construction of alternative continuities. By drawing on the ideas of Breton, this chapter explores surrealism in relation to its techniques of disjuncture: the destabilisation of habitual perception which emerges through dissociation, juxtaposition and disorientation. It considers how surrealist montage is taken up in film editing through a comparative analysis of *Emak Bakia*, a film which is variously read as surrealist or dadaist, and *Un Chien Andalou*, surrealism's hallmark film.⁴ This also sheds light on how surrealism has exploited editing techniques that deliberately work to integrate and interrupt different levels of reality. Surrealism,

³ The two way relationship between the mainstream and the experimental is evident in Hitchcock's use of surrealist interruptions in order to depict dream states or subjective experience in *Spellbound* (1945) and *Vertigo* (1958).

⁴ The success of *Un Chien Andalou* as a surrealist film was followed by *L'Age d'Or* (1930) which is a longer, more complex expression of surrealism and its relationship to the unconscious and merged dichotomies.

film and psychoanalysis converge around the resemblance of the cinematic experience to the dream state and the idea of cinema as “conscious hallucination” (Short 2003, p. 9) or waking dream is the basic premise of this study of techniques of surrealist disjuncture.

Surrealist dreams: communicating vessels

When will we have sleeping logicians, sleeping philosophers?

(Breton 1972a, p. 12).

A story is told according to which Saint-Pol-Roux, in times gone by, used to have a notice posted on the door of his manor house in Camaret, every evening before he went to sleep, which read: THE POET IS WORKING.

(Breton 1972a, p. 14).⁵

...it seemed to me, a sentence, I might say, that knocked at the window.

(Breton 1978c, p. 120).

One of surrealism’s primary aims was to tap into and exploit the unconscious. The attempt to incorporate psychoanalytic methods and ideas into surrealism coincided with an emphasis on the dream, particularly the interaction between the ordinary and the dream world: Breton’s “communicating vessels”. This image, which was also the title of his 1932 book, encapsulates the fluidity of movement between two modes: sleep and waking, exteriority and interiority; reality and the imagination (Caws 1990, p. ix). Breton identifies the dream as the “capillary tissue” that links these dualities (1990, p. 139).

The surrealist obsession with the dream, which is linked to Freud’s ideas on the dream, can be traced back to Breton’s famous sentence, “There is a man cut in two by the window” (Breton 1972a, p. 21), which Breton indicates as a starting point in surrealist

⁵ The above Breton quotations are from the 1924 manifesto compiled in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (1972b) translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane. My discussion of Breton’s dream draws from both the 1924 manifesto and his 1934 lecture ‘What is Surrealism?’ which is included in a compilation of surrealist documents (Rosemont 1978) in which he retells the story about his encounter with a sentence, initially described in the First Surrealist manifesto of 1924.

modes of representation.⁶ Breton details how the visiting sentence led him, along with Phillipe Soupault, to develop the process of automatic writing in order to access what he called “spoken thought” (Breton 1978c, p. 121). He describes the sentence with an accompanying visual image:

...a man in the process of walking, but cloven at half his height, by a window perpendicular to the axis of his body. Definitely, there was a form, re-erected against space, of a man leaning out of a window. But, with the window following the man’s locomotion, I understood that I was dealing with an image of great rarity (Breton 1978c, p. 120).

The story goes that Breton was falling asleep and heard this voiceless phrase. Initially he took a “cursory note of it and prepared to move on” but then he was struck by its “organic character” (Breton 1972a, p. 21). There are several elements to this visitation: it is part composed of an image, and part composed of words.⁷ It indicates a man who is cut in half by the window thereby suggesting a fragmentation of the body and rupture to material coherence.⁸ It occurs at a moment between sleep and waking life. Freud writes that the “dream experience appears as something alien inserted between two sections of life which are perfectly continuous and consistent with each other” (Freud 1953, p. 10). Freud therefore appears to view the dream experience itself as rupture; the surrealist endeavour to merge waking and dream life therefore is an attempt to disconcert the ordinary and integrate rupture; this is how the ordinary is remade into the marvellous.

Breton’s visitation indicates the ways in which surrealist montage and automatism link together disparate elements in order to communicate a dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious, between the dream and the quotidian. It illustrates the idea of spoken thought as it is simultaneously verbal and also the fragment of a dream image. The visitation highlights the transition from image to words and also marks the gap between the two: the seemingly intraversable territory which Breton must cross in

⁶ Breton says in ‘What is Surrealism’: “ ...I explained the circumstance that had originally put my friends and myself on the track of the surrealist activity we still follow ...” and then proceeds to recount the visitation by the sentence (Breton 1978c, p. 120).

⁷ Hammond (1978) discusses the intrinsic connection between surrealist film and poetry; similarly, Man Ray conceives of his films as cinepoems. Susan McCabe (2005) traces the relationship between surrealism and poetry thereby drawing a parallel between the structure of the poem and of the montaged, surreal film.

⁸ The chapter on Švankmajer considers the surrealist body and rupture in more detail.

order to communicate the untranslatable. This mimics the coinciding of dream and waking life and points towards what Wills refers to as a systematic decentralisation of language:

In the so-called surrealist image, this rupture is conveyed by an absence within normal linguistic articulation. The sign (say, “umbrella”) which is completely incongruous with its neighbouring element in the syntagm (say, “sewing machine”) but to which it is nevertheless compared, parodies any absolute concept of difference (Wills 1996, p. 87).

Surrealist disjuncture is marked by an absence. This is an absence which corresponds to Freud’s “something alien”, a blank which emerges between two disparate elements that are communicated alongside each other. Surrealist montage both emphasises and dispels difference. Similarly, film editing highlights and bridges differences and the joining of shots always covers the gap that emerges between them.

The visiting sentence and the accompanying visual image also mark the merging of form and content that is so indicative of surrealism; similarly, the process by which Breton takes this out of the near-dream state into his theory of surrealism further negotiates the divide between the inarticulable dream and conscious reflection. The visitation by the sentence then communicates the way in which surreal expression is equivalent to surreality; that the articulation is not simply an aesthetic, but, like the dream, functions as capillary tissue, the place where dream and waking life converge. The surrealists did not explore and innovate art forms in the interest of art, but in pursuit of surreality. Benjamin highlights the surrealist emphasis on mode of expression above the self:⁹

Language takes precedence. Not only before meaning. Also before the self. In the world’s structure dream loosens individuality like a bad tooth. This loosening of the self by intoxication is, at the same time, precisely the fruitful, living experience that allowed these people to step outside the domain of intoxication (Benjamin 1979c, p. 227).

⁹ Their dislike of French avant-garde film, for example Gance, was linked to a dislike of form for form’s sake.

In Benjamin's understanding of surrealist expression, the implicit danger of being caught up inside the inward seeking element of surrealism, of being trapped inside the dream, was averted by the way that surrealism emphasised its mode of expression first.¹⁰ But privileging language above the self and the "loosening" of self do not mean the effacement of self; such an awareness of form suggests that this is not entirely possible. Rather, it indicates the way in which surrealism sought an unconscious self through a particular mode of artistic expression and set it up in dialogue with other more rational selves. Adamowicz considers the loosening of identity in relation to surrealist montage:

By exploding the mimetic claims of photography, fragmenting the face, and displacing the visual with the verbal, Ernst foregrounds the (self) portrait as an artefact, presenting identity as a construct – split, fragmented, held together by writing – bringing together irreconcilable fragments in the manner of collage. The Surrealists explore through their texts and pictorial works the destabilisation and splitting of identity, portrayed as a locus of contradiction, fragmentation and decentring (Adamowicz 1997, p. 33).

According to Adamowicz, surrealist techniques of disruption work to undo the self. After the visitation, Breton writes that it left him alienated and "in a state of extreme detachment" (Breton 1978c, p. 121) thereby indicating that his surrealist encounter with language allowed for a loosening of the self and a consequent state of disassociation. The integration of dream and waking life therefore seeks to unravel apparent reality and this is the premise of surrealist film.

Surrealism and film

The surrealist interest in the dream is actively linked to an interest in film. Film has frequently been considered the ideal medium for the surrealists because of its resemblance to dream; it has the potential to function as a "conscious hallucination"

¹⁰ Wim Wenders, many years later, exploited the idea of being trapped within one's dreams in *Until the End of the World* (1991) in which the characters become disconnected from each other and socially useless because they spend all of their time replaying and watching their dreams.

(Short 2003, p. 9). But there are obvious limitations to the analogy between cinema and the dream state. Most insurmountably, the gap between the conception and product inhibited surrealist filmmaking and this could be a reason for such a low output of films that can be called surrealist without reservation. Surrealist viewing then becomes an important part of the surrealist's relationship to cinema. Breton tells of how he and Jacques Vaché would dip in and out of cinemas, watching snippets of films thereby effectively editing together their own films (Breton 1978b). Buñuel entertained himself when bored by covering his eyes with splayed fingers or blinking repeatedly, others had dinner parties in cinemas and these were all practices which were designed to interrupt and refuse a linear reception of films.¹¹

A definitive factor in surrealist film was the combined effect of linearity and interruption. Just as the dream takes its material from and engages with the real, surrealist film sought an integrated representation rather than one which lacked all logic and coherence. Man Ray's 1926 film, *Emak Bakia*, has been read as either a surrealist or a dada film or somewhere between the two.¹² *Emak Bakia* was initially not considered a surrealist film, but when Breton published his 1938 list of surrealist films, he appears to have revised his opinion. For contemporary critics, *Emak Bakia* seems to hover on the margins of surrealism as it shows some characteristics that are in keeping with surrealist film and in other ways is better understood as a French Dada film. Man Ray appears to have aspired to surrealism:

I complied with all the principles of Surrealism: irrationality, automatism, psychological and dramatic sequences without apparent logic and complete disregard for conventional storytelling (Man Ray cited in Kuenzli 1996, p. 3).

Emak Bakia, contrary to Man Ray's expectations, was not enthusiastically received in surrealist circles despite his attempt to comply with their "principles". Man Ray's list of how he complied with surrealist principles sounds rather like a checklist of points; textbook surrealism – just follow the formula – and this is at odds with the idea of the surreal text as unconscious and spontaneous expression. As a result, Man Ray's opening presents itself as an "object lesson in the surrealist belief in the camera's power to

¹¹ Both Matthews (1971) and Short (2003) elaborate on the ways that the surrealists viewed films.

¹² See for example Fotiade's comment regarding *Emak Bakia* (1995, p. 398).

transform the familiar world and generate surreality” (Short 2003, p. 27). The result is an approach which is distanced and intellectual rather than spontaneous. It also underscores the extent to which surrealist expression is not simply about irrationalism and automatism at the expense of an underlying continuity.

Emak Bakia (Don't Bother Me) is fifteen minutes long and can be divided into three parts. The first part depicts rayographs and abstract shapes juxtaposed with each other. The second part begins with a shot of an eye superimposed on a car which then drives away. It continues with various shots, including sheep and dancing legs – the key difference between this and the first section is that there are some human figures. The third part begins with an intertitle saying “the reason for this extravagance” and shows a man taking off his collar which then rotates and returns to similar images until the ending with the painted eyes. Many of these shots seem random but for a graphic relationship, a connection between the visual qualities of the shots and sequences. The absence of a straightforward linear narrative defies an easy synopsis of the film, and this is only marginally easier with *Un Chien Andalou*.

Un Chien Andalou is sixteen minutes long. The film is introduced by a prologue, the famous slit eye sequence, and can then be divided into eight sequences. After an intertitle saying “eight years later”, the first starts with a cyclist dressed in an elaborate costume carrying a striped box who then falls off the bicycle. There follows an interaction between the woman (whose eye at this point is noticeably intact) and a man (the cyclist) in a room. The sequence ends with the montage of ants, underarm hairs, a sea urchin and circle of people watching the androgen prod a severed hand in the street. The androgen, who now has the striped box, is watched by the woman and man from an upstairs window. The androgen is hit by a car and the action returns to the upstairs room. The man pursues and corners the woman – this is marked by a montage where he turns into a sightless man feeling her breasts which shift between clothed and bare, and then again transform into bare buttocks. After chasing around the room, he drags in a grand piano with a dead donkey on top, followed by two Marist brothers. She runs into another room, which is the same room, and finds that the clothes she laid out earlier have turned into the man. The next sequence begins here and an intertitle announces “around three in the morning”. A visitor arrives and tosses the cyclist's costume out the window. A new

title card appears, saying “sixteen years earlier” and the two men continue to confront each other until one is shot and dies, falling into a park; a group of men gather around and carry him away. The next sequence returns to the room where the woman sees a Death’s Head moth. The man suddenly returns and they have an argument which is realised through his loss of mouth, her response of putting on more lipstick, and his sudden growth of pubic hair in place of a mouth. She sticks her tongue out at him and leaves; a new sequence begins on the other side of the door which is now a beach, where she meets another man. They walk and pick through rubbish; the striped box lies discarded. The final sequence is entitled “In the spring”, and shows two still figures deep in sand, their eyes hollowed out and insects crawling. This is not a happily ever after as suggested by the opening title, “Once upon a time”. *Un Chien Andalou* has a clear sense of story that develops the experiences of the main characters, but this is not a linear story. Instead it functions according to an idiosyncratic causality. The film marked an exciting development in surrealist expression. While Buñuel and Dali were not attached to the group when they made the film, it became their introduction to surrealist circles.

It is useful to consider surrealist expression in film with regard to the differences between *Un Chien Andalou* and *Emak Bakia* because the latter appears to miss the mark somehow, despite adhering to some surrealist precepts. Man Ray seems to have worked towards the wrong kind of discontinuity; he miscalculated in his sequencing of various disconnected images – rayographs – in *Emak Bakia*. Man Ray describes his process of making the rayographs for *Return to Reason*: “On some strips I sprinkled salt and pepper, like a cook preparing a roast, on other strips I threw pins and thumbtacks at random” (Schwarz 1977, p. 290).¹³ Many of these rayographs used in *Return to Reason* were repeated in *Emak Bakia*.¹⁴

Buñuel and Dali, on the other hand, claimed an entirely spontaneous process but one that was based more directly on dreams and automatism:

When I [Buñuel] arrived at Dali’s house in Figueras, I told him about a dream I’d had in which a long tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade

¹³ Schwarz (1977) gives a full account of the conception and reception of *Emak Bakia*.

¹⁴ Man Ray’s next film, *L’Étoile de Mer* (1928) was more enthusiastically received. This film, centered on the image of a starfish, was based on a poem by Robert Desnos, one of the early surrealists, who also acted in the film.

slicing through an eye. Dali immediately told me that he'd seen a hand crawling with an ant in a dream he'd had the previous night (2003, p. 64).¹⁵

Apart from the genesis of *Un Chien Andalou* in the combined dreams of Dali and Buñuel, one of the primary differences between *Emak Bakia* and *Un Chien Andalou* is that Buñuel and Dali adhered more to spatial and temporal conventions of editing. By doing so, they were able to subvert these conventions, and this, according to Hammond, was one of the ways in which surrealists created the effect of surreality (Hammond 1978). In addition, Kuenzli suggests that Man Ray broke the illusion of film by showing the camera – not unlike Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) – and making it self-reflexive and therefore too self-aware (Kuenzli 1996). Both films contain images of their makers and thereby draw some attention to the film as text. The presence of Man Ray with a camera at the beginning of the film highlights Man Ray's role as filmmaker, rather than highlighting the language of the film. While surrealist film did not project an illusion of seamlessness, announcing the camera suggests a different kind of interruption: the presence of the filmmaker with a camera implies a self-consciousness that is somehow not compatible with the dream state.

Buñuel, on the other hand, does not announce himself as filmmaker by inserting a shot of himself with a camera. There may well be a deliberate analogy between Buñuel the slicer of the eye, and Buñuel the filmmaker, but this is not an obvious assertion of himself as maker of the image. Instead, he allows himself to be read as an object of the camera, rather than as the author, and therefore tricks the viewer into believing the opening sequence. Buñuel's inexplicable disappearance also de-emphasises his presence; it is just another example of altered causality in the film. It also suggests a loosening of the self as Buñuel, after the eyeball is slit, is lost inside his film.

The viewer of *Emak Bakia* oscillates between being invited into the film, but also rudely thrust out: the viewer is positioned in a way that permits entry and simultaneously refuses a way in. There is no clear sense of spatial geography apart from what is effectively a black background – or infinite space – upon which sometimes indistinguishable or seemingly arbitrary images move. Later the film moves to outside

¹⁵Short goes on to give a full account of the "gestation of the film script" as well as some details of the shooting which are both characterised by spontaneity.

locations but even these are not edited together in a way that allows them much cohesion. The rotation of objects accords a false sense of intention – they are moving, and this movement must be doing something and therefore be useful or have some purpose. Instead, it becomes another means by which the viewer is blocked from the film: it moves and this move is repetitious, and after a while, the potential for a narrative significance subsides. Eventually, there is the suspicion that staring at Man Ray's rayographs on film and the inhibiting rotation of objects is really an experiment in form; the use of rotation and repetition of shapes indicate a graphic continuity that, like Man Ray's objects, just turns in on itself. Once again, there is the idea of self-awareness which resists surrealism.¹⁶ The focus on movement and shape in *Emak Bakia* forgets another key factor with regard to dreams:

The transformation of ideas into hallucinations is not the only respect in which dreams differ from corresponding thoughts in waking life. Dreams construct a *situation* out of these images; they represent an event which is actually happening; ...they 'dramatize' an idea" (Freud 1953, p. 50, his emphasis).

Emak Bakia lacks situation. Freud ends the above paragraph saying that in dreams "we appear not to think but to experience". In *Emak Bakia*, thought is privileged above experience. It presents a more intellectual experiment with form and this concurs with Man Ray's description of his film:

I said that my film was purely optical, made to appeal only to the eyes – there was no story, not even a scenario. Then, somewhat more truculently; this was not an experimental film – I never showed my experiments – what I offered to the public was final, the result of a way of thinking as well as of seeing...I concluded in a more conciliatory tone: how many films had they sat through for hours and been bored? My film had one outstanding merit, it lasted not more than fifteen minutes (Schwarz 1977, p. 295).

The difference between an intellectual rather than visceral approach is most apparent in the contrast between Man Ray's ending and Buñuel and Dali's opening sequences. At the

¹⁶ *Emak Bakia* was made in the context of various other films exploring the links between mechanisation and film, for example, Leger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), and Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) both of which are a study in movement and mechanisation. It also shares similarities with Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924) which presents itself as an experiment in time.

end of *Emak Bakia*, the actress Kiki opens her eyes to reveal another set of eyes beneath them (the first is painted on her eyelids). This second awakening is clearly a comment on vision as it uses the surrealist motif of the eyes in order to depict the hidden eye which sees the unconscious and it therefore suggests release from habitual perspective. Buñuel and Dali's prologue communicates something similar, but is executed in a way that highlights experience – the effect is visceral – and therefore communicates ideas of vision and seeing in a much more immediate way.

The slit eye sequence at the beginning of Buñuel and Dali's film is said to be the most frequently discussed sequence shorter than two minutes in film history (Short 2003), and there are various ways to read it. We could view it in opposition to the opening of *Emak Bakia* as an assault on, rather than assertion of, the self through its attack on the "eye"; this is elaborated by the implied attack on the viewer who connects visually to the sequence through the image of the eye, and experiences the slashing on a visceral level. The opening sequence of *Un Chien Andalou* is most obviously understood in terms of an assault on vision: the film signals an alternative way of seeing; with the mind's eye, as it were. Fotiade (1995) reads the sequence in terms of Breton's figure of the "untamed eye". In *Surrealism and Painting*, Breton writes:

The eye exists in an untamed state. It presides over the conventional exchange of signals apparently required by the navigation of the mind. But who will draw up the scale of vision? There exists what I have seen many times... There exists also what I am beginning to see that is not visible" (cited in Fotiade 1995, p. 394).¹⁷

Fotiade considers the untamed eye to be the foundation of surrealist cinema, and the way in which it distinguished itself from Dada film. This places an emphasis on the image of the eye which is bound to seeing the visible, but also alludes to the unseen. The implication is that the slit eye can see what the whole eye cannot and therefore, by slitting the eye in two, the film screen becomes a "threshold space" (Everett 1998) which brings together dream and waking life.¹⁸

¹⁷ The translation that Fotiade cites is different to the Simon Watson Taylor translation published in 1972 which does not use the term "untamed eye".

¹⁸ I take this term from the title of Everett's paper 'Screen as threshold' (1998).

Surrealist montage: the slit eye

Editing is the specific film technique that effects surrealist montage. The implicit fragmentation of both editing and surrealist montage corresponds to the slit eye which is then able to access the inaccessible. And further, the slit eye corresponds to Breton's man cut by the window (part image, part sentence), thereby signalling the integration of the dream and the quotidian. That the slit eye should result in a different kind of seeing is practically enacted through the editing of the film. Because the editing manipulates the way that the viewer is positioned in the film, there is a further correspondence between the altered viewing position of the viewer in the discontinuous film and the altered viewing position through the parted eye.¹⁹

The prologue of *Un Chien Andalou* is made up of 12 shots, excluding the titles that bookend it on either side, and is 38 seconds long. It contains the following shots:

Transcript 3: the slit-eye sequence

	Visuals	Edit
1	"Once upon a time" written on screen	All straight unless otherwise indicated
2	MCU hands sharpening razor against door knob	
3	MCU man's face, looking down -	eyeline match to
4	MCU hands with razor	
5	MCU man's face looking down	
6	MS man opens door and goes out -	match cut to
7	MLS man emerges through door onto balcony	Jump-cut, but alleviated by shot scale and slight angle change to
8	MCU man smoking on balcony	Eyeline match to
9	MS moon in the sky with the faint puff of cloud	
10	MCU man on balcony puffing on cigarette, eyeline to moon	
11	CU woman's face, a man with a tie holds her eye open, starts to draw a razor across	
12	MS moon in the sky sliced by a cloud.	
13	ECU eye slit by razor	
14	Title: Eight years later	

¹⁹ Wendy Everett (1998) links this slit eye to Stephen Heath's idea of the cinematic apparatus as the perfect eye.

This sequence draws on the logic of continuity editing. The first image of the razor sharpened adjacent to the door frame is followed by a shot of the man's face (played by Buñuel), establishing the action as his, and lulling the viewer into a position which does not anticipate discontinuity. Through shot reverse-shot, the editing in the opening sequence establishes the relationship between the man and the razor. In sharpening the razor, opening the door and going out to the balcony, the continuity of the sequence is maintained, though very subtly undermined by small lapses such as the missing watch and the collarless shirt which is later replaced by a tie; these small details are not immediately visible. The man puffs on his cigarette and a matched eyeline, point-of-view shot of the moon follows. But an alternative continuity begins here: the smoke from his cigarette provides a visual rhyme with the clouds moving towards the moon in the next shot.

The clear spatial and causal logic that characterises the scene until this point is interrupted in the next shot – the appearance of the woman – thereby drawing attention to both the continuity and its interruption (see figure 3). Prior to this, the woman is not edited into the space of the film and her appearance removes the viewer from the established space of the sequence. But the careful continuity in the editing through the use of match cuts and eyeline matches smooths the viewer's entrance into the film and her sudden appearance does not jar too much; the violence of the slit also does not give the viewer a chance to object to her sudden presence. The moment of slicing the eyeball is anticipated by the cloud moving across the moon, which in turn is visually linked to the cigarette smoke; the cloud moving across the moon interrupts the match between the hand about to cut and the slitting of the eye thereby making the wisp of cloud part of the action. But the use of continuity editing in actually slicing the eyeball is significant: the illusion of the slit eye occurs through the combination of the preceding shot (someone about to slice her eye) and the shot of the slitting of a calf's eye; it is also pre-empted by the graphic continuity of the cloud slicing through the moon. This particular blend of continuity and discontinuity serves to anchor the integration of dream and waking life that surrealism seeks. Without the use of continuity editing, as *Emak Bakia* shows, the viewer remains suspended, never entirely immersed in the film.

While graphic continuity can be considered a subset of continuity editing, the use of visual rhymes and analogies signals the alternative continuity by which the film pieces itself together. The graphic continuity overrides the logic of continuity editing as the film no longer communicates in a linear way. *Un Chien Andalou* uses graphic continuity in order to create visual rhymes; it becomes another linking device that recurs throughout the film. Particular shapes or objects return, sometimes in a different form, and through this use of repetition, the film draws associations and analogies through seemingly disconnected moments. The narrative logic relies on rhymes and association but grounds itself in continuity editing which is persistently interrupted and consequently undermined. The moon, for example, maintains graphic links with other moments in the film: the face of the woman as her eye is slit, the circle of people around the severed hand, which corresponds to the ants crawling out of the hole in the hand, the fuzzy underarm hairs, the sea urchin. Similarly, the striped tie that is laid out on the bed in simulation of a man suggests the tie which suddenly appears in the prologue.

A different way of reading the opening of *Un Chien Andalou* is as the sum of its discontinuities. The suddenly present woman, the missing watch and the collarless shirt turned into tie all appear in only one shot: this is shot 11, which depicts a man about to slit the woman's eye. If we read the man wearing the tie and no watch as a second man distinct from Buñuel, in an entirely different space, then this shot could be understood as a rupture, an imposition to the continuous sequence. Either way, the scene is punctuated by the establishment of an alternative continuity through the use of the conventions of continuity editing.

Breton writes that what most appealed to the surrealists about cinema was the “*power to disorient*” (Breton 1978b, p. 43, his emphasis). For Breton, this disorientation worked in various ways, partly through viewing conventions and partly through the text. Buñuel and Dali's ability to disorient in *Un Chien Andalou* is linked to their revision of spatial and temporal cues, as well as the alternative way of reading bodies, shapes and objects. Temporal cues such as “Eight years later” and “In the spring” are designed to create an illusion of continuity, but because the links are not conventionally logical, these temporal cues are false trails and serve to disorient rather than link the various scenes; this kind of disorientation is consolidated by the way the body is refigured through the

disembodied hand, the bodiless clothes laid out on the bed and of course the slit eye. Similarly, at the core of surrealist expression, is a reconfiguration of space, and consequently of the portrayal of bodies and objects in relation to space. *Un Chien Andalou* disregards the rules of space as objects and characters move through it in a way that is inconsistent with the illusion of realism as, for example, the box appears and disappears, a body falls into a forest and the apartment opens out onto the beach. This contrasts with the spatial continuity that the film maintains. The reconfiguration of space is also evident through the ways in which space is perceived – the emphasis on vision is an enduring feature of surrealism, most succinctly displayed through the sliced eyeball, one of surrealism’s iconic images. The representation of literal space attempts in many ways to compensate for an uneasy relationship with those spaces that cannot be perceived with the human eye. The surrealist desire to reach the inaccessible is in some ways a search for negation and this is difficult to represent. The calculated approach of Man Ray to *Emak Bakia* and surrealism alludes to a core tension in all surrealist expression: how does the surrealist artist articulate the unconscious without mediation and therefore without bringing it to consciousness? Surrealism attempted to appropriate psychoanalytic strategies in order to achieve this.

Surrealism and psychoanalysis

With poetry, painting, and film, surrealists applied the devices of dream thought: condensation, displacement, analogy, intensification, and disregard for conventional time, space, syntax and causality. They hoped to consecrate objective chance, “the geometric locus of coincidences,” and to create works of such startling coincidences that would “attain surreality” (Linden 1984, p. 42). One of the surrealist projects with regard to photographs and the cinema was to explore ways of depicting the dream state and unconscious impulses by exploiting the realist potential of the camera while simultaneously undermining it. Cinema opened up opportunities to explore specific forms of non-verbal expression and this was developed in various ways. Instead of a more direct pictorial relationship between image and referent, surrealism employed complex techniques for communicating through images,

and this was related to the way an image could be arranged, both in composition and in sequence. So, as discussed earlier, surrealist strategies such as chance, automatism and montage redirected straightforward readings of images. Because the surrealists were concerned with expressing that which eludes easy representation, they bore an inherent distrust of the relationship between the image and its referent.

There are two iconic examples of the detachment between the image and its referent. The first is Magritte's 'The treachery of images' (1929) which shows a picture of a pipe which is immediately undermined by the claim 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' beneath it. The second is the 'chance encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella' by the Comte de Lautréamont, a predecessor of surrealism.²⁰ Both reveal a particular understanding of the material object as detached from their habitual meanings. As with surrealist montage, the surrealist object allows for subterranean meanings to emerge. The transformation of the object was one surrealist means of communicating the co-existence of the interior and the exterior.

By undermining the object, the surrealists were undermining the fabric of the ordinary, material world. Breton explains the surrealist reconfiguration of objects:

Liberated from the need to reproduce forms essentially taken from the outer world, painting benefits in its turn from the only external element that no art can get along without, namely inner representation, *the image present to the mind*. It confronts this inner representation with that of the concrete forms of the real world, seeks in turn, as it has done with Picasso, to seize the object in its generality, and as soon as it has succeeded in so doing, tries to take that supreme step which is the poetic step par excellence: excluding (relatively) the external object as such and considering nature only in its relationship with the inner world of consciousness (Breton 1972c, p. 260).

Breton speaks of the surrealist relationship with objects as a means to reconcile interior perspective with material presence. In this way, the object is no longer bound to its material presence, instead, it is reproduced as simultaneously in its general form but also

²⁰ Both of these, like "the exquisite corpse will drink new wine" and Magritte's apple disclaimed by "Ceci n'est pas une pomme" are now popular expressions of surrealism. This is evident in the earlier quotation from David Wills where he uses the umbrella and the sewing machine in order to indicate how difference works in surrealist juxtaposition.

revised by its relationship with inner consciousness. Objects are therefore presented as material, but their boundaries are tested as they become altered through subjective interpretations. Surrealism therefore establishes an alternative relationship with objects and this emerges through techniques such as counterpoint and juxtaposition. These techniques work to destabilise objects by removing them from their usual contexts.

In *Un Chien Andalou*, psychoanalytic techniques such as condensation and displacement mark the depiction of objects in the film. Displacement, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, indicates a chain of association, the way meaning can be passed on from one idea to another, facilitating condensation, which refers to the way one idea can represent a range of associated meanings (1973). The underlying sexual anxiety becomes displaced through a series of objects working in relation to each other. The object that stands out in the film is the striped box which reappears in various contexts, thereby indicating a skewed causality in the film. The idea of sexual anxiety is suggested by the use of the box to indicate the groin when the woman lays clothes on the bed in the shape of a man. The box defies the logic of continuity editing: after filling in for the groin, it inexplicably reappears in the street and is given to the androgen. As the androgen stands clutching the box in the street, a car hurtles towards her and there is a series of shots of her both holding the box and with her arms raised in defence, the box neatly placed at her feet (see figures 4 and 5). The disconnected and repeated depiction of the box throughout the film gives it a significance which is best understood in relation to Freud's idea of condensation: the box is a seemingly unified object which indicates various associated ideas relating to sexuality.

Breton's 1934 lecture on objects entitled 'The Surrealist situation of the object' (Breton 1972c) also occurs in the context of him commenting on the dangers of its success: that the term surrealism was being employed too loosely; his definition of surrealist objects was used specifically to define and differentiate surrealism from contemporary experimental forms. Interestingly, Breton's lecture on surrealist objects was delivered in Prague, where later Czech surrealist animator, Jan Švankmajer, would be developing his own surreal relationship with objects.

Emak Bakia and other avant-garde films show that irregular narratives examining movement, shape and structure and decontextualising objects through the use of montage

was not the exclusive domain of surrealist film in the 1920s; surrealism was not the only movement that sought to defamiliarise through formalism. What primarily distinguishes the surrealists from other avant-garde movements of the time was the way in which they coincided with psychoanalysis in their interest in the unconscious, and equally importantly, their playful approach to the psychoanalytic strategies that they drew on. Various critics have cautioned against a too serious reading of surrealist images, particularly in terms of their symbolism.²¹

The relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and surrealism has been fraught with mutual distrust on either side.²² Caws and Harris include the prickly correspondence between Breton and Freud in their translation of *Communicating Vessels* (1990) in which Freud, rather disingenuously, comments: “although I have received many testimonies of the interest that you and your friends show for my research, I am not able to clarify for myself what Surrealism is and what it wants. Perhaps I am not destined to understand it, I who am so distant from art” (Breton 1990, p. 152).²³ By saying that he is not able to understand what surrealism wants, Freud dismisses the surrealist claim to accessing the unconscious and distances it from his more scientific approach.²⁴ In an attempt to account for the relationship between psychoanalysis and surrealism, Lomas considers one of the key differences between them: he notes an important distinction “hinges on the very question of analysis” as the surrealists were interested in the “products of the unconscious”, while psychoanalysis found the value of the unconscious to be the “raw material of interpretation” (Lomas 2000, p. 5). Lomas documents Breton’s reservations about psychoanalysis, particularly in terms of ascribing psychoanalytic interpretations of surrealist products. In this way, he draws attention to the exploitation of psychoanalytic symbolism as a knowing device used by surrealists rather

²¹ Thiher, (1977), Hammond, (1978), Everett (1998) Lomas (2000) are four examples that indicate that for as long as surrealism in film has been discussed, there has been the tendency to warn against reading the images in a serious or symbolic way.

²² David Macey (1988) details psychoanalysis’s debt to surrealism in terms of surrealism spreading the ideas of psychoanalysis. He traces Lacan’s own affinity for and involvement in surrealism.

²³ The two men had a series of letters arising from Breton’s accusation in *Communicating Vessels* that Freud did not reference Volkelt. The reference had been included in the German edition, but not the French.

²⁴ Caws, in the introduction to the translation links this question of what surrealism wants to Freud’s other question, “what do women want?” (1990).

than as a blind adherence to Freudian psychoanalysis.²⁵ The appropriation of psychoanalytic techniques to coincide with surrealist techniques is conscious and deliberate and this makes it difficult to consider these works only in terms of the symbolic value of the images.

Instead, it is more productive to focus on the relationship between surrealism and psychoanalysis in terms of their mutual pursuit of the hidden structures of life. Psychoanalysis and surrealism intersect in their joint interest in “the habitually concealed or occluded” (Marcus 1998, p. 243); both have an affinity with the cinema because of these intersecting interests. Macey observes that “the question of possible mutual influences is less important than a parallelism which testifies to the fertility of the borderlands between psychiatry, psychoanalysis and surrealism” (1988, p. 63). Surrealism attempted to reconcile psychoanalytic techniques with specific textual practices; it sought to find analogies between the two as both worked towards revealing unconscious experience. In film, this becomes particularly evident through the disruptions and deviations from continuity editing conventions which fundamentally sought to construct a linear and coherent narrative. Silent films had developed a syntax that allowed the narrative logic of film, particularly in relation to realism, to run parallel to that of the novel (Thiher 1977). Eisenstein explored Griffith’s filmic equivalences to the classical realist novel in his essay (Eisenstein 2004). These developments were largely aiming at a transposition of the narrative logic of nineteenth century novels in order to construct realism along similar lines.

Filmmakers wanted to cope with the problems of temporality and the mimesis of episodic experience as well as character functions and point-of-view not only in the same manner as a realist novelist, but, more especially, because the realist novelist had defined these concerns to be the central preoccupations of mimesis (Thiher 1977, p. 38).

But the surrealist integration of psychoanalysis worked towards an expression of subjective states that were not communicated by the classical realist novel.

²⁵ Lomas points out that Dali was criticised for a too academic approach to the use of symbols.

To use it [cinema] to tell a story is to neglect one of its best resources, to fail to fulfil its most profound purpose. That is why I think the cinema is made primarily to express matters of the mind, the inner consciousness, not by a succession of images so much as by something more imponderable which restores them to us with their direct matter (Artaud 1978, p. 64).

Artaud was drawn to what he perceived as a magical, almost alchemic process that became a space for displaced religious rituals. By conceiving of the cinema as an alchemic process, Artaud recognised cinema as a magical transfiguration. While Artaud's views might be extreme and not representative of surrealism in general, they coincide with Breton's fascination with the marvellous. They also indicate that the surrealist tendency in cinema was not simply a matter of showing dreams. Rather, film revealed structure and was able to mimic psychic processes and thereby access the unconscious. Benjamin says of the camera:

Photography with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis (Benjamin 1979a, p. 243).

Benjamin aligns the technical ability of the camera with psychoanalysis by finding analogy between the camera's ability to slow down or zoom in on the visible world in order to reveal what usually goes unnoticed, and the relationship between psychoanalysis and the unconscious. From here it is possible to understand how film itself may be inherently surrealist as Wendy Everett suggests through her comparison of the visuality of both and their mutual concern with the dream (1998). But there are further ways in which film and surrealism coincide, and these are related to technique and structure. Surrealism expressed itself in film through the use of visual associations, nonlinearity, a skewed causality, a playful use of symbols, and a revision of the temporal and spatial logic of film. These techniques coincide with psychoanalytic devices such as the relationship between dreams and condensation, symbolism, parapraxis, ellipsis and

projection.²⁶ Similarly, editing works in accordance with psychoanalytic processes such as displacement: editing, particularly when it is nonlinear, functions in relation to the sequences that precede and follow it. The use of alternative continuities and associations requires that scenes and images are read in relation to each other. The surrealists then consciously and playfully applied these elements in order to explore the unconscious. This conscious appropriation suggests that while the film sought to emulate psychoanalytic devices in order to explore the unconscious, there is a limited value to reading them as a means of interpreting the film. As indicated earlier, one of the key divides between psychoanalysis and surrealism was that surrealism sought the unconscious and not the interpretation of it (Lomas 2000). Therefore, acknowledging the similarities between psychoanalytic techniques and the surrealist use of editing sheds light on the kind of relationship that surrealism sought with psychoanalysis; it brings us that bit closer to understanding what it was that Breton wanted.

The surrealist revolution

Having discussed surrealist montage in terms of surrealist film, I will briefly consider a more overarching significance of surrealism to this study: the reading of the objective through the subjective and the consideration of the socio-political through the aesthetic. Breton's reconceptualisation of the quotidian is potentially subversive. Hal Foster details how the surrealist uncanny has social implications and how Breton's image of the modern mannequin and romantic ruin offer a critique of industrial capitalism (Foster 1993).

The marvellous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic ruins, the modern mannequin, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility (Breton 1972a, p. 16).

²⁶ Hammond observes: "Freud had uncovered the devices the unconscious uses: condensation, displacement, symbolisation, co-existent opposites, a disregard for time, space and causality. The surrealists proposed employing these same devices consciously to reveal the unconscious things of life" (1978, p. 8) thereby reiterating Linden's point stated at the beginning of the chapter.

The idea that the marvellous is not the same in every period of history sheds light on the relationship between the marvellous and the ordinary. It suggests that the marvellous is in part constituted by the everyday, when the ordinary is perceived anew.

Breton, from the early days of surrealism, conceived of the movement in revolutionary terms. Initially, this referred primarily to a revised approach to the real, in which the imagination refreshed and recast the habitual; the conceptualisation of surrealism as a revolution marked it with an urgency and emphasised it as an approach to life rather than purely an aesthetic. As surrealism progressed, Breton became increasingly interested in Marxism. In some ways this may seem the ultimate in surrealist montage: the juxtaposition of the dream and the socio-political; how can unmediated unconsciousness and the marvellous work in conjunction with social consciousness? In the 1924 manifesto which laid out a map of surrealism, social concerns and processes were absent.²⁷ Breton's awareness of this contradiction prompted him to observe in an essay entitled 'Visit with Leon Trotsky': "We have heard often enough, my friends and I, that this attitude we wish to maintain with the greatest rigour is incompatible with Marxism!" (Breton 1978a, p. 180). Breton does not hold to this view. He goes on to write of Trotsky: "I would say, comrades, that I could have found no one more open to my preoccupation than I found him to be" (p. 180).

Breton became increasingly anxious in his attempt to "reconcile Engels and Freud" (Cohen 1995, p. 2). But there remained a tension between the potentially mystifying expression of surrealism and Breton's more political interests resulting in some uncertainty around Breton's exact position. *Communicating Vessels* (1932) and *Mad Love* (1937), the two texts that express some of Breton's ideas here are not easy to read as clear theoretical concerns, and the effect is that many people, surrealists included, were not convinced. Breton's position in the French Communist party was not comfortable and he left in 1933.

²⁷ Instead, lines like these entrench a very specific kind of social positioning. This is from a section in the 1924 manifesto entitled 'Secrets of the magical surrealist art': "After you have settled yourself in a place as favourable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have your writing materials brought to you" (Breton 1972a, p. 29).

Another voice picked up on some of the ideas that Breton was trying to communicate: Walter Benjamin's interest in surrealism has been frequently discussed.²⁸ Benjamin in his essay on surrealism credits it with a "profane illumination": he recognises the revolutionary potential in the surrealist fascination with the outmoded and discarded, which, as Breton's observation, quoted earlier, suggests, was where the surrealists located the marvellous (Benjamin 1979c, p. 227).²⁹ Both Benjamin and Breton were interested in exploring the irrational aspects of social processes; they were both intrigued by the ways in which the irrational pervades society. Benjamin's insight into the surrealist project excited him greatly: in a letter to Adorno dated 31 May 1935, he claims that he had to put down Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* because it made his heart beat too excitedly (Adorno 1999). While he remained sceptical of various elements of surrealism, particularly its potential for "intoxication", he recognised something of his Arcades project in the "profane illumination" of surrealism: both surrealism and the Arcades project attempted to apply psychoanalysis to orthodox Marxism.

One of the contributions of surrealism to art is therefore the coincidence of the subjective with the objective, which allows the exterior to be read through the lens of the interior. Without claiming a direct influence of surrealism on all of my later examples,³⁰ I consider its tactics of disjuncture, particularly surrealist montage, and its related juxtaposition of the socio-political with phantasmagoria a helpful premise for some of my later discussions. The importance of the relationship between surrealism and Marxism for this thesis rests in the potential of surrealism and surrealist techniques applied to film, in particular, to reflect on the socio-political realities by recasting the objective through the lens of subjective internal states. Surrealism's potential in this regard is taken up in a different way by magical realism, the subject of the next chapter, which shifts focus from the unconscious to the communal. A detailed portrayal of the objective in magical realist

²⁸ See for example Foster (1993) and Cohen (1995).

²⁹ Benjamin, W 'Surrealism: Last Snapshot of the European Intelligensia' in *One Way Street* (1979)

³⁰ Roger Shattuck, in his introduction to Maurice Nadeau's *History of Surrealism* identifies the inability to pinpoint what surrealism became after its prime. He says that the term "refers to literary-artistic activity that centred in Paris in the Twenties and profoundly affected two generations of poets and painters in Europe. Beyond this point, any concurrence of opinion on the nature and significance of surrealism goes to pieces" (Nadeau 1968, p. 12).

texts allows access to collective internal states, which necessarily creates a space for reflection on historical and socio-political contexts.

Conclusion

It is no longer the harmony of the individual parts that constitutes the whole; it is the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements (Bürger 1984, p. 82). Peter Bürger points out that montage allows for a unified reading but one which holds inherent contradictions. Surrealism in film integrated interruption and worked towards different ways of reading images through its particular use of montage. The films emulate the effects of psychoanalysis by using editing techniques that resonate with psychoanalytic practice. This is evident both in terms of the structuring of non-linear narrative as well as the particular depiction of objects in surrealist film, which gain their significance in terms of where they are located within a text.

Surrealist film is an early example of the use of discontinuity editing to incorporate dreams, the marvellous or elements of fantasy. But surrealism always emphasised that it was not an aesthetic; rather, its aim was to access a specific kind of reality, surreality, through the use of art. Similarly, the injection of fantasy, or its variants, through the use of discontinuity and disjuncture in other contexts has also indicated a concern that stretches beyond aesthetics. One of the legacies of surrealism has been an understanding of how art and art form may reveal an alternative kind of realism; how art enables one to push beyond these constraints. By aligning itself with psychoanalysis, even in this limited way, surrealism showed that film had the potential to reveal subjective experience through the use of montage.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Chapter Three

Magical Realism and Film

This chapter explores the relationship between magical realism and film. It draws on Jameson's 1986 essay, 'On Magic Realism and Film' which attempts to reconcile the idea of magical realism as a narrative trend, with the idea of magical realism as altered perception, by discussing the two in relation to film. I consider the early understanding of visual magical realism in Weimar Germany and then briefly examine more contemporary claims to magical realism: as a postcolonial mode; as a Latin American form of expression; and in terms of Jameson's idea of it as an interstitial mode. In relation to film, even though the term has currency, there is no clear consensus about how it should be used. I suggest three useful ways for reading magical realism in relation to film: it could indicate literary magical realism adapted to film, and it could refer to the appropriation of the term by contemporary popular film. The third is the most intriguing: there is a body of films that exhibit equivalent textual strategies to literary magical realism, and I explore this by drawing on Wendy Faris's article 'Scheherazade's Children' (1995) which summarises textual features of magical realism.

Introduction

Maggie Ann Bower's 2004 study of magical realism includes a filmography at the end and only five films are listed: *Like Water for Chocolate*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Being John Malkovich*, *City of Angels*, *Wings of Desire* and *Stuart Little* (2004, p. 136). These slim, almost random pickings reflect the difficulties of identifying a definitive body of magical realist films. Magical realism has been most frequently discussed as a literary

mode, particularly within a Latin American or postcolonial tradition. The link between contemporary literary magical realism and the origin of the term in early twentieth century fine art has been well documented. In film, the term has been less formally established: it has been casually applied to communicate a popular trend in Hollywood cinema; it has also been used in more precise way that correlates to the attributes developed in literary and art criticism. While it is difficult to definitively apply the term to contemporary work outside of literature, its origins in fine art provide a link to the visuality of film.

Magical realism moves towards realism even as it pulls away and this informs the antinomy that Chanady recognises as the structural hinge of a magical realist text (Chanady 1985).¹ This combination of fantasy and reality suggests an affinity with film. Cinema is itself simultaneously implicitly fantastic, or illusive, and realist.² As with surrealism, with which it has a historical relationship, magical realism may be well suited to cinema, a medium that is conducive to exploring the co-existence of the magical or the fantastic and the real. But there is a significant, if small, body of films that are associated with surrealism and these are largely agreed. Filmic magical realism, on the other hand, is best pursued by tracing the influence of the mode on contemporary cinema practice.

My discussion of magical realism in film draws on Jameson's extraction of two tendencies from its complex history: a narrative trend and a "metamorphosis in perception" (1986, p. 301). This chapter explores the premise of magical realism as metamorphosis in perception which emerges in its origins in fine art and reconciles with its narrative tendencies in literature and, potentially, in film. In my discussion of how magical realism has been applied to film, I identify three distinct uses. These include the adaptation of novels and stories to screen and the Hollywood appropriation of the mode. The third refers to films that textually embed recognised magical realist techniques and practices. But while these certainly indicate a strong influence of magical realism on film, I conclude that there is no agreed body of magical realist films.

¹ In addition to Chanady, for a discussion on the combination of fantasy and reality in magical realism see Flores (1995) and Faris (2004).

² See Chapter One for a discussion of illusion and realism in cinema.

Early magical realism: the metamorphosis of perception

Because contemporary magical realism has been recognised as predominantly a literary mode, not much has been written about it in relation to film. Jameson's 1986 essay, 'On Magical Realism and Film' is the most significant attempt to locate all three media (literature, fine art and film) in relation to magical realism. Jameson spells out two distinct tendencies in the development of magical realism since the early part of the twentieth century: the "metamorphosis in perception" (1986, p. 301), which occurs through the transfiguration of the object, and the narrative aspect of magical realism; he identifies Marquez's writing as the moment where these two merge.³ Jameson's reading of magical realism begins to draw together the narrative and the perceptual elements in a more theoretical way through his application of the concept to film. Because magical realism has its early history as a visual art form, film could potentially further reconcile the narrative trend – which is strongest in literature – with the metamorphosis of perception inherited from ideas of magical realism in painting.⁴

The idea of the metamorphosis of perception in relation to magical realism emerges through the writing of German art historian, Franz Roh, writing in 1925. Franz Roh used the term "magischer Realismus" to describe developments in German art of the time (Roh 1995).⁵ This is one of the earliest applications of the term and refers to a renewed interest in the conventions of realism as a reaction to Expressionism.⁶

³ Jameson's discussion of magical realism in film centres on three films and three features that he identifies: history, colour and narrative. My intention is not to simply replicate Jameson's article and apply it wholesale to my examples. I am primarily interested in two elements of his article: his attempt to reconcile magical realism as metamorphosis of perception with magical realism as narrative technique and his "very provisional hypothesis" discussed later.

⁴ The thread of magical realism in painting was picked up in various different contexts beyond 1920s Weimar Germany.

⁵ 'Magischer Realismus' is sometimes translated as 'magic' realism in order to distinguish it from 'magical' realism, the more contemporary form, but this is not always consistent. See Bower (2004) to trace this development from magic to magical realism.

⁶ Roh is generally accepted as coining the term magical realism in relation to representation in art. The uncertainty of definition that has dogged the term is present from its very start as Roh claims "I attribute no special value to the title 'magical realism'" (Roh 1995, p. 16). The second name, "Neue Sachlichkeit" coined by Gustav Hartlaub, a German museum director gained currency because of "the famous Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition of 1925. Roh's term did not reappear until a new interest in the Weimar Republic and German art of the time ...in the 1960s" (Guenther 1995, pp. 33-4). Guenther

Contemporaneously, the term “Neue Sachlichkeit” also emerged as a description of these developments and while there are some differences in the application of the two labels, Neue Sachlichkeit is the name that has endured.⁷ This new phase in German art emphasised a return to materiality as it detailed a depiction of the object world in paintings and photographs that attended to the mundane with clarity and precision. But the way of looking at the object world was altered: a sense of mystery was perceived behind the implacable materiality of the depiction and the ordinary was offered up for reinterpretation. The intellectual zeitgeist was marked by the rise in popularity of psychoanalysis – the awareness of an unconscious layer rendering things not quite as they seem, reinforcing a need to question the apparent, and imbuing the visible with the weight of the invisible.

Guenther (1995) traces the genesis of magical realism back to Giorgio de Chirico, the Italian artist usually associated with Metaphysical painting (*Pittura Metafisica*) which he developed along with Carlo Carrà between 1911 and 1918, and this was also the origin of the parallel path of surrealism. De Chirico was greatly admired by the surrealists who adopted similar ideas around alternate realities that could be accessed beneath the object world (Alexandrian 1970).⁸ Both of these approaches, born in close proximity and sharing the same source of inspiration, embraced a similar ambivalence to realism: their interest was in an object world infused with subjectivity. Both found that the object was key to accessing truths that lay beneath the surface and Roh drew on Carrà and de Chirico’s *Pittura Metafisica* in order to expand these ideas.

points out that even earlier than Roh, Novalis used “magical idealism” and “magical realism” with regard to romantic philosophy. But Roh’s use of magical realism in Weimar art, while distinct from, is connected to, and has deeply influenced, contemporary magical realism. Less has been written about the links between Novalis’s ideas regarding romantic philosophy on later magical realism, but Christopher Warnes’s doctoral thesis explores the relationship between the two (Warnes 2003).

⁷ There are several films made under the umbrella of Neue Sachlichkeit but the initial impulse came from painting. The influence of the art movement is evident in the films, particularly in the work of Georg Pabst.

⁸ His early work was a huge inspiration to the surrealists and de Chirico was one of the exhibitors in the first group exhibition. But they were disappointed by his later work, culminating in the surrealists running a counter-exhibition to his work where they staged children’s toys in parodies of his recent paintings. Aragon also renamed the paintings (Alexandrian 1970, p. 58).

Carrà and de Chirico emphasise an attention to form in order to access a hidden reality (Carrà et al. 1971, p. 23).⁹ Their desired effect was the transformation of the “pictorial representation of reality in such a way as to make visible the concealed reality that lies beneath”(Carrà et al. 1971, p. 181). Similarly, Roh’s use of the term attempted to define an art whose realism was so laden that it pointed to an interior reality beneath it: “it’s a question of representing before our eyes, in an intuitive way, *the fact, the interior figure of the exterior world.*” (Roh 1995, p. 24; his emphasis). An ambivalence towards the object world is evident: there is a clear mistrust of the world of appearances in favour of the concealed reality that lies beneath; yet it is only through the immersion in the detail of what can be seen that one is able to access what lies beneath, to effect transformation of what is immediately visible. The exterior world needed to be depicted in a realistic way in order to access a second, concealed reality; Roh advocated smooth surfaces, fine textures and clear detail of objects. Through this, a second reality, one that lies beneath a detailed and accurate presentation emerges: the object is transformed and consequently, the way of perceiving the habitual is altered.

Early magical realism sought out the materiality of the object to counteract the increasing sense of an alienated and modernised world; the growth of technology and mechanical processes resulted in a sense of detachment and loss of agency. Like Surrealism, early magical realist art explored issues of modernity through images of and an engagement with technology and mechanisation. One of the dilemmas that early magical realist art sought to communicate was the plight of the individual against the onslaught of modernity: a sense of alienation in an increasingly automated world. This is evident, for example, in some of the etchings of Otto Dix which present detailed and precise, yet eerily hyperreal images of war: soldiers dehumanised and made monstrous by gas masks, an alien landscape of craters and trenches. Both surrealism and magical realism emphasise defamiliarisation through juxtaposition. Similarly, one of the most frequent uses of juxtaposition in magical realist films occurs through the coincidence of different worlds.

⁹ There are two Carràs mentioned in this thesis: one is Carlo Carrà, de Chirico’s contemporary and the other is his son, Massimo Carrà, primary editor of *Metaphysical Art* (1971), on de Chirico and Carrà’s painting.

Magical realism and surrealism developed differently as they responded to their immediate contexts, but remained bound up in their common affinity with the ideas of de Chirico, and also through the transportation of intellectual and artistic trends within and between Europe and Latin America. Figures like Max Ernst engaged with elements of early magical realism, and brought this, along with the remnants of his flirtation with Dadaism, to surrealism, thereby consolidating a fluid interaction between the modes. The Spanish influence in surrealism, most visible in Buñuel and Dali, extends a kinship to Latin America, not least through a linguistic commonality. Furthermore, Alejo Carpentier's writing about the "marvellous real", which is generally accepted as magical realism, responds on the one hand to the context of Latin America, and on the other to surrealism, in which he had been an active participant. Since then, magical realism has developed primarily as a literary mode popularly associated with Latin American literature. I will consider some of the key applications of the term.¹⁰

Contemporary magical realism

Like any other apparently stable term, magical realism has been interpreted and applied in various ways. Isolating some of the claims, which sometimes converge, sometimes conflict, disentangles some of the varying aesthetic and political functions ascribed to magical realism. There are several key deployments of the term which intersect with each other: magical realism as early German art; its positioning at the interstices of different modes of production by Jameson; the popular appropriation of magical realism by Hollywood film; the idea of magical realism as postcolonial or hybrid expression which coincides with the understanding of it as postmodern. There is also the claim that magical realism is autochthonous to Latin American experience, or at least, it has been very closely associated with Latin America. While the contemporary use of magical realism is distinct from 1920s magic realism, there is a clear, if not entirely unbroken, thread that binds the two.

¹⁰ This diaspora of surrealism and magical realism has been told many times. Bower (2004) sums it up well as does Guenther (1995).

The association of magical realism and Latin America has emerged through the recognition of a trend in Latin American literature popularised by Marquez and Borges. But there has also been a suggestion of magical realism as natural expression in Latin America; Jameson elaborates on this by saying that Carpentier considered it the authentic Latin American expression of surrealism (1986, p. 301). In various papers, starting from 1949, Carpentier revised the surrealist conception of the marvellous to indicate a wonder inherent in Latin America (1990). Zamora and Faris note in their introduction to 'On the Marvelous Real in America' that Carpentier asserts a key difference between the marvellous real and surrealism:

In Latin America, Carpentier argues, the fantastic is not to be discovered by subverting or transcending reality with abstract forms and manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America's varied history, geography, demography, and politics – not by manifesto (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 75).

Carpentier identifies the marvellous real as outward focused, looking towards community rather than inward-looking and concentrated on the unconscious. He also emphasises the relationship between the context of Latin America and the marvellous real. Carpentier's idea of a tendency towards magical realist expression in Latin America resonates with Marquez's view of his storytelling: in his conversations with Mendoza, Marquez claims that he tells stories the way that his grandmother did (Mendoza c1983), suggesting that there is something about storytelling in Latin America that is inherently magical realist. Magical realism therefore invites us to reconsider what is "real" as it embraces a more inclusive idea of reality. Zamora and Faris validate this broader idea of reality in certain cultures as they refer to "non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation" (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 3). But these distinctions are perhaps too simple and too general and potentially encourage an exotic view of "non-Western" cultures.

A similar, though less insistent, claim is made for other postcolonial or cross-cultural contexts based on the co-existence of different frameworks of experience.¹¹ Just as magical realism has been claimed – and rejected – as the “authentic” Latin American voice; its open-endedness and interstitial nature offer a means of expression suited to postcolonial contexts.¹² Magical realism is frequently associated with postcoloniality because it is a form that emerges in the convergence of opposing forces. The fusion of “possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes” (Zamora and Faris, 1995:6) applies at a textual level, for example, the use of juxtaposition and oxymorons, as well as at a contextual level. But the reading of magical realism as postcolonial expression frequently sets it up, as Zamora does, in opposition to “Western” or “rational” modes. The positive interpretation here is that magical realism occurs as an alternative to dominant ways of perceiving the world and offers a different framework where elements of realism and of the fantastic may be rearranged. But the implicit danger of an inescapable binary opposition between Western/rational/realism and exotic/irrational/fantastic is not always averted in this reading. Consequently, a newer generation of writers from Latin America, Africa and India disclaim magical realism because of its potential for romanticism and exoticisation; it can be another tool in the ghettoisation of literature outside of the Western mainstream.

Identifying magical realism as a postcolonial mode resonates with the “very provisional hypothesis” put forward by Jameson in his paper on magical realism and film (Jameson 1986, p. 311). He positions magical realism at the interstices: he refers particularly to magical realism as the site where different modes of production coalesce and considers that it relies on a type of “historical raw material in which disjunction is structurally present” (1986, p. 311). In his paper on Carpentier and Derek Walcott, David Mikics elaborates on Jameson’s definition by suggesting that magical realism “relies on

¹¹ There are texts that are sometimes considered magical realist, for example the work of Angela Carter, which do not conform to either of these claims to magical realism, as the term is not fully agreed. My discussion of the claims to magical realism highlights the usual deployments of the term rather than focusing on the debates around definition.

¹² There is also a backlash to this association of magical realism and Latin America. Most coherently, McOndo is a recent literary trend, clearly derived from Marquez’s *Macondo*, which deliberately moves away from magical realism towards a more urban, grittier representation. It began with the publication of an anthology of short stories, entitled *McOndo* in 1996.

disjunctions among differing cultures and social formations which coexist in the same space and time” (Mikics 1995, p. 373). This resonates with an understanding of magical realism that includes popular storytelling techniques associated with pre-colonial or traditional societies and the postcolonial condition; an understanding which merges different ways of looking at and representing the world, the re-incorporation of poesis, as pre-colonial artistic form, with Western traditions of mimesis.¹³ The shift from early magic realism to contemporary magical realism also reflects a shift from modernism to postmodernism.

The claim for magical realism as an interstitial mode coincides with many of the features that are ascribed to it: magical realism is liminal, hybrid, in-between; it is open-ended, dialogical and polyvocal.¹⁴ Magical realism is implicitly political: it is a latently subversive form which opens up new ways of looking as magical realist texts respond to the varying social and historical contexts in which they are produced. Magical realism engages a particular relationship with history: while surrealism is made strange by the murky waters of the unconscious, magical realism engages with the marvellous through a “shared fictionalisation of history” (Cooper 1998, p. 36). David Mikics observes that magical realism serves as a mode in which the uncanny reveals itself as a “historical and cultural phenomenon” (1995, p. 373). He identifies the ability of magical realism to “transfigure a historical account via phantasmagorical narrative excess” (p. 372) which coincides with Zamora and Faris’s description of magical realism as history through “clairvoyance”(Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 6). This is an understanding of history that disregards time as linear and a coherent spatial integrity, favouring an integration of the past into the present and redefining causality. The inherent contradiction in the term, linking the real and the magical, communicates an ability to slip between different modes; it can illuminate the subjective through the objective.

Magical realism, as it eludes easy categorisation, retains Jameson’s often quoted “strange seductiveness” (1986, p. 302) and remains a persuasive and compelling means of classifying a particular mode of representation. Like surrealism, it rejects the idea of a

¹³ See Chanady ‘The Territorialization of the Imaginary’ (1995) for an account of this.

¹⁴ See Zamora and Faris, ‘Introduction’(1995), Brenda Cooper, (1998) and Faris (2004) for discussions regarding the open-ended textuality of magical realism.

fixed objective reality in favour of representation that speaks to the subjectivity of experience, but magical realism locates this more specifically within a social context. Magical realism, as a mode of representation, is thought to compensate for the inability of realism to depict particular realities effectively. Simpkins considers the argument that magical realism is seen to “improve” on realism as it comes closer to capturing lived reality which in itself is appropriately disproportionate (Simpkins 1988, p. 140). In this way magical realism moves closer towards a nuanced, more accurate, depiction of the world.

From its early use in Weimar Germany, magical realism has evolved to the contemporary application which communicates a predominantly literary mode that is positioned interstitially. Magical realism vacillates between the magical and the real, the objective and the subjective, the post- and pre-colonial and different modes of production. Moving between the literary and the visual, many aspects of magical realism converge in the application of the term to film.

Magical realism in film

Magical realism in film has been narrowly defined as the translation of Latin American magical realist literature by Bordwell and Thompson (1994) and associated with third cinema by James Donald (1989). Donald draws on Jameson to identify magical realism as a “third force” (1989, p. 228) and locates this alongside the emergence of third cinema which attempts to work outside of restricting dualisms in debates around cinema. Third cinema is almost as slippery a term as magical realism, and the problems are charted across similar territory: initially third cinema referred specifically to a Latin American militant cinema following the manifesto by Fernando Solanas and Otavio Getino in 1969, but has come to refer to a broader set of films.¹⁵ While there is an idea that third cinema, like surrealism, refers to the specific historical moment, it can be understood in terms of a

¹⁵ See Michael T. Martin's (1997) edited volume of manifestoes and writings on Latin American cinema.

broader application.¹⁶ Like magical realism, third cinema, inhabits an in-between place, pointing to a clear affinity between the two.

Following Donald and Jameson, it appears that at least in the eighties, the idea of magical realism in film extended the altered perspective within its texts to critical approaches to cinema: it seemed to offer a different perspective on realism/anti-realism, mainstream/ avant-garde modernism/postmodernism debates. Donald interprets Jameson's reading on magical realism and film as an "emerging cinematic mode that allows at least some purchase on History" (1989, p. 228). There seems to be quite an optimistic view of the role of magical realism in film particularly since Jameson considers it as alternative narrative logic to postmodernism. But twenty years after Jameson's article, after magical realism appears to have passed its peak, it would seem that magical realism as a mode of representation has not turned out as anticipated, leaving critics to speculate on its future.¹⁷

Other applications of magical realism to film tend to be fairly broad. For example, there is an understanding that is most often encountered in the entertainment pages in the form of movie reviews, where the term – compelling in its ambiguity and exotic associations – has been used regularly enough but without too much sophistication. While Bower rightly states that it is more than "simply a fashionable device" (2004, p. 128), magical realism was very much in vogue in the mid-nineties to the early two thousands, perhaps attaining its peak in Oprah's declaration of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as book of the century. This peak in popularity coincided with a scepticism in its critical reception. The popular use of the term usually indicates an outline roughly sketched – magical realism reduced to its basic element as it crudely emphasises the most appealing aspects of the mode. Often, but not exclusively, it is applied to films that engage the senses (most frequently taste) like *Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström 2000), *Simply Irresistible* (Mark Tarlov 1999), *Woman on Top* (Fina Torres

¹⁶ Stam and Shohat compile a useful list of "overlapping circles of denotation" for third cinema beyond Latin America in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (Stam and Shohat 1994, p. 28)

¹⁷ Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) dedicates a chapter to this; Chris Warnes's doctoral thesis considers newspaper articles in *The Guardian*, *Newsweek* and *The Observer* bearing headlines like "Is magical realism dead?" On the other hand, Wendy Faris (2004) asserts that it has become a very important mode and reads it as "perhaps the most important contemporary trend in international fiction" (p. 1).

2000) as they offer sentimental, sexualised and exoticised accounts of the ordinary being infused with the extraordinary; they also tend to be romantic comedies and are often dismissed as “chick-flicks”.

The appropriation of magical realism by popular forms of literature and especially film have resulted in what could be perceived as a similar kind of nostalgia that Jameson contrasts magical realism against in his 1986 paper. These films lack the historical significance and perspective that is so definitive of magical realism. For the most part, they do not seem to indicate a subversive magical realism that coaxes viewers away from received ideas through its ability to offer a fresh way of seeing. But there are other elements, cross-culturalism and a potentially subversive treatment of gender and ethnic identities which make it hard to simply dismiss these films.

But there is the danger that the subversive potential of magical realism is absorbed into mainstream narratives and made benign. This incorporation too often reduces it to a binary opposition of magical and real interacting with each other in an attempt to tap into the saleability of the concept. The term magical realism here becomes a selling point – cinema is a commercial industry first – and the materiality of culture is made apparent through the transformation of magical realism itself from a subversive to a fashionable mode, subsequently viewed with a slightly suspicious edge in the early 21st century, as if just past its sell-by date.¹⁸ Similarly, many novels – saleability is also a key criterion for publishing in the book industry – have also appropriated a magical realism-by-numbers style with greater and lesser success at the height of the trend. This could be seen as the failure of magical realism as it succumbs to the softer, more exotic elements that are couched in the form; where the transformation of the object world is simply illusory rather than indicating Jameson’s “metamorphosis of perception” which defined the mode from its earliest inception. This is another way in which the term becomes more elastic: if we view the use of the term as a spectrum, it is not always possible to draw a neat line between real magical realism and the appropriation of it. And, even as it is misappropriated, the idea of magical realism has been extended in a way that is entirely consistent with its history; magical realism, from the start, has metamorphosed as it

¹⁸ Amazon.com has “magic realism” as a genre for DVD sales.

developed. Because magical realism incorporates popular narrative traditions such as folktales and myth into itself, considering the Hollywood version of the concept allows us to consider magical realism as a popular form rather than as an obscure mode that no-one really gets right. These popular films have the most currency as magical realist films as these are the films that are most popularly identified by the term.

A more satisfying idea of magical realism in film depends on the extent to which we can identify particular narrative strategies that affect a magical realist form and aesthetic. It is relatively easy to identify magical realism in literature as there are apparent textual devices and techniques that can be unquestionably identified as magical realist. But how do these techniques translate to film? I argue that magical realism is necessarily formal – the passing off of the extraordinary as ordinary works because of the way that the story is told, as Marquez's grandmother reminds us. Film representations, rather than paintings or literature, are always loaded with an extra dose of realism; cinema has taken on the burden of realism and it is able to pass off the most fantastic elements as real. But at the same time, film is also implicitly magical and therefore could plausibly pass off the mundane as magical.

It is possible to recognise at least three different ways in which magical realism influences film. First, and quite safely, there is the adaptation of the magical realist literature to screen for example, *Eréndira* (Ruy Guerra 1983), *The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier* (Ruy Guerra 1988), *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Fernando Birri 1988), *Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau 1992), *No-one Writes to the Colonel* (Arturo Ripstein 1999). Second, rather more adventurously, I identify a body of films which appear to be forging a screen equivalent of the textual strategies of magical realism like *Wings of Desire* (Wim Wenders 1987), *Time of the Gypsies* (Emir Kusturica 1988), *Black Cat, White Cat* (Emir Kusturica 1998), *Gabbeh* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf 1996) and *The Butcher Boy* (Neil Jordan 1997). And finally, I work through the popular understanding of the term magical realism which is most visible in films depicting the ordinary alongside the extraordinary in a way that is at least superficially consistent with magical realism in literature, for example, *Woman on Top, Mistress of Spices* (Paul Mayeda Berges 2005), *Simply Irresistible, Chocolat, The Butcher's Wife* (Terry Hughes 1991).

The following discussion attempts to reconcile trends in early magical realism in painting with the later magical realism associated with literature and explore these in relation to film. In order to identify technical strategies in magical realism, I refer to Wendy Faris's article 'Scheherazade's Children' published in Zamora and Faris's 1995 volume on magical realism, which lists the distinguishing elements in the magical realist text. These provide a summary of the generally agreed features of magical realism and, in combination with Jameson's ideas of how magical realism communicates in film, they serve as a useful measure for discussing the ways in which magical realism has influenced recent cinema. I discuss formal techniques of magical realist films in relation to the three categories that I identified above and refer specifically to *Eréndira*, *Black Cat*, *White Cat*, *Gabbeh*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Woman on Top* and *Chocolat*.

Magical realism and adaptation

Marquez's interest in cinema permeates his writing. He speaks of his perception of narrative space in terms of film grammar: he sees his fictional world through the lens of film.¹⁹ His earliest ambition was to write for the screen – he went to film school in Rome along with several key film figures in Latin American cinema history²⁰ – and his successes and frustrations with the medium informed his writing of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* which he called the “opposite of cinema” (Moylon 1989, p. 117). Cinematic magical realism engages particular textual strategies – some of them derived from its literary counterpart, some from the visual arts and others generated through the mechanics of film form – in order to map out its convergence of the magical and the real.

In the 1980s, there was a conscious attempt to explore the links between magical realist Latin American literature and film (Bordwell 1994). One of the results of this was a six-part series called 'Difficult Loves' where different Marquez stories were adapted

¹⁹ See Mendoza, *Fragrance of Guava* (1983) for Marquez's discussion of the influence of film on his writing.

²⁰ B. Ruby Rich (1997) locates this between 1952-55. The fellow students included Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, Julio Garcia Espinosa and Fernando Birri, who later directed *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*. All three made significant contributions to the development of Latin American Cinema.

into feature-length films by Spanish and Latin American film directors.²¹ But magical realist literature does not automatically adapt to a magical realist film, as some of these films, and the bleak 1999 adaptation of *No-one Writes to the Colonel* directed by Arturo Ripstein, will attest. It is necessary to consider what gets altered or lost in translation; what changes in the conversion from written to cinematic language. Even if we accept that magical realism is primarily a literary mode which may be translated into film, there should be filmic equivalents of its complex textual strategies. There is a difference between harnessing the formal aspects of narrative and a more cosmetic approach that presents magical content but does not embed magical realism into the structure. Magical realist film, as adaptation of the magical realist novel, needs to consider the weight of form in creating the effects of magical realism.

Eréndira (1983) was directed by Ruy Guerra, one of the figures in the Cinema Novo movement in Brazil in the late fifties to early seventies.²² It follows the outline of the novella quite closely: Eréndira lives with her grandmother and is treated like an unpaid servant. A wind of misfortune blows, a candle is knocked over and burns down the house. The grandmother calculates the cost – an astronomical amount – and holds Eréndira responsible. Since Eréndira has no means to pay the bill, her grandmother prostitutes her and Eréndira's reluctant fame spreads throughout the desert. Eventually, Ulisses falls in love with Eréndira and after their attempt to escape fails, they kill the grandmother and Eréndira disappears. The novella begins with Eréndira bathing her grandmother:

Eréndira was bathing her grandmother when the wind of her misfortune began to blow. The enormous mansion of moonlike concrete lost in the solitude of the desert trembled down to its foundations with the first attack. But Eréndira and her grandmother were used to the risks of the wild nature there, and in the bathroom decorated with a series of peacocks and childish mosaics of Roman baths they scarcely paid any attention to the caliber of the wind (Marquez 1996, p. 244).

²¹ These include *I'm the One You're Looking For* (Jaime Chávarri 1988), *The Summer of Miss Forbes* (Jaime Humberto Hermosillo 1988), *The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier* (1988), *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (1988), *Miracle in Rome* (Lisandro Duque Naranjo 1988), and *Letters from the Park* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea 1989). Not all of these can be identified as magical realist.

²² See Stam and Johnson (c1995) for a discussion of Cinema Novo and for writing by Ruy Guerra.

Marquez's characteristic magical realism is immediately evident: the wind of misfortune is casually inserted in what could plausibly be considered everyday activity (Eréndira bathing her grandmother) but reading on alerts one to the nature of the relationship of the two women. The details of place – the enormous concrete mansion in the middle of the desert – are slightly unusual and this is mostly because of the combined effect of the desert, the trembling house and the texture of moonstone. Eréndira and her grandmother's indifference to the wind suggests that it is normal; that the "risks of wild nature", "winds of misfortune" are usual occurrences – they were just unlucky in not noticing its caliber that night. The disparity between the reader, for whom these kinds of events probably do not usually occur, and the characters' casual indifference is one of the pleasures of the magical realist text. The magical realist effect is constituted by the details of the scene which by themselves are only slightly strange, but when put together, simultaneously contrast with and complement each other. The attention to detail reminds the reader that magical realism is a variation of realism, as the presentation of the details in a matter of fact way insists that they be accepted as ordinary.

The film opens with an image of two graves, belonging to the two Adamises, Eréndira's father and grandfather and the camera zooms out at a fairly fast pace. This makes the camera movement noticeable and therefore implies a presence, or communicates a point-of-view, particularly because the wind initially sounds as if someone was breathing. Already, the film has located itself in the otherworldly; images of graves, the sense of an unidentified presence, the sound of the wind together strongly insinuate the supernatural and this contrasts with the casualness of the novella's opening. A voiceover paraphrases the first line of the novella, saying "the grandmother was bathing when the wind of misfortune rose". Since the next image is of the grandmother in the bath, it is a strange choice of voiceover – the wind is audible and the next few scenes are marked by its relentless rattling; the grandmother is visibly in the bath, misfortune clearly strikes in the first act of the film, so it does not seem entirely necessary to have a narrative voice communicate what can be realised through film language. This highlights one of the key difficulties of adaptation: the relationship between the visual and the verbal. In the next scene where Eréndira bathes the grandmother, they speak the same dialogue as in the novella:

"Last night I dreamt I was expecting a letter," the grandmother said.

Eréndira, who never spoke except when it was unavoidable, asked:

"What day was it in the dream?"

"Thursday."

"Then it was a letter with bad news," Eréndira said, "but it will never arrive."

(1996, p. 244).

That Eréndira only speaks when it is unavoidable adds to the magical realism of the novella but cannot be communicated by the screen. Instead, it appears to attempt to communicate a sense of reluctance through other means. The first shot of the grandmother is of her skin beneath bath foam which dissolves from the desert graves. The viewer is not shown her face, nor are they allowed immediate access to Eréndira who keeps her face averted and moves away from the camera. The grandmother's face is only seen in the next scene and, initially, it is her reflection in the mirror. Ruy Guerra's choice of grandmother departs from Marquez's grandmother:

The grandmother, naked and huge in the marble tub, looked like a handsome white whale ...The grandmother was so fat that she could only walk by leaning on her granddaughter's shoulder or on a staff that looked like a bishop's crosier, but even during her most difficult efforts the power of an antiquated grandeur was evident (pp. 244-245).

Guerra's grandmother is lean and angular, but working with the opposite of Marquez's description, Guerra creates a similar effect. The representation of the grandmother in her casual excess is one of the ways in which the film begins to satisfy a similar pleasure that the reader of the magical realist text receives. But Eréndira in the novella falls asleep on her feet:

She closed her eyes, opened them again with an unfatigued expression, and began pouring the soup into the tureen. She was working as she slept (p. 245).

Guerra chooses to depict this with a hypnotic zoom into Eréndira's unblinking face followed by a shot, perhaps overstated, of tinkling chandeliers. Guerra's deliberate attempts to emulate the description of the magical in the novella are the least successful instances of magical realism in the film. Instead, when he adapts the principle of magical realism – the co-existence of the magic and the real communicated as if it were ordinary

– rather than the specific details of Marquez’s novella, magical realism begins to emerge in the film. This is evident for example when a painted butterfly flies off the wall, but even more so in the final image of Eréndira as she runs away. Here Guerra uses motion effects which have her disappearing without a trace, but for her footprints. Literary magical realism does not automatically transfer to screen, and some of the literary techniques of magical realism do not easily find screen equivalents. But many do, and I will examine these in relation to films that have been considered as magical realist but are not adaptations.

Magical realism and screen techniques

Certain screen techniques resonate with literary techniques, as Eisenstein recognised in his paper on Griffith (Eisenstein 2004b). There is a body of films that are not adaptations yet exhibit narrative elements that can be considered magical realist. This discussion of feature films that reveal magical realist characteristics draws from Faris’s summary of literary magical realism (Faris 1995) and I consider them with regard to *Gabbeh* (1996), an Iranian film, and Yugoslavian director Kusturica’s *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998). Both of these films have currency as magical realist films and have been identified as such by film reviews, if only in the casual sense of the term.²³

Gabbeh, directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, is about a carpet which bears the history of a couple. It begins with the couple who wash their carpet at a stream and a young woman appears – she seems to have come from the carpet – and tells the couple her story. *Gabbeh* (which refers to both the carpet and the woman) tells them about how she was courted by a distant man on a white horse who followed her nomadic family and called to her in a wolf voice. *Gabbeh* is given permission to marry him, but this is endlessly deferred by various impediments: she has to wait for her uncle to return, she has to wait for him to get married, she has to wait for her mother to give birth, then her little sister dies. Eventually she runs away with her beloved and her father pretends to shoot them. The past and the present interact throughout the film and the viewer realises

²³ See, for example, Andrew O’ Hehir’s review of *Black Cat, White Cat* (O’Hehir 1999).

that the love story is the story of the couple who are now old and querulous. The two strands therefore comment on each other and the end of the film reconciles the young Gabbeh with the older Gabbeh in her husband's eyes.

The second film I refer to is Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* which details the lives of a gypsy community living alongside the Danube. This film works at different levels and has several story strands woven together. The main strand in *Black Cat, White Cat* tells the story of Matko and his son Zare. Matko makes a deal that goes wrong and then agrees to Zare's marriage to Dadan's (a flamboyant gangster) sister in order to avoid the consequences. But Zare falls in love with Ida and neither he nor Dadan's very short sister are happy about being forced to marry each other. The film is a comedy and does not have an entirely linear narrative. It is punctuated with images such as a pig eating a rusted car, musicians strapped to the branches of a tree, and also includes the stories of Uncle Grga, an old gangster who watches Casablanca repeatedly and his very tall son. At the end, Zare and Ida escape on their dreamed-of yacht.

Faris identifies basic features of magical realism and both *Gabbeh* and *Black Cat, White Cat* exhibit several of these features. The most elemental is as the "irreducible" presence of the magical (Faris 1995, p. 167). Both *Gabbeh* and *Black, Cat White Cat* show evidence of this as, for example, in the former, a carpet turns into a woman, and in the latter two men are raised from the dead. But the magical events also indicate a further feature that Faris identifies: hesitation. The viewer hesitates between believing the magical events and seeking an alternative explanation for them. Another agreed element discussed earlier, is that magical realist texts are grounded in the historical and both of these films depict historical communities living in the margins and in contexts that are effected by ideas around progress. Kusturica comments on this:

I don't think an American from the Midwest would play with magic realism very much except in movies like *Superman*. That *could* be magic realism, too, in a way, but I don't find anything magic in it; it's just something that's loaded with special effects. True magic realism grows out of places where the political and historical context blends with the reaction of the people - sometimes in strange ways (Kusturica cited in Nelson 1999).

Kusturica recognises the validity of popular claims to magical realism, but at the same time asserts the importance of the historical and political dimensions to the mode. The subversive potential of magical realism is linked to its relationship with context. Magical realism therefore usually communicates a spirit of anti-establishment, and in both *Gabbeh* and *Black Cat, White Cat*, this is revealed through its focus on marginal groups living on the outskirts.

In magical realism, there is a questioning of accepted views of time, space and identity: time is lengthened in *Gabbeh* by the endless wait for the father to agree that the lovers can be married and contracted as the past interacts with the present; the conflation of the woman and the carpet recasts identity and the movement of the nomads offers a reflection on space. Repetition is used as a narrative device and in both films, this is evident by the interruptions to the primary narrative: the return to the image of the pig, the lessons on colour, the figure of the lover in the distance. *Black Cat, White Cat* plays with metamorphosis, another feature on Faris's list, as a bride, through the trick of the camera,²⁴ seems to turn into a goose. A further element in magical realist texts is the close relationship with the carnivalesque and there are clear traces of the carnivalesque in *Black Cat, White Cat*. Matko can be read as a trickster figure and the film displays characteristics of Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque through the inversion of religious and official ritual (the wedding) and through its representation of the exaggerated material body which is most explicitly revealed in the scene of the performer with a special talent for extracting nails from planks and the latrine humour at the end. The carnivalesque reiterates the spirit of anti-establishment (Bakhtin 1968).

There are two further elements of magical realism that I am particularly interested in: the interstitiality of magical realism and the use of "material metaphors". Both of these translate to the filmic in interesting ways. Faris's list of magical realist characteristics reiterates the idea that magical realism is located in border spaces:

²⁴ And Kusturica's obsession with people running around with boxes over their heads. He repeats this image in *Time of the Gypsies* and mirrors it at the end of *Black Cat, White Cat* when the bride, Afrodita, runs away, first beneath a box, then with a tree trunk covering her head.

The magical realist vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions (Faris 1995, p. 172).

This resonates with Jameson's location of magical realism at the intersection of different modes of production, at "the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features" (1986, p. 311). Both Faris and Jameson convey an idea of magical realism as interstitial thereby negotiating the divide between the scientific and pre-scientific, the colonial and pre-colonial, west and other.²⁵ The interaction between the technological and the mythical becomes one of the interstices where magical realism thrives. The technological, when observed through a defamiliarised perspective, can be considered magical. The medium of film, one of those "marvellous machines" that Roh feared would crush painting (1995, p. 25) instead extends and brings out particular elements of the mode. Jameson's contrast between the precapitalist and technological is particularly evident in Kusturica's films which juxtapose a more traditional gypsy culture with a modern Westernised perspective.

The opening of *Black Cat, White Cat* communicates a tension between the two and it is because of this that the viewer experiences a world off-kilter. There are many cues to alert the viewer of a relationship between the technological and the traditional: the father lies on a hammock cooled by a pleated fan which is mechanised by a bicycle wheel; Zare watches the fiddler on the boat through his binoculars while his eggs fry on a makeshift woodstove; he sees a truck/house float by on a boat and exclaims in delight at the design. The debris of an unsustainable modernisation is evident everywhere – the rusty containers, the broken car parts. A newly wrapped washing machine sits on a boat, next to a TV, teddy bear and pair of horns, waiting to be bought and transferred into the little rusty boat. This is also a world where Jameson's divide between nascent capitalist and capitalist is all too evident as Matko buys a washing machine and diesel (which is actually water) from a passing boat. Zare is entranced by a big modern yacht whose passengers in their Western clothes contrast with the more ragged world of the gypsies.

²⁵ While this is a useful way of considering magical realism, there are potential dangers here, as discussed earlier. Christopher Warnes lists these as the saleability of the exotic, the alignment of realism with the developed part and the fantastic with the underdeveloped. He also points out the dangers of perceiving magical realism in terms of modernity's nostalgia for the lost traditional (2003).

The modern yacht that floats by every now and then serves as a reminder of the extent to which these characters are excluded from that world; it is Zare's dream that he leaves the gypsy community and join the outside world which is signified by the yacht.

A further feature of magical realism is what Wendy Faris identifies as "material metaphors" (1995, p. 167) in magical realist texts. These are the images or objects which become overlaid with significance by the way that they are used in the text.

The film metaphor is a visual image. This means that the figure as a whole is recognizable perceptually – recognizable by looking – and that the elements that the spectator uses in her metaphorical interpretations must be recognizable perceptually as well. But, obviously, in order to grasp a film metaphor, the spectator must not only be able to recognize the relevant elements; her attention must also be drawn to them. The relevant elements must stand out; they must be visually salient; they must be prominent. Of course, we cannot theoretically predict all the ways in which filmmakers may secure salience. But we can argue theoretically that in order for a film metaphor to be identified by a spectator, all things being equal, the film metaphor and its pertinent elements must be salient (Carroll 1996b, p. 814).²⁶

Metaphors in magical realist texts function in a heightened way; they walk into the *mise en scène* in the way of Beloved and Gabbeh, the title characters, and thus sustain a hyperreality in their presentation. These images or objects hold much of the core ideas and concerns in a kernel; they sum up bigger narrative elements in one unified whole. In *Black Cat, White Cat*, the two cats wander in and out of the *mise en scène* without apparent purpose. They function in a metaphorical way, underscoring the tensions that emerge in various ways in the film: the tension between Dadan and Matko; Matko and Zare; Grge and Zarje and also the various love stories that weave in and out of the film. The black cat and white cat figure for these relationships and this is evident as they go through the roof where the two dead men are hidden and as they witness Zare and Ida's

²⁶ Trevor Whittock's *Film and the Metaphor* (1990) discusses how metaphors as literary devices can translate to screen. Noël Carroll in his article on the film metaphor further considers this. Carroll's discussion of the film metaphor concentrates on a specific variety of film metaphors which he considers in terms of composite images.

union.²⁷ Kusturica's metaphors are simultaneously central to the films and remain on the margins, not unlike the two cats who remain aloof but function as the core image of the film. Metaphors in magical realist texts gain the added significance by the way they are inserted into the texts. Wendy Faris identifies the function of these material metaphors in magical realist texts as repeatedly calling "attention to themselves as metaphors, thus remaining partially unassimilated within the texture of the narrative" (1995, p. 168). The presence of metaphor in magical realism results an overburdened narrative which spills out. Magical realist metaphors emerge from an excess of meaning, when realism is too polite to do likewise. They are never fully absorbed into the story so undigested metaphors bulge out of the narratives. Images can remain unassimilated because of a seemingly arbitrary or disconnected relationship to the main story. For example, in *Black Cat, White Cat*, the main narrative is occasionally interrupted by images of a pig eating a rusted car (see figure 6). These function almost as a parallel narrative, but also serve to comment on the primary narrative strands as the pig silently eats its way through the car. The pre-industrial pig scavenging on the corroded car reflects the lives of the gypsies who eke out an existence on the margins of the technological mainstream.

Metaphor in these films therefore occurs both through interruption, as well as the establishment of visual motifs, patterned to create a web of significance, that communicates beyond the images themselves. Kusturica's pig resonates with another image of a pig in the film. Matko, arriving at Grge's house to request a loan is watched through a camera in a makeshift security system. There is an unmotivated shot of one of Grge's men riding wildly on a pig. This is a small interruption, but resonates with the additional porcine interruptions in the film. These intrusions from metaphor necessarily alter the way in which the film is viewed; they require the viewer to reflect on the main story strands in relation to these images which are simultaneously detached and at the core of the films.

In *Gabbeh*, the carpet as metaphor is emphasised in various ways. The film reflects on how the carpets are woven and how colour is integrated into them. The couple's carpet reveals itself to be a magic carpet not because it flies or behaves in any

²⁷ Similarly, Perhan's flying turkey in *Time of the Gypsies* also offers commentary on the main narrative while functioning as a part real, part magical object.

way like a conventional storybook magic carpet, but because it delivers metaphorical meaning which is communicated through film devices – in the way the carpet is presented. For example, the Gabbeh woman and the carpet are established as interchangeable: she suddenly appears on the carpet to an older version of herself and serves to trigger memories of the past. The first image in the film is the carpet with its picture of a bride and her groom on horseback; the carpet is ever-present, weighted with a significance through the patterns in which it recurs; the carpet also presents itself as a patterned object, as its history is traced through the way it is woven. It therefore functions as an object of collective history – this is how events are recorded in this community – but also of personal history as it tells the love story of the old couple. Both films refer to their core images, the carpet and the cats, in their titles; the titles are a way of encapsulating the primary concerns of the films through the presentation of a unified image.

Magical realism goes to Hollywood

The use of folklore and fairytale structure is a recurring theme in magical realist texts and this is related to what Jameson calls the “raw material derived essentially from peasant society”(1986, p. 303) and what Faris refers to as “almost a postmodern pastoralism” (1995, p. 182). Magical realism borrows from stories which could be considered traditional and this is another way in which we can recognise the magical realist text as positioned at the interstices between the traditional and the technological. However, in the context of mainstream films with magical realist influences, the element of the traditional tends to be appropriated, rather than an originating factor of the film.

In *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top*, the interaction between the mythical and the present is one of the ways in which food is represented as magical. *Chocolat* (2000) tells the story of Vianne who arrives with her daughter in a small French town.²⁸ She opens a

²⁸ Director Lasse Hallström “points out that he’s never before attempted to mix drama, high farce and magical realism as he has in that film. Unsurprisingly, he describes the blend in culinary terms. ‘I am very happy with having baked a soufflé, which I think it is,’ he says. ‘It’s a tricky mix, and soufflés

‘chocolaterie’ during Lent thereby incurring the resentment of many of the town folk. But she coaxes people with the magic of her chocolate, makes a few friends and fixes their problems. *Woman on Top* (2000) tells the story of Isabella who leaves an idyllic life on a Brazilian beachfront when she discovers that her husband is cheating on her. She goes to San Francisco and begins again, with her magical cooking, her main talent. She bewitches people with her cooking, meets another man, hosts a TV show and her husband comes looking for her.

In *Woman on Top*, it is the mother goddess, Yemanjá, who is the author of the magic and this is passed to Isabella through her cooking. In *Chocolat*, which appears to be set in a small French village, Vianne’s fey mother from some mythical Latin American tribe bequeaths Vianne a wanderlust and secret recipe for chocolate; she functions as the originator of magic in the film. Both films create an exotic Latin America as the motherland and the birthright of these women is their magical way with food as they are able to invest emotions and desires into the food they prepare which then magically acts upon those who eat it.²⁹ These films clearly draw from the first successful film about lovelorn cooks, mothers and Latin America: *Like Water for Chocolate*.³⁰

Like Water for Chocolate is based on Laura Esquivel’s book of the same name and she wrote the screenplay for the film. It has a more complex narrative than the other two films and tells the story of Tita who cannot marry her beloved Pedro because, as the youngest daughter, she must look after her mother. Pedro marries her sister Rosaura in an attempt to be close to Tita who is the head cook at the house. The love story between Tita and Pedro is plotted over many years and includes numerous narrative turns, for example, Tita’s nervous breakdown, Tita’s engagement to the doctor who nurses her, the death of Pedro’s son and the consummation of their passion.

are tricky, because you need the right ingredients and the right amounts, the right temperature and timing. This film was so sensitive to temperature and timing” (Bing 2001).

²⁹ The focus on the senses suggests that they could potentially be read in terms of Laura Marks’s discussion of haptic visuality (2000) which highlights the sensory perception of film. Marks’s discussion draws primarily on intercultural cinema, but, while these films exhibit elements of cross-culturalism, they also rely heavily on mainstream techniques.

³⁰ John King notes that until *Il Postino*, *Like Water for Chocolate* was the “largest grossing foreign language film of all time in the United States and was shown all over the world to similar acclaim” (King 2000, p. 261).

One of the primary differences between the Latin American film and the other two can be found in the way the core image of food and cooking is applied. In *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top*, the cooking achieves good magic – it works as a narrative device that seeks closure and ensures a happy ending when its narrative in three acts concludes. People fall in love and forge links with each other as soured relationships are healed; the mothers who pass down this magic are good mothers, even if they are sometimes detached. In *Like Water for Chocolate*, the magic in the food is used for love, adultery, and makes people vomit and flatulent; the mother is a bad mother and over involved in her daughters' lives, but she finds counterpoint in the figure of the good Nancha who continues to whisper recipes to Tita after she dies. The narrative structure of *Like Water for Chocolate* does not allow for an easy closure; it has too many plot points so that by the end of the film, the original disequilibrium is no longer relevant.

While these films can be seen as influenced by magical realism as they draw on techniques such as metaphor and attempt to position themselves interstitially, giving a customary nod towards Latin America, it is still open to question whether the metaphors function as transfigured objects, thereby facilitating an altered perspective, like Kusturica's pig. One of the primary differences is the extent to which the metaphors are assimilated into the narrative; in these three films, to varying degrees, food as metaphor is digested by the film. This relates to the other prong of magical realism identified by Jameson and discussed at the beginning of this chapter: the use of narrative. *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top* are Hollywood films and conform to a mainstream narrative style.³¹ The seamless integration of the magical and the real is mirrored by the seamlessness of the narrative structure.

Like Water for Chocolate is a Mexican production but in the end still resembles the nostalgia film, against which Jameson contrasts magical realism (1986). For Jameson, the nostalgia film “seeks to generate images and simulacra of the past” (p. 310);

³¹ There is a danger in seeking magical realist authenticity in the form of a Latin American production as an online review of *Woman on Top* indicates: “Western producers have made the sensible choice of importing a genuine Latin America director [Fina Torres].” Seeking a “genuine” Latin American director suggests that magical realism is bound to geography, an idea which has been problematised, as it carries an implication of an essential relationship between magical realism and Latin America. A more cynical view of the importation of a “genuine Latin American director” is that it is related to product branding.

for Jameson, this is a “pseudopast” which is distinct from films that have a historical perspective. A further key element for Jameson is the particular use of colour which, in magical realist films, is not glossy and serves to separate objects from one another. Bower (2004) points out the golden light which is at odds with the function of colour as described by Roh, and then later by Jameson. The golden glow, like the closed narrative, works to create a screen surface where objects blur into each other rather than one which separates the composition. The second reality, which emerges through a particular representation of objects, recedes. Ultimately, these films present a closed and final image that does not allow for a multiplicity of meanings. While all three films are clearly influenced by the mode, their ability to function as magical realist films is limited.

In comparison, *Gabbeh* works to separate colour and heighten the viewer’s awareness of how colour works. This is most immediately apparent in the compositions that contrasts bright colours, usually the women’s fabrics, against dull landscapes. This has the effect of making the figures of the women stand out from their environment. It also runs an ironic commentary on the exoticism of the film; “exotic” is usually constituted as colourful and *Gabbeh* at times accepts a richness of colour and at other times resists it in favour of a harsher depiction of the landscape which must be traversed. Johnson notes this as he comments that the use of colour in *Gabbeh* reflects “the hardness of the nomads’ experience as much as their exotic settings” (Johnson 1997, p. 35). There are several digressions from the main narrative strands and these are frequently meditations on colour; one scene shows how wool for the carpets is coloured; elsewhere the film is gently but consistently interrupted by inserts of Uncle Abbas pulling colours out of fields. In these interruptions, Uncle Abbas reaches out to flowers, the sun, the sky in order to pull out the colour. These scenes create the illusion of pulling out red and yellow from the fields or sun by editing the images together in a continuous way. This brings to the viewer a consciousness of colour that disallows the totalising glossiness that Jameson discusses; the viewer is too aware of the colours as separate. This, in addition to the collage effect of narrative as it moves between the past, the present and the digressions which create an uncertainty in the story, results in a film that works in a lateral rather than linear way. But ultimately, *Gabbeh* becomes too fragmented to sustain a magical realist reading of the film; there are moments towards the

end of the film particularly where the breakdown in realism is too great to be described as a variation of realism.

Conclusion

While it is not possible to identify a definitive body of magical realist films, there is a clear influence of magical realism on film. Cinematic magical realism translates some of the features of magical realism in the visual arts. The most compelling arguments for magical realism in film are related to the way the mode may be embedded in the formal qualities of the text rather than through the cosmetic appearance of the co-existence of real and magical. The transfiguration of the object world, which is brought about by presenting and then undermining a realistic representation, resonates with ideas regarding the function of metaphor in magical realism. The location of magical realism at interstices suggests that the relationship between magical realism and technology in the film text is embodied by the medium of film itself. Magical realism is suited to a visual medium for its ability to render perspective visually, to realise material metaphors, to experiment with colour and to depict and thus transform a detailed object world.



Figure 6

Chapter Four

The Exquisite Corpse: the Discontinuous Body in Švankmajer's Films

This chapter explores surrealist expression in the work of contemporary Czech animator Jan Švankmajer, by looking particularly at his representation of the body in film. Švankmajer's style of animation allows for a revision of the norms of continuity editing and is a site for the confluence of the marvellous and the quotidian which characterises surrealism. I consider Švankmajer's animation and his representation of the body as subversive; this becomes a means to explore and transgress social norms. I examine Švankmajer's specific idea of childhood in relation to the mechanical and discuss the integration of live-action and animation by examining how he recasts the human through the object. The films accord an equal status to the human and the object, and I consider how the impassive bodies of puppets and dolls signify in relation to the human body. My discussion is structured by four particular techniques for representing the body: the fragmented body, which becomes reconstituted as hybrid; the body in relation to the mechanical; the use of repetition and doubling; and the substitution of puppets and dolls for human bodies, which is related to the merging of live-action and animation. The fourth technique underpins much of my discussion.

My discussion of the fragmented body examines *Darkness, Light, Darkness* (1989) and *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1982) and draws on the early surrealist idea of the exquisite corpse, which highlights fragmentedness through continuity. I also attempt to understand Švankmajer's use of the broken body as an exterior manifestation of internal processes. The dismembered body, like the mechanised body, invokes Freud's 1919 discussion of the uncanny as it induces anxiety and uncertainty; I discuss mechanisation

and the body in relation to *Food* (1992) and *Jabberwocky* (1971). A coherent representation of the body is further disturbed by the blend of live-action and animation, and I discuss this in relation to *Faust* (1994) and *Little Otik* (2000). Similarly, through the repetition and substitution of the body, the viewer is not able to read characters in a linear way and, therefore, Švankmajer revises narrative cues. I examine *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) with this in mind. Finally, I consider the relationship between the body and the mind in his most recent film, *Lunacy* (2006).

Introduction

“Surrealism exists in reality, not beside it,” Jan Švankmajer states in an interview with Geoff Andrew (1988). A contemporary Czech surrealist, Švankmajer conceives of an object world that may be saturated with magic.¹ His signature film technique of mixing different forms of animation and of merging live-action and animation is the process by which he may realise, uncover and access this dual nature of things, and Prague, with its legacy of puppets and magic, is the background for his work. Švankmajer was born in 1934, just one year before Breton’s lecture on objects in Prague, which marked the integration of early French surrealism and surrealist trends in the city at the time.² He works towards an integration of dream and reality, and his representation of the body is one of the key sites where this occurs.

Cinematic realism is concerned with representing the body as a coherent whole and this has been formalised by the conventions of continuity editing. Švankmajer’s destabilisation of the body coincides with his approach to realism: the revision of the material body becomes a means of exploring and elaborating subjective experience; this is how Švankmajer communicates surreality. Like any good surrealist, he does not

¹ While contemporary Czech surrealism is different to early French surrealism, many of the overarching concerns regarding dream, the imaginary and the relationship with reality remain similar. Švankmajer outlines the relationship between the two in his interview with Hames (1995). See also Fijakowski (2005) for a discussion on the contemporary Czech and Slovak surrealist group.

² See ‘The Surrealist Situation of the object’ (Breton 1972c).

particularly value the idea of art except through its ability to liberate (Andrew 1994).³ He has been referred to as an “underground” filmmaker (Hames 1995) because of the politically volatile context of his work, where artistic expression was monitored and repressed.⁴ The subversive element in these films is therefore necessarily subterranean, and social reality may be explored obliquely through the revisioning of the material world.⁵ Švankmajer’s puppet and doll world is established as continuous from one film to the next, and presents a microcosmic puppet world where these transgressions suggest broader subversions. Without making explicit socio-political comment, these films offer, as a form of surrealist expression, a kind of transgression; they are quietly subversive. This emerges through the breaking down of mainstream film norms, such as the seamless editing but also through Švankmajer’s particular representation of the body. He flirts with sexual taboo and redresses the idea of childhood as innocent. He also questions human autonomy through techniques which fragment and mechanise the body. This chapter examines the representation of the body by considering the effects of fragmentation, mechanisation, doubling (or repetition) and substitution.

Švankmajer’s film career, which developed from his work in theatre, spans from 1958 to his most recent film released internationally in 2006, during which he worked closely with his wife, artist Eva Švankmajerová, until her death in October 2005. He has made twenty-seven short films, and five features: *Alice* (1988), *Faust*, (1994), *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996), *Little Otik* (2000), and *Lunacy* (2006).

³ Švankmajer, as other surrealists before him, rejects the idea of surrealism as an aesthetic. Instead, his emphasis is on surreality, rather than on an artistic trend. Early Czech surrealism, headed by Karel Teige, linked itself to French surrealism in the 1930s. See Hames (1995) and Fijałkowski (2005).

⁴ The short film format proved potentially subversive, as using this form allowed Švankmajer to escape complete censorship (Hames 1995).

⁵ Švankmajer says in an online interview with S. F. Said (n.d): “I was never interested in what I would call the foam of politics; but by definition, if they’re true imaginative films, they deal with the world we live in, and the diseases that the world suffers. In that respect, of course my films were political; but they were never intended as a political statement. I was never interested in direct targeting of a particular situation or person, as the dissident writers of the 1970s and 1980s were. I thought, surely even this totalitarian regime is only a boil on the face of civilisation. Surely a civilisation which has in one century produced two such terrible things as Stalinism and Fascism must be deeply sick within. The rot must be in the veins, inside the civilisation, and these things are only boils. If what I was trying to do was only about a specific totalitarian regime, it would be dead, like most of the dissident literature is now completely dead.”

The animated body and discontinuity

Béla Balázs, the famous film theoretician, recalled: “This story was told to me by a friend in Moscow. A cousin had arrived on a visit from a Siberian collective farm – an intelligent girl, with a good education, but who had never seen a motion picture (this was of course many years ago). The Moscow cousins took her to the cinema and, having other plans, left her there by herself. The film was a burlesque. The Siberian cousin came home pale and grim. ‘Well, how did you like the film?’ the cousins asked her. She could scarcely be induced to answer, so overwhelmed was she by the sights she had seen. At last she said: ‘Oh it was horrible, horrible! I can’t understand why they allow such dreadful things to be shown in Moscow!’ ‘Why, what was so horrible, then?’ ‘Human beings were torn to pieces and their heads thrown one way and the bodies the other and hands somewhere else again’ (Lotman 1976, pp. 28-9).

The body in the film frame is effectively the body in pieces, cut up by the shot and joined together by the edit, as the anecdote from Jurij Lotman reminds us.⁶ Editing works to establish the continuity of the body in film in order to maintain the illusion of realism. Continuity editing has developed various etiquettes such as match-on-action, the 30-degree rule, the 180-degree rule and directional rules that ensure that the human body, cut up in shots, is pieced together in a way that maintains coherence and a sense of integrity both on screen and in terms of their reception by the viewer.⁷ Švankmajer does not simply invert the rules of continuity editing in order to piece the body together in a discontinuous way. Instead, his fusion of animation and live-action, his surrealism, his use of puppets and dolls destabilise the representation of the coherent body in frame. Continuity editing is more subtly undermined through the different ways in which he

⁶ Lotman goes on to quote from Béla Balázs in order to discuss Griffith’s big smiling “severed” head, which caused great panic in the theatre, causing spectators to “stomp” and call “show us their feet” (Lotman 1976, pp. 28-9).

⁷ While continuity editing usually works to give an illusion of the whole body, there is a difference in the way that male bodies and female bodies are represented in film: male bodies tend more to be constructed as whole and coherent while female bodies are more inclined to fragmentation. While this study does not address the complex issue of representation of the female body in film, this, in relation to fragmentation, has been extensively studied. See Mulvey (1975), Doane (1991), Williams (1982), De Lauretis (1985). See also Mary Anne Caws’s discussion of the fragmentation of women in surrealist art in *The Surrealist Look* (1997).

explores and disrupts the perception of the body as complete, whole and autonomous. He emphasises montage above continuity editing; O'Pray writes that Švankmajer claims that "his style emanates from montage and not composition" (1995, p. 69), thereby alluding to the camera/editing distinction discussed in Chapter One.

Švankmajer's particular use of animation marks his signature as a filmmaker and there are several signature techniques that can be recognised in his work. His animation works very differently to mainstream techniques, particularly cell animation which is exemplified by Disney, and more recent developments in three-dimensional computer-generated images. Three-dimensional digital animation, and also cell animation which refers to the process of animation in which drawings are layered on transparent sheet, are highly polished, particularly as practised in Disney and Japanese anime. Shera summarises arguments around the totalising effects of cell animation which "engender a sense of wholeness" (Zipes cited in Shera 2001, p. 139). Švankmajer's use of animation is darker. His mix of different styles, materials and media formally communicate the disjuncture of his content. The films may use any combination of dolls, drawings, clay animation, puppets and marionettes and live-action, and the converging of various media in the text is analogous to montage. Švankmajer further embeds disjuncture in his films through these specific techniques of animation. One of Švankmajer's frequently used techniques is stop-motion which joins still shots, rather than sequences, in order to impose a movement upon the images. Stop-motion carries an implicit interruption; even when more frames are used, they bear a trace of the imposed movement through a brief but usually discernible hesitation. This works in conjunction with the editing of the films which primarily connects discontinuous elements. The effect of this is to emphasise their essential disconnectedness.

Kotlarz locates animation in terms of its history in early cinema where it was "closely linked with the celebrations of the illusionary contrivances and power of editing. It foregrounded the means of producing illusion by montage, perspective and juxtaposition" (Curtis 1995, pp. 25-6). There is a close link between the processes of editing and animation, particularly since, as Curtis suggests, animation is usually considered an uninhibited form of expression, while editing in narrative fiction usually cannot completely escape the constraints of continuity editing. This tension between the

infinite possibilities of animation and the restricted linearity of continuity in editing is something that Švankmajer often exploits to his advantage.

Animation becomes an obvious vehicle for surrealist concerns, as it too explores the boundaries of the body and the nature of movement. One of the primary gags of animation is the dismemberment of, or distress to, body parts. Kotlarz discusses how techniques such as “stretch and squash”, which is the extension and compression of the animated body in an exaggerated way, reveal an underlying interest in the details of the movement and reactions of the body (Curtis 1995, p. 27). She also refers to the preoccupation with the body in relation to the appeal of animation to children who are “intensely curious and aware of the mysteries of the body” (1995, p. 30). The affinity between children and animation coincides with Švankmajer’s interest in childhood, which emerges through his depiction of children, and also his use of dolls. Children’s bodies are marked by uncertainty as they are constantly negotiating their boundaries, and this corresponds to a sense of uncertainty, related to the Freudian uncanny, which emerges from Švankmajer’s representation of the body.

The human body is one of many different kinds of bodies in these films. Bodies are manufactured and crafted; they may be marionettes or puppets, dolls, clay, drawings, cuts of meat, wooden tree stumps or any object made to function as if they had bodies and minds. The puppet and doll bodies are particularly impassive and expressionless and Švankmajer redirects any reading of the human body through these more ambiguous, unnatural bodies. They are simultaneously inert, but made to move, and allude to the presence of a puppeteer, or a child playing a game with dolls. Švankmajer, as master puppeteer, establishes a parallel world which his dolls, puppets and animated characters inhabit, much like through the looking glass, and this allows him to undo and test the limits of the ordinary. The dolls/puppets and clay figures stand in for human bodies; they signify the material which becomes corrupted or altered as the interior is made manifest.

The fragmented body

In his study of the disabled body, Davis (1995) asserts that art has bred normalcy into ways of viewing the body even when it is experienced in fragments. Davis argues that disability signifies as disruption in visual and perceptual fields and therefore has been regulated and contained. Similarly, Švankmajer's representation of the body signifies visual interference, particularly through his use of fragmentation and repetition. Drawing on Kaja Silverman, Davis suggests that, in filmic depictions of the body, society insulates itself against "the possibility of mutilation, fragmentation, castration" (1995, p. 134) because of an underlying fear that the body is essentially fragmented:

The disabled body is always the reminder of the whole body about to come apart at the seams. It provides a vision of, a caution about, the body as a construct held together wilfully, always threatening to become its individual parts – cells, organs, limbs, perceptions ...(Davis 1995, p. 132).

Švankmajer's interrogation of physical form unhinges the body and enacts a primal unravelling: as the body comes undone, other kinds of disintegration ensue. The willed integrity of the body reflects a broader concern with totalising; the anxiety of a body threatening to reduce to its parts coincides with more general fears of dissolution.

A related anxiety emerges in the depiction of the dancing meat in *Meat in Love* (1989) and much of Švankmajer's animation of individual body parts. The dancing and marching meat, brains, tongues, eyeballs and host of fragmented organs imply a certain completeness and autonomy of the fragments. This suggests that the body is really a federation, never entirely controlled, as the individual parts usually lie dormant while waiting for an opportunity to rebel or assert their will. The autonomy of the body fragments forces the viewer to reconsider how they perceive the whole human figure; it introduces rupture in the perception of the unified body. The use of animation therefore functions in a transgressive way, as it destabilises the normal expectations of the human body itself as well as its relation to objects. In his 1919 essay, Freud (2001a) discusses how severed body parts give rise to the uncanny as they depict the familiar detached from its usual circumstance; they also raise anxiety about the observer's body parts.

The fragmented or afflicted body is the site where surrealist concerns and animation techniques meet in Švankmajer's films. There is a clear affinity between surrealism and the body as a means of expression. This is evident in the iconic image of

the slit eye where surrealism is expressed as an assault on the body. The fragmented body issues a perceptual challenge not dissimilar to the slit eye; it refigures the relationship between the human body and the object world around it by repeatedly taking the body back to a fragmented state. Fragmentation implies a process of undoing, and this becomes a means of accessing and manifesting interiority. This is apparent in early surrealist works such as Breton's hypnagogic image of a man cut in half by the window which signifies the integration of sleep and waking life.⁸ Similarly, Breton's ideas of "communicating vessels" and "capillary tissue" (1990, p. 139) locate the linking of the exterior and interior in the material body, and suggest blood and a beating heart. A further intersection between surrealist expression and the fragmented body emerges in the surrealist game, the exquisite corpse.

The exquisite corpse refers to a game in which different people draw a figure – or write a sentence – on folded paper, each player contributing one part and unaware of what the others have drawn or written. While the game is named for the first famous sentence produced in the written version,⁹ the term "exquisite corpse" also refers to the object created by the game, which draws on two surrealist techniques, montage and chance. Shera (2001) elaborates on the idea of the exquisite corpse in relation to Švankmajer's work and conceives of it as female, thereby alluding to the underlying sexuality – and misogyny some would argue – that characterises surrealism.¹⁰ For Shera, the exquisite corpse is a concept underpinning surrealist work, extending beyond the surrealist game and functioning as an important "surrealist referent" (2001, p. 129).

The term "exquisite corpse" then suggests the possibilities created through the collective montage of the body: by joining different fragments, something is opened up. The holistic view of the exquisite corpse, all the different quarters seen together, simultaneously indicates the sum of its parts – a hybrid body – as well as each fragment that constitutes it. The rules of the visual game require that on folded paper, the first person then draws a head, the second the torso, the third the legs and the last the feet; the drawings would extend lines in order to allow the different body parts to fit onto each

⁸ See Chapter Two for a discussion of Breton's visitation by a sentence.

⁹ The exquisite corpse will drink new wine.

¹⁰ See Mary Ann Caws *The Surrealist Look* (1997) and Rudolf E. Kuenzli 'Surrealism and Misogyny' (1991) for arguments regarding the relationship between surrealism and women.

other (Caws 1997, p. 228). The exquisite corpse therefore indicates an underlying continuity – each fragment is assembled according to the logic of the body as well as of the folded paper and extended lines. Similarly, the slit eye sequence in *Un Chien Andalou*, discussed in Chapter Two, uses continuity editing in order to communicate the rupture in this sequence; it is through continuity editing that a calf's eye constitutes one of the most iconic screen moments in film history.

Similarly, in *Darkness, Light, Darkness*, an eight-minute clay animation, various body parts use the logic of continuity editing to piece themselves together in a small room. The wallpapered room with its dinky door handles and little window looks like a room in a doll's house; it is a room that reappears in *Alice*, and parts of it are repeated in other films, thereby building the sense of continuity in Švankmajer's world from one film to another. The room is a strange place to build a man, but this is one of the juxtapositions that drives the film. Various body parts knock on the door, then enter the room, seeking to link themselves to other body parts. Through techniques such as match-on-action, the film communicates each body part's sense of agency, but also underscores the search for cohesion that the fragmented body parts enact. It is particularly the use of continuity editing that makes the piece effective: Švankmajer uses continuity in order to communicate the disconnectedness of the various body parts. Because it works so coherently in sequence, the film makes plausible the implausible and establishes a certain kind of logic as it communicates this: the first hand feels its way into the room after opening the door and turning on the light in a neatly edited sequence; the nose sniffs at the door; the hands can see the nose and hear its pig-like squeals because they have ears and eyes. As the body parts continue to piece themselves together, they exhibit a primal knowledge of how the body should fit together: when the head arrives, the hands relinquish the eyes and ears; there is some sense of the hands feeling their way towards a greater purpose. The urge to link the body is too powerful, so even when the parts do not fit (the hands attaching the eyes and ears to themselves) they force a connection, and these moments of coercion are the moments where the logic of the sequence, established through the use of continuity editing, leads the viewer astray. In the absence of the body, the hands attach themselves to the head as feet; when the feet arrive, they attach themselves as arms. The arrival of the genitals causes some fear, and, in an almost

slapstick scene, the male organ is only admitted after being doused with cold water. After it enters, the rest of the body flows in as rivers of clay and the hands fashion a man who is then trapped inside the tiny room at an awkward angle, his head squashed and seemingly choked by the light suspended from the ceiling. Švankmajer coheres disparate elements with an underlying continuity in order to communicate the disruption of the body. This is a recurring technique which he uses in various films including *Dimensions of Dialogue*, *Jabberwocky*, *Et Cetera* (1966), *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* (1990), amongst others. It is the integration of continuity editing and montage to communicate the disrupted body that achieves his particular narrative style.

Dimensions of Dialogue, banned in 1982, uses the broken and reconstituted body as subversive expression.¹¹ The film is divided into three different parts and each of them elaborates on the idea of dialogue and the possibilities or impossibilities of conversation. The presentation of a dialogue or conflict between two characters leading to their mutual destruction is a persistent theme in Švankmajer's films (Dryje 1995).¹² But in *Dimensions of Dialogue*, instead of a verbal conversation, dialogue figures through the body. Each of the three parts of the film is read in conjunction with the others; the tension that emerges in each dialogue is held in relation to the other dialogues. The choice of three distinct dialogues, rather than two, implies an extra third; it denies an easy binary like the conversations themselves. In the first dialogue "men", collaged from food, metal and paper, eat, digest and spew each other out, each time evolving into something softer until a line of clay men spew new clay men. Each man appears to be an improvement on the last as the various materials which make them up each become pulverised and then made into something else. Švankmajer structures the metamorphosis according to a continuous pattern. Through the establishment of the sequences, the viewer anticipates that the figures, reminiscent of Arcimboldo's portraits, will continue to eat, digest and spew as they evolve.¹³ The second dialogue moves from a devouring, romantic love

¹¹ Irene Kotlarz says: "In Eastern-Europe under the repressive Marxist-Leninist regimes when film was heavily censored, animators like Jan Lenica and Jan Švankmajer used allegory and visual metaphor to convey hidden political meanings in their animated films" (Curtis 1995, p. 29).

¹² Dryje (1995) refers to *The Last Trick* (1964), *Punch and Judy* (1966) and *Food* (1992) as further examples. I would add *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) to her list.

¹³ Arcimboldo was a Milanese artist who travelled to the court of Rudolf II and has clearly influenced some of Švankmajer's representations of the body. This is most evident in *Dimensions of Dialogue*

between a clay man and woman to aggressive indifference, which is marked by them swatting away a bit of clay which is reminiscent of a baby. It ends in destruction. The third dialogue follows a similar pattern. Two heads perform simple acts such as sharpening a pencil and tying shoelaces, but they do so with their tongues. After the action is established – the first head sticks out his tongue with the toothbrush, the second squirts the toothpaste – it becomes increasingly frenzied until the toothbrush is shredded by the sharpener, and the two heads dissolve into a puddle of clay with their tongues sticking out. All three sections suggest the impossibility of dialogue as they either end in destruction or endless repetition. The film visualises and embodies dialogue through the broken-down and rebuilt bodies which take the place of language.

Švankmajer's animation therefore fragments and dismembers the body, but also reconstitutes it in order to create a body that reads as chimeric or hybrid. The preoccupation with the body in fragment – and then reconstituted as hybrid – is evident across a wide range of early surrealist works, most noticeably Bellmer's dolls, but also in Dali and Magritte. The hybrid body, like the exquisite corpse which reads as the montaged effect of its composite parts, embodies transgression as it collapses and renegotiates its boundaries. Švankmajer's hybrid bodies also indicate an underlying concern with metamorphosis which places emphasis on the process of becoming. Metamorphosis implies an unstable body and this can be traced in the early surrealist recasting of the body through the figure of the machine.

Childhood and the mechanical

The early surrealist preoccupation with the dismembered body stems from the First World War with its “mutilated and disfigured bodies, wounded psyches and hysterical disorders” which “brought about fundamental shifts in the way the body was conceptualised and identity was constructed” (Adamowicz 2001, p. 20). Adamowicz

(1982) and *Flora* (1989), a twenty-second film where a figure composed of fruit and vegetables rapidly decomposes. The use of collaged figures draws directly from Arcimboldo's style. See O'Pray (1995) for a discussion of Arcimboldo and mannerism in relation to Švankmajer.

identifies the way in which the physical injuries correspond to interior disorder but, more significantly, points to a shift in how the body was conceived. She suggests that this reconceptualisation is linked to the surrealist representation of the broken body which aimed to expose it as a “dysfunctional machine” (Adamowicz 2001, p. 20). Hal Foster observes that the metamorphosis from human to machine was focused on the “figure of the mutilated and/or shocked soldier” (1993, p. 136) and the figure of the industrialised worker.¹⁴ For Foster, the modern machine signifies “not only as an uncanny double but as a demonic master ... which assumes our human vitality because we take on its deathly facticity” (p. 129). The mechanised body cast as both the uncanny double and as the demonic master functions to reduce human capacity and autonomy while underscoring the non-human aspects of humanity. The idea of the demonic master also highlights the role of the machine in art, particularly in film which is itself the recorded imprint of a complicated technological process: all human figures are effectively automated by film. From the shooting to editing to the running of the film through a projector, film is essentially a mechanical process. Švankmajer’s animated bodies also indicate, quite literally, the mechanised body as it becomes caught up in the relentless rhythms and narrative loops found in many of his films.

The early surrealist preoccupation with an increasingly mechanised world therefore concentrated on the representation of the body, and this was exemplified by the figure of the automaton. Early surrealism fixated on the “strange (non)human character of the mannequin, the automaton, the wax figure, the doll – all avatars of the uncanny and all players in the surrealist image repertoire” (Foster 1993, p. 126). Similarly, Švankmajer’s automatons, his puppets and dolls as well as the independently moving dismembered body parts, all suggest the uncanny while working to communicate his particular brand of surrealism.

In Freud’s 1919 description of the uncanny (Freud 2001a), there is a hesitation before an animate being which might not be alive, and an inanimate object which might be animate; Švankmajer’s fusion of live-action and animation exploits this. For example, his black cats in both *Jabberwocky* and *Little Otik* convey a sense that they could be

¹⁴ This interest in the soldier’s body made machine is echoed in hyperreal detail in the work of Otto Dix, who is usually located within Neue Sachlichkeit, or magical realism.

either. The switching between live-action and animation is an established practice in his films, therefore the viewer's hesitation before what might be alive or not is a reasonable response to the films. Furthermore, the figure of the doll or puppet carries an uncertainty about life and death, calls to question the nature of life and induces anxiety. Švankmajer's characters, particularly in the earlier shorts, inhabit worlds where "nothing is alive and everything moves" (Field 1986) as they are brought to resemble life through mechanical processes; they are animated from the outside. The uncertainty of aliveness that underscores the uncanny is therefore heightened by Švankmajer's tendency to merge a variety of materials and styles, particularly through the merging of live-action and animation. But the blurring of this line also accounts for much of the underlying anxiety in many of the films. This relates to the ways in which Freud's ideas regarding hysteria begin to explain the bodily manifestation of internal trauma, which coincides with the surrealist preoccupation with accessing an inner world by recasting the ordinary (Breuer and Freud 2001).

In several of the short films, the use of regular narrative rhythms and the establishment of a pattern through the use of repetition, in addition to aspects of the content, operate as self-referential gesture to film as mechanical process. The content of films like *Jabberwocky*, *Food*, and *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* include the mechanical processes of assembly lines. All of these films involve some kind of destabilisation or destruction to the body as the human or clay figures or dolls become caught in some kind of endless loop, thereby emphasising the effect of mechanisation through repetition. In *Food*, human beings take their place in a long chain in order to feed and transform into vending machines once they have fed – everyone gets a turn at each. Human movement, such as entering a room, is animated through stop-motion; characters therefore do not walk but slide stiffly. By stripping away the human ability to move and replacing it with machine-imposed movement, this sequence recalls the uncanny: it is unclear how these characters are alive. Švankmajer juxtaposes details that suggest an automated nature, such as the use of stop-motion and the coin-operation facility located in the tongue, with details that suggest that they are all too human: the scrabbling for change, the attempt to insert a coin before reading the instructions, the need for reading glasses to see the faded instructions. The moment of becoming a vending machine is a

moment when the human body is taken over by the automaton and this substitution of clay for flesh is a moment of destabilisation; hesitation is embedded into the narrative structure. Replacing the real man with a clay model is made more disconcerting because the vendoid's body operates in ways that violate the constraints and also the integrity of the human body. For example, the food appears from a shaft inside his abdomen; the knife and fork squirt out from the ears; in order to activate the vendoid, the consumer must jab his finger in the man's eye.

In *Jabberwocky*, the staccato animation, the narrative and sound rhythms, are regular and further underpin the mechanical processes that bring the nursery toys to life. The use of clay models, puppets or dolls instead of people results in a much more distanced perspective, thereby increasing the mechanical effect. The music is almost like an incantation, and set to the nursery images, there is something quite lulling, yet potentially sinister, since the images, which are at times quite gory, move in an irresistible pattern and then settle in a disquieting stillness at the end of this short film. The images seem to be propelled by the music and the narrative rhythm as well as an unknown force that compels them to move. *Jabberwocky* is divided into seven distinct sequences which are separate from, yet interact with, each other.

Transcript 4: Narrative sequences in *Jabberwocky*

	Sequence	Description	Time
1	Opening credits	Credits over an image of a hand game, regularly interrupted by shots of a hand slapping the naked bottom of a child. ¹⁵	00:00 – 00:29
2	Jabberwocky	Child recites Carroll's poem over a fast, jagged montage of photographs of exteriors, including a signal tower and a wardrobe running around in a forest. The wardrobe moves to an interior filled with nursery objects, jars filled with bubbling substances. The montage here includes shots which partly animate some of the dolls and objects, for example a doll pushing another in a pram, but also excludes them in some shots resulting in a strobe-like effect. It moves cleanly into the next sequence.	00:30 – 02:01

¹⁵ Švankmajer's opening credits, especially for the features, usually follow the same style: a fast montage of shots interspersed with the titles.

3	The sailor dance	A doll in her pram rides in circles around the same (but emptier) room. A disembodied sailor suit does a dance in the room which suddenly grows branches from which apples blossom then fall to split into maggoty ruin. Ends with a mountainous landscape made from blocks, which turns into a maze board game. A black cat kicks it over. ¹⁶	02:02 – 04:42
4	The dolls' house	Little dolls creep out of the stuffing of a bigger doll and this begins an elaborate assembly line of sorts which ends with dolls eating each other in doll soup. Ends with the blocks, maze board game and cat knocking everything over.	04:43 – 06:58
5	Toy soldiers	The sailor suit oversees a war between toy soldiers. All troops are flattened by a doll. Ends with blocks, maze and the cat.	06:69 – 09:03
6	The switchblade dance.	A figurine on the edge of a jackknife does an enthusiastic Russian dance until the knife closes on him causing a bloody end. Ends with blocks, maze and the cat.	09:02 – 09:35
7	The folded paper	Paper folds itself, photo spits blocks which dance, a puppet swings on a chair. The paper flies outside the room. Ends with the blocks and the maze board.	09:36 – 12:33
8	The black suit	The line traced through the maze extends up the wall and scribbles over the photo of the bearded man. The film ends with the cupboard opening to reveal a grown-up's black suit and the cat in a cage. The sailor suit lies in a heap in the corner of the cupboard.	12:34 – 13:01

Jabberwocky is based on Carroll's poem from *Through the Looking Glass* which uses made-up words formed by a combination of other words. In order to make sense of it, Alice has to read the poem backwards, and there is a correlation between the looking glass world where the characters "live backwards" (Carroll 1996a, p. 181) and the film screen. Humpty Dumpty's explanation of the poem deliberately highlights its nonsensical nature, but it does cue the reader to consider it in terms of word montage when he says, "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy.' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word" (1996, p. 198). Without attempting to make sense of Humpty Dumpty's idiosyncratic logic, his words indicate a clear nudge towards lateral associations, not unlike montage. That *Jabberwocky* should rely on word montage highlights the function of visual montage in the film, both between shots and between sequences. *Jabberwocky* aims to evoke a child's world by creating a

¹⁶ The black cat corresponds with black kitten who is blamed at the beginning of Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1996).

montage of shots and sequences through which the material objects of the child's world, like dolls, sailor suits and games, explore their limits beneath the framed image of adulthood (the bearded man).

Jabberwocky is a film about childhood. Švankmajer is not really interested in children so much as he is in the state of childhood. In this way, children can be read as the objects of childhood, much like the dolls and toys. *Jabberwocky* specifically juxtaposes these signifiers of childhood (nursery, toys, dolls, games) with the mechanical. Childhood can be considered primal and spontaneous, while the mechanical, which in early surrealism was explored through the more jaded figures of the soldier and worker, signifies progress but also planned, automated action. There is something inherently incongruous, but simultaneously fitting, in Švankmajer's juxtaposition of childhood and the mechanical.

The montage of images in this twelve-minute film therefore highlights the space and artefacts of childhood but combines them in ways that depart from the usual associations of childhood. Cardinal, in his chapter on Švankmajer's objects, says that generally, "sentimental pathos of things commonplace or childlike is always qualified by strong doses of the grotesque or the macabre" (Cardinal 1995, p. 86). The effect of this juxtaposition is to communicate Švankmajer's more ambivalent views on childhood. He believes that "[a]dults have a very distorted idea of a child's world; they are crueller, more animalistic, than we like to admit" (Andrew 1988)¹⁷ and the viewer's delight in watching, ground, cooked and cannibalistic dolls taps into the crueller element of the child's world (see figures 7 to 9). This is an understanding of childhood as pre-socialised: there is a sense of social etiquette but this is overridden by more basic urges. Švankmajer, perhaps provocatively, says in an interview that "Carroll is an illustration of the fact that children are better understood by pedophiliacs than by pedagogues" (cited in De Bruyn 2002). He therefore juxtaposes childhood and sexuality which resists a reading of childhood as a state of innocence.

While it may be tempting to read the film as an analogy of childhood and growing up, Švankmajer cautions against a too simplistic understanding of childhood.

¹⁷ He conveys a similar idea in his interview with Peter Král (1985): "The vision of childhood as a paradise lost is certainly a distortion ... No-one knows better than a child how to be cruel."

Jabberwocky cues the viewer to read it as an analogy: the final image of the creaking cupboard door opening to reveal a sedate and well-behaved adult suit compared to the more carefree sailor suit; the cat which is caged at the end; the image of blossoming apples rotting to maggots; the setting of the nursery juxtaposed in every sequence against the framed photograph of the stern-looking, bespectacled, bearded man. But Švankmajer repeatedly cautions against an idealisation of childhood or an easy understanding of it as a state of innocence. He also appears to view it as something which is not entirely separate from an adult state. He calls *Down to the Cellar* (1983) his most autobiographical film (Hall 1997), therefore establishing an identification with its child protagonist. He comments on his ongoing dialogue with childhood in several interviews and describes himself as “infantile”, implying that the word can only be used as an insult in “normal society” (Andrew 1988).¹⁸ The film offers a complex engagement with the material objects and bodies of childhood which are physical manifestations of the mental state that Švankmajer retains in his seventies. The glaring absence of any children in the film attests to this; the spanking of the detached child’s bottom in the opening credits speaks of the ways in which Švankmajer’s conception of childhood is reigned in and controlled. This is particularly communicated through the way that the smacks – brief and bare – burst out of the credit sequence. The sound of the smack corresponds with the sound of clapping in the music and becomes part, both aurally and visually, of the rhythm that carries this piece along. The sequences are all about two minutes long – just under or just over – and similarity in length creates a regular rhythm to the piece. This is further achieved by the way in which all of the centre sequences end with an image constructed by the blocks, the maze board on which a squiggly line works its way in a new direction, and the cat knocking it over. While the overall tone and mood of the music remains the same, there are variations in each sequence. For example, the music becomes a march for the battle of the toy soldiers, and becomes much more like a lulling music box or merry-go-round tune during the dolls’ house sequence.

¹⁸ See, for example, interviews by Jackson (1997), Hall (1997), Hames (2001) and Steinhart (2002) for Švankmajer’s views on children and childhood. See also ‘Animated Anxiety: Jan Švankmajer, Surrealism and the “agit scare”’ (Wells 2002).

The dolls' house sequence, which is at the centre of the film, through the combined effect of music and montage, juxtaposes its rhythmic continuity with the fragmentation and bodily destruction in the content of the sequence. The sequence begins with lots of little dolls breaking through the "skin" of a bigger doll and destroying her. They spring into action as they follow the beat of various domestic processes. It is the domestic objects and activities such as ironing, cooking, the coffee/meat grinder which mechanise the scene and punctuate the rhythm. This is Freud's "unheimlich" in which the domestic is made unfamiliar and strange.¹⁹ The mechanised domesticity distorts and fragments the bodies of the dolls: the grinder grinds, the iron irons and flattens and the cooker cooks, and these create a relentless rhythm in which the dolls are indifferently caught up. This is very similar to the clay men who are decapitated then pulped in *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* when they are caught up in an assembly line process. The result in both cases is fragmentation and, in *Jabberwocky*, the cannibalisation of the dolls. The minced dolls are cooked in pots and baked in the oven. The cannibal dolls who eat the cooked dolls are also caught up in the rhythm of the scene – they are at the end of the production line – but the rhythm then becomes bound up in the social activity of mealtimes as the dolls feed the baby dolls soup with doll arms and legs, all the while following good mealtime etiquette. But the implicit socialisation of the sit-down meal is undermined by the rawer urge indicated by the cannibalism of the impassive stony-faced dolls; this also serves to highlight the meal as a game reminiscent of little girls' tea parties.

Like the spanking hand, the mechanised domestic routines order and contain. But the calm domestic horror also indicates a certain kind of child's play; the continuous rhythm, the dolls' dinner time all also suggest games. They allude to the physical movements of children, particularly through the use of rhythm – although there are no actual children in the film, *Jabberwocky* invokes the state of childhood by recreating its space, using its props and implying its movement. But Švankmajer insists on a revised view of childhood, and this is achieved, in part, through the juxtaposition of childhood and mechanisation.

¹⁹ See Freud's 1919 essay 'The "Uncanny"' (2001, p. 220-226) for a discussion of the "unheimlich" in relation to the different understandings of the "heimlich".

Live-action and animation

Švankmajer has a particular investment in the objects and materials of his work. The processes of film and animation impose movement, in a way that blurs the line between the real and the automated. Švankmajer says of his objects:

I believe that under certain circumstances objects which are charged and contain emotion are able to reveal those emotions ... This is where I see magic in animation. In that sense you can compare an animator to a shaman (Hall 1997).²⁰

It is this approach to objects and animation that has earned Švankmajer his title of “alchemist of the real”. His work has been called “dark alchemy” as he claims that carefully selected objects become altered through the process of film.²¹ In an interview with Peter Kral (1985), Švankmajer observes that “listening to and decoding the latent content of objects works much better than technical wizardry” thereby suggesting an emphasis on surreality above the technical film skills.²² Švankmajer’s elaboration on objects resonates also with the earlier surrealist conceptions of the object and indicates an understanding of the object as altered during the process of filming. This results in a continuum between the animated object, which Švankmajer has “charged”, and the human figure, which usually moves of its own accord, but in Švankmajer’s world, this can be overridden by stop-motion animation thereby forcing human figures to submit to the rhythm and movement of the film.

Švankmajer’s fusion of animation and live-action accords human bodily functions to inanimate objects and the effect is discomfiting. By recasting bodily functions through

²⁰ Švankmajer’s conceptualisation of objects, which is related to the early surrealist ideas around objects, highlights both found objects and charged objects. In other words, he places a high value on all the things that constitute his filmic worlds and has quite specific ideas about how they can become charged with significance. He emphasises the importance of his relationship with his objects in most of his interviews. See Král (1985) Andrew (1988) and Hall (1997) for example.

²¹ The appellation is also linked to the popular association of Prague with magic and alchemy based on the legacy of Rudolf II. This is evident in the title of Hames’s book and is discussed by Švankmajer and Jackson (1997).

²² This has some parallels to the relationship between magic and the object discussed in Chapter Three: one of the hallmarks of magical realism is the transfiguration of the object, which allows a sense of the magical to emerge through the depiction of the commonplace.

animation, he transgresses and collapses the boundaries of the human body. He does this with eating in *Food*, with sex and toilets in *Faust* and with birth in *Little Otik*. In Faust's theatre underworld, the co-existence of humans and puppets or clay figures is unquestioned; it does not shock Faust to walk past a puppet sitting on a toilet, though it does signify disruption to the viewer. This foregrounds the tension between the co-existence of the alive and the animated: by depicting puppets participating in acts which require an interaction between bodies (usually human) Švankmajer is departing from the norms of animation and attempting to simulate life itself.

The sex scene between Helen and Faust towards the end of *Faust* is a particular instance of the merging of the two modes, through the use of puppetry. This scene is disconcerting: the viewer knows that "Helen" is actually a succubus, fashioned by Mephistopheles and that Faust is losing his final chance at redemption; Faust pursues her single-mindedly and gratifies his sexual desires in the vault scattered with coffins and bones, at the expense of his soul. But what is most uncomfortable is that in Švankmajer's game of switching humans for puppets and vice versa, the intercourse happens just after the puppet Faust is changed for the human Faust, so that the intercourse takes place between demon-puppet and man, between different species, as it were. That Helen is a demon is less worrisome; the main discomfort lies in watching a man have sex with a red, wooden puppet, emphasised by the crudely fashioned hole seen earlier, and by the puppet legs rising in a simulacrum of pleasure during the act. The substitution of the puppet for a human, and the incongruity of the sex act between the wooden doll and the man, redefine the boundaries of the human body in film and challenge the norms regarding what is permitted and what is forbidden.

There is a similar transgression in *Little Otik* as the film depicts a mother-baby relationship between a woman and a puppet. The film tells the story of a tree stump brought to life through a couple's longing to have a baby. The consequences are disastrous, in the way that they sometimes are in fairytales, when it turns out that the baby has an enormous appetite and proceeds to eat anything, and anyone, it can. For the first part of the film, Otik is an inanimate tree stump that only Božena Horáková, the mother, perceives as a baby. After forty minutes, the stump comes "alive" in a scene where Karel Horák arrives at the weekend cabin to find Božena, beatific and serene

behind a white gauze screen and wearing a white towel over her blonde hair, suckling the now animated baby tree stump (see figures 10 and 11). This moment is communicated primarily through the use of closer shots:

Transcript 5: Birth of little Otik

	Image	Dialogue/sound	Edit
1	MS Karel closing the door behind him.	"I'm back."	Straight unless otherwise indicated
2	POV zoom, MS of Bozena behind white gauze.	Muted sucking noises; footsteps	
3	MCU Karel behind white gauze coming closer. He opens the door which moves the gauze and stares intently ahead.	Muted baby sounds	
4	Bozena wearing white, one breast exposed but for the tree stump feeding at it. She looks up and smiles.	Baby sounds louder	eyeline
5	CU her breast and Otik feeding.	Baby sounds	
6	ECU Karel's eyes, wide behind spectacles Baby sounds		
7	CU Bozena, zoom to ECU as she raises a finger to her smiling lips.	Baby sounds Sshhh	

Švankmajer asserts this as the pivotal moment of the film: "... [T]he first shot of the 'live' Otesánek [Little Otik] shows him sucking at his 'mother's' (Horáková's) breast. Sometimes I have the impression that the success of the film hangs on this take (when I mention success I mean its content, idea, philosophy, imagination, documentary value and subversion, not commercial success)".²³ This is a key sequence in the film because it allows for a deeper understanding of the function of Švankmajer's animation. The aim here is not simply to impose movement, but to recast the tree stump as alive. This refers to his belief in objects as magically charged. Švankmajer says in an interview: "I can characterize animation shortly as magic ... I'm not just trying to make inanimate objects alive. But I try to make objects alive in the real sense of the word. So there is a certain psychological moment in it" (Hall 1997). While he is clearly not summoning a tree stump to life, he is insisting on a different perception of the process of animation. This

²³ Švankmajer's 'Production Diary (Excerpts)', *Little Otik* DVD, Zeitgeist Video, 2002

first shot of Otik “come alive” occurs between the shot reverse-shot sequence of his parents looking at each other; it is embedded between close-ups of their different body parts: her breast, his eyes, her mouth and finger. Otik is brought to life as the viewer is sutured inside the sequence through the use of shot reverse-shot which highlights certain body parts.

The illusion of life in the tree stump is therefore punctuated by the use of continuity editing, which positions the viewer inside the baby’s “birth”, and also by the allusion to the Madonna with child. It is also significant that Otik is first seen as alive when feeding on his mother. In one way, the animated moving mouth and the corresponding moving (animated) breast is the site of the blurred line between human and animated object. In another, it is a premonition of what is to come as that animated mouth later shows an insatiable hunger and seeks its nourishment in human flesh. For Karel, the solution to the horror of blurred boundary between object and life, is to brandish an axe in an attempt to “cut it into little pieces” and to “chop its little mouth off” and therefore attack its integrity and consequently its aliveness as well as its offending mouth feeding on human life.

The integration between live-action and animation reads as disrapture, either through the hesitation that is entrenched in the narrative structure, or because ultimately animated objects are a constant testimony to the fact that they are not alive. Animations always reveal themselves as such, even the most realistic-looking models remain models: the image of the baby fished out of the tub at the street baby-monger in the beginning of *Little Otik* is betrayed by a disturbing moment of stillness when the baby-monger wraps it in newspaper. But Švankmajer’s specific approach to objects, informed by his identity as a surrealist, negotiates the boundary between human and object. The line between human and object is further blurred through his specific use of substitution and repetition. In many of the films, the body is replaced by something else, or else it metamorphoses into a new form or finds itself displaced through the use of repetition, both in the narrative and through images of the body.

Repetition and substitution

Švankmajer's films, when seen together, communicate a cinematic world that is continuous from one film to another. There are various ways in which the different films overlap with each other and this can occur thematically, technically or, most intriguingly, through the use of particular visual motifs and graphic continuity. The effect of this is self-reflexivity; by repeating his themes and objects, Švankmajer introduces an element of self-awareness, but also encourages the viewer to read the films in relation to each other. This coincides with the idea of surrealism as a mode of living, above an aesthetic (Andrew 1994).

Thematically, Švankmajer has loosely adapted both Edgar Allen Poe and Lewis Carroll in several films and sometimes relies on folk stories, as in the case of *Little Otik*, and *Punch and Judy* (1966). Theme, technique and visual motifs all converge; the thematic links usually find a visual equivalence as the props and sets recur in different films. He also repeats techniques and clay models or puppets. The bodiless clay head (with staring and blinking eyeballs) is repeated in *Dimensions of Dialogue* and *Darkness, Light, Darkness*, and gains a baby's body in *Faust*. The particular use of puppets and dolls makes for a similar texture and mood across different films: in *Alice*, the use of the blonde-haired doll reminds the viewer of his other Lewis Carroll adaptation, *Jabberwocky*. The cupboard, where secrets may be hid, appears in *Conspirators of Pleasure*, *Lunacy* and *Jabberwocky*. The one-minute short film *Meat in Love* appears as an advert on TV in *Little Otik*. Images of meat, of tongues and eyeballs detached from the rest of the body appear in several films, most memorably in *Lunacy*.

This is related to another primary narrative element: food. Food is presented in close, but not entirely appetising, detail in many of the films. Similarly, Švankmajer frequently explores an unerotic sexuality. It is therefore possible to identify narrative techniques that operate across Švankmajer's oeuvre: the replication of the body and of objects; the repetition of narrative elements and devices. Images, props, narrative devices become established as motifs across the films. In *Down to the Cellar*, *Little Otik* and *Alice*, he uses the figure of the little blonde girl as an inscrutable protagonist. In each of these films, a different actor is used which indicates that Švankmajer is more interested in the type (blonde, under ten) than in the individual. Each of the blonde girls must undergo

a journey or quest; in some ways, they are all Alice who journeys through the irrational. In *Down to the Cellar*, the quest is simply to go down to the cellar to collect potatoes but there are potentially perilous characters along the way: the old woman using coal to bake more coal, the shoes, the man offering sweets and the wilful potatoes who work their way out of the basket. *Little Otik* borrows and repeats ideas and images from *Down to the Cellar* as Alžbětka undertakes a journey down to the cellar where she befriends Little Otik and encounters a similar, but more sinister, sexual threat in the figure of the old man who looks up her skirt. The use of repetition, with some variation, therefore becomes an alternative way of creating continuity: rather than simply telling a linear narrative through continuity editing, Švankmajer communicates at multiple levels by interrupting what is conventionally continuous and then constructing an alternative order. In particular, the use of repetition constructs a continuity which signifies through the body. But the use of repetition is also potentially destabilising: rather than functioning as a lateral means of cohesion (opposed to the linearity of continuity editing), repetition may also fragment.

In *Conspirators of Pleasure*, Švankmajer repeats the body in a way that destabilises the continuity of the film. The film explores issues around freedom and rebellion (Felperin 1997) and this is centred on the body and its pleasures. One of the climaxes of the film is a showdown, of sorts, between two neighbours, Mr Pivonka and Mrs Loubalová. The scene involves an effective use of repetition to destabilise the representation of the body as intact and autonomous. The two neighbours each have effigies of the other; Pivonka drives to an isolated spot in the country while Loubalová goes into an abandoned church. Here, spurred on by some kind of lust, they enact rituals which bring the effigies to life until they eventually destroy each other. In Pivonka's ritual, he dons a chicken-head mask which he prepared very carefully in advance.²⁴ The two rituals are developed across a few sequences; some of these are directly contrasted with each other; at other points, they are interjected with a scene depicting the postwoman's (another of the six fetishists in the film) ecstasy as she snorts little rolls of

²⁴ Ritual, which always implies repetition, is another important trope in Švankmajer's work. He uses this in *Faust*, *Conspirators of Pleasure* and *Lunacy*. But they are all destructive rituals (a deal with the devil, killing one's neighbour through some kind of magic, a blasphemous orgy). In both *Lunacy* and *Conspirators of Pleasure*, part of the costumes are made from montages of naked women, thereby underscoring the kind of magic Švankmajer is depicting.

bread. In Loubalová's ritual, using the tools of the dominatrix, she acts upon the effigy of Pivonka and this is followed by Pivonka's ritual in which he attempts to kill the effigy of her. As Pivonka becomes a bird man who flies around the effigy of Loubalová, the battle moves to various locations. Having been in a ruined courtyard, the bird man flies into an abandoned house to which the effigy of Loubalová tied to a chair has suddenly moved. He flaps around her, scares her and flies out the door, bearing a boulder which he tosses at Loubalová, who is now tied to a chair outside. Immediately, he appears inside the upstairs window and tosses down another boulder. Inside, from the upstairs window, he turns to where she still sits in the chair behind him, in the room in the abandoned house. He flies from the window down to a railway line where she is now tied to a chair in the middle of the tracks. He chokes her, a train whistles, and then they are back in the courtyard. The effect here is a disjuncture in space caused by the repetition of the body across various locations and it jars the viewer in a way that is similar to a jump-cut, where the viewer is suddenly dislocated in space, but the difference here is that, instead of disruption through the similarity of space, the disruption is brought about by the unexpected difference in space and through the repetition of the body in these different locations. Krauss discusses doubling in relation to surrealist photography:

For it is doubling that produces the formal rhythm of spacing – the two-step that banishes the unitary condition of the moment, that creates *within* the moment an experience of fission (cited in Caws 1989, p. 116).

For Krauss, doubling results in textual interruption through fissure. This is further indicated by the doubling in *Faust*. When Mephisto appears to Faust, he assumes Faust's face. Mephisto, like Pivonka as the bird man in *Conspirators of Pleasure*, is animated through stop-motion and this effects a contrast between the movements of the characters and their doubles. The doubles do not move of their own accord; they are animated by the process of filming thereby creating the sense that they are phantoms emerging through textual fissures.

This doubling also relates to Švankmajer's use of substitution. My earlier discussion of *Food* and *Faust* touched on how Švankmajer substitutes human bodies for the made bodies of puppets and clay figures. The effect of both substitution and doubling through repetition is a reduced empathy between the viewer and the characters in the

films. Both techniques disrupt the viewer's identification with the characters and immersion in the film world. In *Alice*, Švankmajer substitutes the child Alice with a blonde doll; in *Faust*, as mentioned earlier, he substitutes the actor playing Faust with a marionette. Similarly, in *Conspirators of Pleasure*, effigies stand in for characters, and what happens to the effigies, happens to the characters themselves. Michael O'Pray identifies effigies as the location of "displaced phantasies" (O'Pray 1989, p. 260), and in *Conspirators of Pleasure* this is evident through the way in which Loubalová and Pivonka are barely able to communicate in person: it is only through the effigies of the other that their fantasies are made material; again there is the idea of dialogue occurring through the body but bound up in desire and destruction. The idea of "displaced phantasies" also suggests the way in which Švankmajer redirects the reading of human through the figures of the puppets which indicate the imagination made material. It allows him to explore taboos and transgressions by transposing them on to the imagined bodies which stand in place of the human.

The lack of identification with specific characters results in a de-emphasis on the individual, and this is ambiguous, because although the films appear to focus on particular characters, for example, Faust, Alice, Little Otik, as their titles suggest, this is communicated in a way that does not allow for a singular focus or identification with these characters. Again, the films appear to imply importance to the narrative purpose of characters without realising them as individuals. Various narrative techniques are used to communicate this. For example, the films do not usually offer a sustained identification with any of the characters. The viewer feels no particular empathy for Faust, and the narrative shift between Mother and little girl in *Little Otik* prevents a clear allegiance to either of them. Instead, there is a deliberate attempt to estrange the viewer from the characters through the ways in which their bodies are represented. There is a rejection of the kind of editing that promotes identification through the orchestration of close-ups and point-of-view shots (unless Švankmajer is manipulating the viewer into accepting the implausible, like the tree stump feeding off its mother). But even in these instances, the incongruity of the content makes it difficult to identify with the characters. The stripping of human movement through stop-motion also functions to accord an equal status to the figures in the films: because humans can lose their autonomous movement, they have the

same status as the animated objects in the film; the implicit assumption of human ascendancy is refused.

The redirecting of human experience through the body of the puppet, doll and clay figure further complicates the audience's response to the characters: the dolls with their unmoving faces and the marionettes with their painted eyes resist an empathetic relationship. Not only does the substitution of actors with puppets accentuate the difficulty of identifying with the characters, it conveys the impression that the characters are at the mercy of forces beyond themselves: with puppets, there is usually someone else pulling the strings. And sometimes these strings are revealed in order to counter identification: the revealed puppeteer, like substitution, works to sustain some detachment. Švankmajer's bodies frequently de-emphasise individuality and his characters frequently appear to be at the mercy of a world whose rules are unknown and unstable. It is unclear to what extent they have some kind of agency or whether they are part of a larger design. He reveals the presence of a puppeteer in both *Punch and Judy* (1966) and in *Faust*. In both cases, this occurs through a pair of disembodied hands. The effect of this is calculated disruption that again blurs the line between the live and the animated.

The interruptions to the representation of the bodies coincide with interruptions to space and narrative. Michael O'Pray observes:

Through the camera Švankmajer creates cinematic space and time, juxtaposing this with – and at the same time undermining – theatrical space and time. The camerawork and editing are striking and decidedly *visible* (O'Pray 1995, p. 70, his emphasis).

Švankmajer's editing disregards seamlessness either through the use of a "fragmentary, disjointed" montage style which is influenced by Eisenstein (O'Pray 1995, p. 69) or else by highlighting the continuous edit through linking the incongruous. His use of continuity editing often works to cohere fragmented or discontinuous elements; he brings them together in a fluid way which then highlights their disruption and this works with regards to the various facets of editing – time, space and the body. For example, in many of his films, including *Faust* and *Alice*, he seamlessly links disconnected spaces and creates the impression of continuity: ballet dancers on a stage can dance out into a farm field; a

restaurant opens from the back of the theatre toilet, the angel and demon puppet heads roll from an outside area into the enclosed space in the theatre. At the heart of this is the labyrinthine space of the theatre and the spatial discontinuity echoes the discontinuous narrative. Švankmajer's narratives frequently leave gaps or follow an alternative kind of logic. Causality is skewed and the viewer is not in control of their understanding of consequence in the film. Causality is usually clarified through the way in which a film is edited together and, in Švankmajer's world, this is not always reliable. Either the viewer does not have access to all of the explanations or else the films use the logic of continuity editing to assert the impossible; some explanations defy ordinary causality as they appear to follow dream logic.

Body and mind: *Lunacy*

Švankmajer's two most recent films, *Little Otik* and *Lunacy* are the most conventional in terms of narrative structure and draw on mainstream techniques while simultaneously undermining these. In these two films, the use of live-action and animation are more separate than in earlier films: in *Little Otik*, the use of animation, while integrated into the story, is primarily centred around Otik and his feeding habits. There are some exceptions: the meat love dance on TV, the paedophile's beckoning hand/penis, the two-dimensional animated story within a story and the baby-monger on the side of the road. In *Lunacy*, it is possible to disentangle the strands as they are kept deceptively separate; the live-action main story is punctuated by interludes of marching meat moving forward to some unknown purpose, and the animation within the main story emerges only when Jean's nightmares come to life. This is a sparing use of animation: just a shirt sliding off a chair to open the doors to the men in white coats, or the rattling wardrobe. There is a sense of the animated world encroaching on the real rather than the more indiscriminate merging found in earlier films. *Little Otik* and *Lunacy* are also the most dialogue-driven of these films.

The revision of the material body is really a means of exploring and elaborating on the places where the dream and real worlds intersect, as the image of the body represents the confluence of the physical and the psychic worlds. In *Lunacy*, Švankmajer

explores the relationship between the body and the mind. This feature-length film follows the story of Jean who is vexed by his fear of bald men in white coats coming for him. The Marquis takes Jean under his wing, and they go to the Marquis's home. Jean becomes increasingly uncomfortable after witnessing a blasphemous ritual and orgy, and is forced to participate in the Marquis's faked death and burial in a tomb. The Marquis takes Jean to a nearby asylum and tries to persuade him to have himself cured of his nightmares – the logic is that he will confront and conquer his fear of men in white coats at the asylum. Jean agrees to stay but only because the nurse, who had been chained to the bed during the orgy, begs him for help. The inmates have free run of the asylum, and the nurse, Charlotte, persuades him that the reason for this is that the inmates are actually running the asylum, having locked the real staff, covered in tar and chicken feathers, in the cellar. Although not confined to the cellar, Charlotte is made to participate in the orgies and her objections are contradicted by her apparent enthusiasm and it is never clarified how unwilling she is. Charlotte betrays Jean after he finds the key and releases the staff: once the real director is restored to his position, and Charlotte to the director's bed, Jean finds that the director might not be any saner than the Marquis.

The film has a prologue in which Švankmajer addresses the viewer. He presents an argument, or dialogue, between two different approaches to treating madness and the film ostensibly juxtaposes these: control versus complete freedom. But he includes a third alternative – rather like the middle dialogue – he talks about the condition of the world as mad. But both of these become a means of imprisonment against which Jean finds himself pitted. Madness in *Lunacy*, as so often in surrealism, appears in some ways as a front to explore unconscious impulses and their repression.

Instead of explicitly exploring transgression as in the earlier films, Švankmajer takes a more oblique approach. One of the core images and tropes in the film is incarceration. The film opens with Jean locked in his room and fearful of what may be trying to get in. His shirt defies him, slips over to unlock the door and lets in his nightmares. Incarceration appears in the narrative itself, as the end seems pre-ordained. In the end, Jean's nightmares come true – the men in white coats get him. We are left with the impression that the material text, like the material body, acts to incarcerate. Further images of incarceration include Jean burying the Marquis alive, after the

character has told a story of his mother being entombed alive. Similarly, Jean's mother was institutionalised, and both men are ensnared by the fates of their dead mothers. The inmates at the asylum, for all that they initially run wild, are shut up both in an institution but also inside their minds. At the asylum, there is another image of an inmate being buried alive. The hospital staff are imprisoned in the cellar as well as in their own skin after they are tarred and feathered. Similarly, the Marquis claims to suffer from catalepsy, which makes his body immobile and thereby effectively imprisoning himself within his skin.

The film mostly progresses in a slow, linear way. This represents an additional departure from Švankmajer's earlier films alongside the relegation of animation to story strands outside of the main narrative. However, the film subtly undermines this linearity by mismatching eyeline and direction in one of the dialogue sequences: as Jean and the Marquis ride in his coach, the editing is discontinuous. The use of shot reverse-shot here appears to use an eyeline match, but Jean is sitting on the wrong side of the coach and their eyelines both gesture toward an empty space. The effect is the sense that the lines of sight do not quite match, which points to an underlying misconnection between the Marquis and Jean. This becomes all the more apparent as the film progresses. The misconnection through the eyeline mismatch punctuates the temporal anachronism of the film: the Marquis, while living in a modern world, through his dress and lifestyle, remains in the past. This is also highlighted in the coach scene as it crosses a bridge and is juxtaposed with the modern highway beneath.

The tension between the main linear narrative and the parallel story of the meat journey explores entrapment most effectively. The travelling pieces of meat are free from narrative, they are not caught up in the story but have somehow erupted from it. They embody a playfulness and transgressive spirit, until the end, where they become packaged as meat in a supermarket, quietly breathing beneath the plastic. The meat, eyeballs, brains, tongues defiantly make their way through space which is partly recognisable as the space of the main story, and partly not. They therefore communicate an alternative, extended space, distinct from that occupied by the main narrative strand. There is only one moment when the two strands briefly intersect: the tongues lick Jean after he has been knocked unconscious by his worst nightmare – the man in a white coat, disguised by

the tar and chicken feathers. The moment the two strands meet is then a moment at which dream and waking life converge. The meat journey also points to narrative excess that is a corollary of the linear narrative with its neat arguments about madness; it embodies a rejection of the inescapable binary that Švankmajer presents in his prologue. If Švankmajer's verbal explanation of madness is an attempt to contain, then the meat journey, following its unknown path, indicates that which will not be contained. In *Faust*, the stop-motion animated image of Mephisto bearing Faust's face breaks into three slithery clay things which then creep away, out the window and into a forest. The meat in *Lunacy* is similar; these are the extra things, the leftovers and spillages that do not quite fit. Since they comment on madness and the relationship between the body and the mind, they indicate an anxiety of a fragmented body. They are simultaneously bits of body, but also complete bodies as they move and appear to have agency and this results in some anxiety, as I discussed earlier. The meat journey confirms the latent sense of an object world that no longer abides by the laws of the natural – a sense that is always present in Švankmajer's world: things act in a way that they are not supposed to; objects do not behave as they should.

Conclusion

Another important benefit of film is the process of editing which allows for a much greater dynamism of artistic images (Švankmajer cited in Hames 1995, p. 99).

Editing in Švankmajer's films draws on Eisensteinian montage and works in concert with his particular brand of animation. His roots in surrealism direct his concern with the relationship between the inner and the outer, the material and the psychic, through these partially animated films. It is through the material body that the psychic becomes visible. The mixing of different materials in his animation style suggests that Švankmajer is primarily concerned with embodiment. The emphasis here is not on coherence and cohesion, rather, it is on shredding, dismantling and rearranging the body; in this way, seamless and totality is resisted and interior experience may be embedded in the

fabric of this resistance. A further effect of Švankmajer's film style, particularly the fusing of live-action and animation, is the destabilisation of the boundaries between the body and the object. The films are transgressive as Švankmajer subverts the usual understanding of childhood, as he interrogates dialogue and as he reads the human form through his unnatural, animated bodies. His animation therefore functions as subversive expression: by revising the body and by blurring the line between the animate and the inanimate, Švankmajer's films represent a transgressive body of work.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Chapter Five

Memory and Narrative in

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning

This chapter emphasises time in the construction of film narratives as it considers the imposition of memory and fantasy in Teboho Mahlatsi's *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* (1999). The film contains frequent narrative interruptions and I read these in light of the difficulties of articulating trauma, drawing primarily on Caruth (1996), LaCapra (1998) and Rose (2003). The narrative interruptions that mark this ten-minute film show the effects of a violent and impoverished past intruding into the present – both the broader political context of apartheid South Africa and the more recent social instability and fear caused by crime. The intrusions can be read as fantasies, but they are weighted down with memory, they bear the burden of the past. I consider *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* in the context of contemporary South African film which also appears to be haunted by the past, particularly through the compulsion to rehearse reconciliation, even if not explicitly political, through film narratives. One of the core images of Mahlatsi's short film is the image of mourning and I consider how mourning functions in a traumatised community by referring to Rose (1996); my discussion of the community leads to a discussion of the landscape of the township. My reading of this short film suggests that the underlying violence of the film is communicated textually, through the almost aggressive cutting of the film. In this way, I read *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*, with its disrupted narrative, as symptomatic of trauma and indicative of a distorted psychology. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of distorted psychology and textual interruption in relation to Mahlatsi's most recent film, *Sekalli le Meokgo* (2006).

Introduction

I'm trying to construct some kind of magical realism [in] cinema usually found in novels, writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Zakes Mda, the paintings of Zwelethu Mthetwa are also an influence, where you take a normal landscape like the township and then infuse it with things that are slightly abnormal.¹

At the centre of South African filmmaker Teboho Mahlatsi's short film *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* (1999) is an image of the protagonist, Shadow: he watches as he is hoisted upon the shoulders of a funeral procession making its mournful way through a township (see figure 13). This is an impossible image – it suggests either a false memory, or else a fantasy that interrupts Mahlatsi's otherwise stark representation of the township as a space of violence and vigilantism. This chapter examines the function of memory and fantasy in this post-apartheid film by considering a number of the ruptures in narrative. Specifically, I examine the discontinuities in editing in order to explore the relationship between trauma and film language: I am particularly interested in the ways in which film language engages with or undermines the totalising effects of seamlessness in order to represent a deep-seated violence or dis-ease.

This chapter emphasises temporality in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* through the disruption of linear time which can be read as the imposition of memory into the present. There are primarily three narrative elements that I am interested in: the incorporation of discontinuity as a narrative strategy in post-apartheid South Africa which, in turn, establishes an alternative order or continuity in the film; the idea of fantasy which emerges from these discontinuities and its social function; and the role of mourning and memory in relation to these fantasies. By focusing on

¹ Appendix A, Unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

memory and interruption, this chapter highlights the temporal construction of film through editing.

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning is an award-winning² short film by Teboho Mahlatsi, a South African filmmaker who is best known for his direction of the first two seasons of the controversial television series, *Yizo Yizo*.³ Like *Yizo Yizo*, *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* raises questions of realism as it explores township violence. It tells the story of Shadow, a community executioner who is caught between his role in vigilante killings and the search for redemption. Shadow is injured and sets out looking for water to wash himself. As he walks through the township, he encounters various people: a friend, a man in a wheelchair, women and a funeral procession of someone that he has killed. Shadow is despised and distanced by the people in the community – no-one will give him water – yet they later seek him out when they capture a rapist. He makes his way to Tata Phiri, a community leader who tries to dissuade him from killing the rapist. Shadow and the rapist face each other in a ruined building, and his weakness is evident to the community. He limps away after stabbing the rapist, the children laugh and throw stones at him. At the end, he immerses his face in the water set outside, according to custom, for the funeral goers to wash their hands. The film is frequently interrupted by images that are tinted red and that do not quite belong to the diegesis, thereby indicating a parallel reality. The interrupted continuity of the film raises questions about trauma – the residual effects of a violent and corrupt past, combined with current issues of crime and violence disturb the narrative.

There are two levels of trauma at work in the film, one refers to the broader issue of the social effects of apartheid, the second is the related, but more specific issue of violence within a small community which is depicted against the landscape of the township.⁴ This community, the protagonist and by extension the audience, are

² Silver Lion, Best Short Film, Venice Film Festival, 1999

³ Mahlatsi directed the first two seasons of *Yizo Yizo*. It was aired on SABC 1 between 1999 and 2004 and caused controversy for its explicit treatment of the problems in township schools. Education minister in 2001, Kader Asmal was reported as “defending the programme against its detractors on the basis that it accurately reflected the cruel realities of South African life” (Ramsamy 2001).

⁴ Mahlatsi indicates how the film overwrites past violence with present violence: “Incidentally one of the people I gave the camera to was a young man who was a former Self Defence Unit member in the East

implicated to some degree as victims of the violence, but more strikingly, as perpetrators. Mahlatsi's *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* offers an oblique engagement with the ideas and values of what can be called the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) films – these are films that attempt to work through and communicate social cohesion by addressing South Africa's past, using the commission as a platform. The film explores external social reality by engaging the subjective reality of the protagonist. Using disruptive narrative techniques, Mahlatsi unleashes narrative elements that are usually restrained or erased by the seamlessness of continuity editing and negotiates the divide between the individual and the collective.

Speaking pain and trauma in South African Film

There is a strong trend in recent South African film to depict a confrontation with South Africa's past, usually through a recognition of the corrupt nature of apartheid and a gesture towards some kind of reconciliation. This is evident in films like *Red Dust* (Tom Hooper 2004), *Forgiveness* (Ian Gabriel 2004) and *In My Country* (John Boorman 2005) which explicitly explore issues around reconciliation using the TRC as a vehicle for social relationships. In all three films, the personal is explored in the context of apartheid politics unearthed during the transition years of the TRC; they draw upon the TRC to communicate South Africa's transition on an individual level. Other recent films which do not pursue this as an explicit theme weave elements of reconciliation or restoration in their subtexts: Twist's rightful urban, middle-class legacy is restored to him after being forced to the streets when abandoned at birth (*Boy Called Twist*, Tim Green 2004); Yesterday is wronged by her husband and community, but remains patiently forgiving as she is ravaged by disease (*Yesterday*,

Rand, Johannesburg, who after the political wars of the nineties, filmed himself going around his neighbourhood looking for a place to take a bath. But people did not allow him to enter their houses. Even though he had committed acts of violence to protect them against Inkatha attacks, they had still not forgiven him for his violence. That became an inspiration to write *Portrait*." Appendix A. unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

Darrell Roodt 2005); the father in *The Wooden Camera* (Ntshaveni Wa Luruli 2003) confronts his dark side before he can enter into multicultural society. More loosely, *Stander* (*Stander*, Bronwen Hughes 2003) abandons lawful white society after the scene depicting the June 16 uprising: we are encouraged to read his bank robbery as a defiance of the apartheid state; the gap between black and white marked by the violence of the Soweto uprising underpins the division between law and disorder that the film explores. More recently, in *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood 2005), by the end of the film the Tsotsi character is reconciled with the parents of the child he has taken and with himself and his own traumatic childhood. All of these films allude to the rift in South African society brought on by the divisive nature of apartheid, which destabilises the present until it is confronted and laid to rest; the reconciliation explored at an individual level serves as an analogy for a more encompassing idea of reconciliation and atonement. This rehearses reconciliation through narrative and aligns it with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's attempt to use narrative to address the traumas of apartheid and ascribe agency for these traumas.⁵

But these films which make it to the commercial screens, while dabbling in South African injury, almost pathologically avoid trauma. Rather they attempt to master apartheid experience, reframing these stories within neat three-act narratives where the effects of apartheid are tidied into narrative and therefore presented with resolution and closure which effectively suppresses trauma and those experiences which cannot be contained by linearity and gloss. Apartheid forms the backdrop in many of these recent films – it is difficult to ignore – but this is engaged in ways that avert anything dangerous or threatening. *Red Dust* for example, explicitly takes on the issue of apartheid trauma yet fails to investigate what the trauma actually entails. Instead, torture and betrayal become the elements of a thriller; they are employed as narrative tools rather than as the subject of the film.

Contemporary South African film wants to establish itself as a growing commercial industry and also to assert its autonomy as a distinctive national cinema.

⁵ See Lacapra (2001) 'Trauma, Absence, Loss' for a description of how the TRC attempted to provide a forum where loss could be articulated, culpable activity acknowledged and a collective ritual of mourning could be enacted.

There are several ideological assumptions underlying what an established industry entails and regarding the aesthetics of the new South African film industry. Ideas around “production quality” specify a distinct texture and polish to films and this is what many filmmakers and viewers demand. Of course, high production quality usually translates to films that exhibit similar aesthetics to the mainstream; production quality is ideologically loaded. In this case, the films attempt that glossy, contained seamlessness that serves to master and contain trauma, to shush it up, rather than allow it find expression. These narratives usually posit singular accounts, they offer closure, they neaten and straighten out what struggles to be told and heard. This is not to suggest a privileging of films that commit to grappling with the complexities of post-apartheid South Africa as opposed to those that are mainly interested in developing a commercial cinema culture. The aims are different, and neither necessarily has more value than the other. *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* attempts a combination of both and becomes ensnared in itself in a similar way that the Brazilian film *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund 2002) did.⁶

One of the core tensions in Mahlatsi’s short film is the simultaneous desire to tap into the spectacular, even fashionable, elements of contemporary popular film and the clear attempt to communicate something specific about South African experience through an interrupted narrative.⁷ The film’s consciousness of style flirts with mainstream techniques, for example it draws on an MTV style, while simultaneously communicating a trauma narrative.⁸ But just as experimental techniques are drawn into the mainstream mode to recreate the continuously shifting idea of what

⁶ At the first Nemisa roundtable on South African film in February 2005, the aesthetics of *City of God* was discussed in the context of media reports suggesting that this was a good way forward for South African cinema. Some of the academics and practitioners present felt uncomfortable with this as they felt the imprint of current Hollywood trends and fashions too heavily in this film. It suggests to me that that Glauber Rocha’s “aesthetic of hunger” developed in Brazil in 1965 has been occluded by a “cosmetics of hunger” where stories of poverty and dispossession are appropriated, a trend that seems evident in recent South African film with its fixation on marginal figures in the “coloured” community.

⁷ I am grateful to the participants of the second Nemisa roundtable in September 2005 on South African film for helping me to identify this tension after presenting a very early draft of this chapter there.

⁸ See Chapter One for a discussion of how MTV techniques are increasingly drawn into mainstream film.

constitutes realism in film,⁹ we find that Mahlatsi's film draws these once experimental techniques from mainstream modes – the aesthetic of the film hesitates between an experimental approach (which attempts to respond to the questions that the film is posing) but also a more mainstream aesthetic.¹⁰ This also creates a tension in the way that the film is viewed, resonating with Laura Marks's discussion of intercultural cinema which “draws from many cultural traditions, many ways of representing memory and experience, and synthesizes them with contemporary Western cinematic practices” (Marks 2000, pp. 1-2). In Mahlatsi's case, the current fashion for disruptive camera and editing discussed in Chapter One provides aesthetic pleasure, but also attests to a knowledge that gains expression through a discontinuous narrative. In Mahlatsi's 2006 short film, *Sekalli le Meokgo*, this drive towards aesthetic pleasure and original narrative becomes even more apparent as the film merges high gloss with oral traditions.

We can identify *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* as an intercultural film because of the context of South Africa where different cultural practices inform identity and experience, and also because of the ways in which international trends and aesthetics are appropriated, responded to and revised. Marks's (2000) discussion of intercultural cinema highlights the idea of haptic visuality, which attempts to account for how hybrid films may communicate at a more material level than mainstream films. Marks's concept of a cinema that communicates at a sensory level suggests a rupture of the usual boundaries between viewer and text. In this way, it creates a space for the articulation and comprehension of trauma.

The idea that trauma resists language is a basic premise of much of the writing on trauma and representation. The difficulties of articulating suffering are evident in both the

⁹ Dixon and Foster (2002) discuss the ways in which the mainstream absorbs the techniques innovated by the experimental – see Chapter One. Mahlatsi draws these techniques from mainstream sources, but redirects them back towards the experimental.

¹⁰ This is a tension that Mahlatsi acknowledges in our interview: “I grew up watching kung-fu movies, westerns, action movies and in many ways I'm a product of that and at the same time I also reject that cinema because it's not part of my reality. So there's constant embracing and rejecting going on all the time.” Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

TRC and recent South African film. Rose (2003) writes of the failings of language to represent traumatic experience in the context of the TRC:

To read the Report of the Commission is to be confronted on almost every page with how difficult it is to speak of atrocity, whether as victim or perpetrator of the act, although the difficulty is radically different for each. It has been at the centre of the Commission and the source of its greatest difficulty that language ... does not easily 'bed' the truth (Rose 2003, p. 220).

Telling trauma always carries with it a danger of misrepresenting experience; similarly, trauma cannot easily be comprehended and therefore strategies such as those identified above are incorporated into trauma narratives. Scarry (1985) discusses the ways in which pain resists being known – even if language could articulate pain and trauma, we lack the capacity to make sense of it when outside of our immediate experience. Caruth suggests that the ways in which referentiality works are necessarily altered – that history is “no longer based on simple models of experience and referentiality” (Caruth 1996, p. 11). Trauma is spoken in a language that somehow “defies, even as it claims, our understanding” (1996, p. 5). There is something about the breaking down of representation that releases the traumatic experience. What then becomes interesting are the alternative ways through which trauma makes itself manifest, how trauma speaks through a kind of incoherence, through repetition and how trauma coheres around objects such as the body. This is a different kind of process of making reference to the experiences which elude telling.

Film language also struggles to address these concerns. The translation from verbal to visual language does not make reference to experiences which resist language any easier. If anything, the deceptive nature of the visual image and its capacity to look like reality serves to complicate the visual telling of trauma. Furthermore, film language, with its own conventions (lighting, camera work, sound) as well as the complex syntax of film editing, has almost codified the communication of experiences of pain and trauma: it is difficult to really comprehend experiences of pain and trauma through their media representation. For example, the representation of violence, as a particular variation of pain and trauma, in Hollywood film has normalised images of suffering to a large extent. Viewers have become accustomed to

these easy images, and consequently we have learnt to watch while maintaining a distance, wrapped up in the experience of spectacle that usually envelops the cinematic experience of violence. The feature-length film has created a neatly cordoned-off bubble world which further complicates the articulation of pain and violence; even television shows like *24* which do not function quite as separately as feature films, work to normalise trauma (in this case, primarily the trauma of torture). But there is an extent to which violence is constituted by spectacle. Žižek's (2002) analysis of the relationship between the representations of violence and the experience of it through his analysis of the images of 9/11, highlights the spectacular nature of violence:

For the great majority of the public, the WTC explosions were events on the TV screen, and when we watched the oft-repeated shots of frightened people running towards the camera ahead of the giant cloud of dust from the collapsing tower, was not the framing of the shot itself reminiscent of spectacular shots in catastrophe movies, a special effect which outdid all others, since – as Jeremy Bentham knew – reality is the best appearance of itself? (Žižek 2002, p. 11).

Žižek suggests that the crash of the plane and collapse of the towers is indicative of fantasy intruding into the real and that the now iconic image of the World Trade Centre collapsing had happened many times before, in the movies. Power and Crampton discuss how survivors and eyewitnesses of the 9/11 attacks used film imagery to communicate and refer to their experience of the attacks (2005). Similarly, in my interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, he refers to Shadow's desire to extract himself and find redemption by saying "Clint Eastward wants to walk away but the people in the village won't let him" thereby articulating township violence and its effects through American westerns.¹¹ For large-scale and ongoing violence, the movies become a frame of reference but they do not simply function as a neutral language, rather the experiences that are communicated become contaminated by their articulation through these ready-made images. More than a reference point, violent images in the media inform acts of violence. Violence in the media then does not just anaesthetize – but

¹¹ Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

rather, the experience of violence is constituted to a large extent through exposure to media images; this is how people make sense of violence, by using images from films as a reference point, and these recast the experience of violence and trauma.¹² This is not the simple causal relationship of life imitating art but indicates a more complex relationship between the spectacular and experience, particularly in relation to violence.¹³ Interestingly, Mahlatsi's earlier success, *Yizo Yizo*, revealed a similar conundrum: how can you articulate violence without the images elaborating on and constituting further violence?¹⁴ While the series claimed to be representing a truth about township life, the images depicted were harnessed to become part of the language of the problem; as a new weapon. This is the problem of pain, violence and trauma finding representation: the representations are not simply neutral reflections, they continue to hold dialogue with experience.

Mourning in *Portrait of Young Man Drowning*

Teboho Mahlatsi's ten-minute film can be broken down into the following sequences:

Transcript 6: Narrative sequences

1	Opening montage winding through a ruined house
2	Inside Shadow's shack
3	Outside, encounter with B and the man in the wheelchair
4	Shadow walks past the funeral procession
5	The women call Shadow to deal with the rapist; the woman washing her hands in water
7	Inside Tata Phiri's house
8	Shadow vomits outside, the procession goes by and he sees himself as a Christ-like corpse born by the mourners.
9	The rapist is brought by mob, Tata Phiri intervenes, Shadow stabs the rapist
10	Shadow chases the rapist into the ruins, he has a moment of recognition of himself and cries.
11	He runs and the children stone him
12	He washes at the funeral

¹² This is neatly demonstrated in Oliver Schmitz's *Hijack Stories* (2000) where the would-be hijackers practice their techniques using behaviour borrowed from the movies.

¹³ Žižek comments that after 9/11 the Pentagon sought help from Hollywood specialists in catastrophe movies in order to imagine scenarios of terrorist attacks and how to fight them (2002).

¹⁴ Notoriously, images of violence, particularly Papa Action flushing a child's head in the toilet, were reported to be influencing schoolchildren who appeared to mimic his behaviour.

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning is not about apartheid suffering in a direct way. It takes an oblique approach which works through issues of township violence to indicate a more deep-seated unease, like a fault running beneath the ground, waiting. It is an old wound quietly festering like shrapnel beneath a healed scar. The film depicts a hostile community where human interactions are characterised by suspicion and reserve. But this is tempered with a tentative kindness and care which characters appear to be unable to enact fully, marking the film with a sense of hesitation. There is a curious awareness of a connectedness which is skewed by the need for self-preservation. Mourning is an important trope in the film as a funeral procession's slow wail pervades it. The image of Shadow watching himself hoisted on the community's shoulders (sequence 8) is the image of Shadow confronting his loss of self and mourning himself. This is the only inserted image that appears twice – the second time is a closer shot – and it alludes to one of the primary concerns of the film: the search for identity.

Especially for victims, trauma brings about a lapse or rupture in memory that breaks continuity with the past, thereby placing identity in question to the point of shattering it (LaCapra 1998, p. 9).

By seeing himself in the place of the dead man in these two shots, Shadow identifies with the victim (who is also a perpetrator): the man he had slain. This is in contrast to an earlier flash where he sees himself as one of the pallbearers holding up the coffin; a member of the community. This is how Shadow's identity is shattered in the film: he is in a curious position of being both victim and perpetrator; key member of the community and yet outsider, treading the fine line between saviour/hero and outcast, and this ambivalent identity drives the narrative. His sense of self is dissociated – even the name suggests this as “shadow” always entails something else. The dissociation is communicated through the fragmented narrative which also communicates a ruptured memory and a complex relationship with the past. The subterranean trauma of the film, as well as a more immediate trauma bound up in issues of violence in the township, work to fragment the community and destabilise identity. The film tries to recover shattered identity both in the community and in the individual.

One of the ways in which the disturbed psychology and sense of shattered identity is communicated, is through the use of point-of-view. Shadow's split personality, the victim and perpetrator, is structurally embedded into the film through the arrangement of point-of-view in the editing. The opening evokes a strong point-of-view as it winds through a geometrically neat montage of dissolves through an abandoned house. It is a disorienting use of point-of-view that inhabits these shots because it does not belong to any particular character. Rather, it could be read as a psychological point-of-view, one which mimics Shadow's inner journey that the film plots; it resonates with the sense of searching that the film communicates. It also indicates the split which becomes more evident with the inserted shots. The moments in which we share Shadow's point-of-view are mostly the inserted shots which indicate his alternate reality – we rarely share his point-of-view in “normal” reality. Accessing Shadow's point-of-view here would encourage an identification with Shadow. This is absent in the film so the viewer is not encouraged to identify with Shadow, yet has access to his subjective experience. Shadow is therefore communicated at two levels: the tough guy with whom we struggle to empathise, and the tortured mind with which we have an all too immediate access. The search for identity, which culminates in the moment of confrontation at the end, is mapped out along these lines.

The use of the name “Shadow” is an obvious reference to the way in which identity is approached in fantasy, that is, through the archetypal encounter between shadow and self. Here, however, it is turned around as the shadow exists in the here and now and it is the self that is elusive. The viewer is allowed glimpses of the self through images such as Shadow watching himself as dead and mourned; through the figures of his slain who appear to refract a sense of his self. This lost sense of self is bound up in the relationship between Shadow and the community and the image of mourning is a pointed comment on the loss of identity through contemporary violence and South Africa's past. The film follows Shadow's attempt to find his identity, and assert himself within the community rather than haunting its margins. But this cannot happen because the community needs to see him as a killer, as the shadow. The underlying conflict of the film builds up to the moment of confrontation when Shadow faces the rapist in the ruined building but struggles to “finish him off”. He

catches a glimpse of his face in the shards of a broken mirror and cries, unable to carry it through. He rejects his social identity, and immediately his community rejects him. He then flouts tradition by interrupting the procession and washing himself in the funeral-goers' water. The final image is a red-tinted shot of him emerging from water, suggesting that he has attained redemption, born anew. But this is attained by stepping outside of the bounds of tradition and his own role in the community.

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning attempts to communicate the ways in which communities cohere in the aftermath of trauma. Rose identifies mourning, as the key to the "emotive binding of social groups" (Rose 1996, p. 3) which suggests some kind of sacrifice in order for the group to cohere around that loss. And Shadow, as community-appointed executioner, signifies that loss. But the loss does not necessarily refer to the lives of criminals. Instead, each time that Shadow kills, he loses himself through the act. Mourning, as the TRC reminds us, can bring release; but as the TRC testimonies reveal, it struggles in the absence of a body.¹⁵ Mourning therefore formalises around an object and in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*, Shadow becomes the scapegoat, the stand-in corpse, that signifies a collective mourning for an unarticulated loss. The image of Shadow watching himself simultaneously acknowledges the loss of his self and the way he signifies to formalise loss in the community. It is through mourning that the community is able to resist fragmentation. Therefore, Shadow's fragmentedness and sense of lost self is crucial for the ongoing coherence of a community splintered by crime, violence and the effects of apartheid. By killing others and losing his own identity, which he has sacrificed to the perceived good of the community, Shadow fulfils this.

¹⁵ This idea is repeated in the testimonies of various people, most noticeably by Joyce Mtimkulu. Her experiences following the loss of her son, Siphiwo, particularly with regard to the TRC and Gideon Niewoudt, is documented in Mark Kaplan's documentary *Between Joyce and Remembrance* (2003). Joyce Mtimkulu stresses her need to find out what happened to him and to his body; she specifically appeals for his bones. Interestingly, Niewoudt's strategy was to delay the TRC hearings, thereby inhibiting Joyce Mtimkulu from speaking; there is a correlation between needing to speak and finding the bones, most vividly depicted by her holding up the remains of Siphiwo's scalp when she finally did get to testify. Although Joyce Mtimkulu did not find his bones, the film ends with the symbolic burial of the scalp in small box. The search for bodily remains in order to lay to rest is also a premise of *Red Dust*.

The film likens Shadow to Christ from the beginning. The first words we hear are “They crucified you like Jesus” thereby beginning the association between Shadow and Christ. The next association is an image from Shadow’s point-of-view of the bleeding Christ, juxtaposed with the image of Shadow vomiting blood in the street (end sequence 7). The third is the image of Shadow being carried by the funeral procession, limbs stretched out like Christ. But this association between Shadow and Christ requires a dissociation from the conventional meaning of the Christian Passion. Shadow is not put to death, instead he is the executioner, thereby drawing a thread between victim and perpetrator. By drawing on the image of mourning, Mahlatsi, who is Catholic school educated, layers the Christian narrative of loss and reconciliation upon the South African stories.¹⁶ The original loss of Eden is recovered through the second loss of Christ; the mourning of Christ through weekly enactment of this loss is the cohesive glue in Christian communities. The cohesive function of the Christ body, both for the early Christian community and in Christian re-enactment has clear parallels in the film.

Rose’s discussion of mourning is in the context of Freud’s consideration of “guilt for crimes not committed, unconscious wishes, troubled identifications”(Rose 1996, p. 3). The guilt for crimes not committed is key to the Christian narrative of fall and reconciliation: Christ, like Shadow, suffers for others; Christians bear the guilt of original sin and, to a lesser extent, of the crucifixion itself. In his Christ-fantasy, Shadow, as sacrificial lamb, bears the community’s guilt. His marginality and the community’s ambiguity towards him emerge from the conflicting desires to kill the bad elements of society and simultaneously to revile the taking of life. The mourning of the slain becomes a new ritual that binds the community together because it is premised on guilt. Caruth (1996) argues that the crisis at the core of trauma narratives is the unsettling question of whether the trauma arises from an encounter with death or with having survived. The community’s position is double-sided: on the one hand they mourn the dead, but on the other they willed the death in

¹⁶ Mahlatsi says in an interview with Indiewire: “I was born and raised in the rural part of the country. Catholic school, Catholic church. I love the contradictions of being African and dealing with Catholic guilt” (Indiewire 2006).

order to preserve themselves. Mourning is therefore not the lamenting of the loss of life, but a way of ritualising the exchange.

Editing and memory

As discussed in the Introduction, editing always alludes to the space in between. By highlighting editing in this study, I am considering the ways in which the film edit simultaneously figures as a cut, or wound, as well as the suturing of that cut. The film cut is implicitly violent – exploited most effectively by Hitchcock in his famous shower sequence where the violence is directed at the viewer as well as towards the victim¹⁷ – but stitching together is potentially more dangerous. Suturing alerts us to what has been bound up in the seam; it carries with it the sense of Frankenstein’s monster, of being cobbled together, with the unexplained neatly tidied away and quietly festering. Laura Marks, discussing history and memory, says that “cultural memory is located in the gaps between these recorded images”. This suggests that the official histories and hidden memories which constitute cultural memory may be understood through the “excavation” of the text (2000, p. 21).

In *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* there are two cuts or wounds to the characters’ bodies that resonate with the cuts to the film text itself. First there is Shadow’s festering wound which marks his body as diseased and him as an outsider: it is the body of the invisible man, a shadow. It also begins to explain his distorted psychology which is conveyed through the hyperreality of the film: perhaps these are the hallucinations of a delirious man. The second is the wound that he, as the reluctant community executioner, inflicts on the rapist in sequence 9 when faced with his identity as a killer. But there is a missing cut, the final fatal wound that Shadow resists. The film communicates a trauma through the diseased body and mind, but primarily by infecting the text with dirty cuts. By communicating the diseased bodies and mind through a similarly diseased film text, the film works to act upon the viewer, to get under our skin. Marks talks about intercultural cinema as “contagious”

¹⁷ See Chapter One for a discussion of the shower sequence in *Psycho* (1960) in relation to cutting.

(2000, p.xii) because it works towards a transformation in the viewer. Mahlatsi's film forces questions about violence and complicity; it closes the distance between the passive observers in the township and a wider audience who affect a similar ignorance. In this community, it is difficult to differentiate between the onlookers and those who actively call for Shadow to kill. The viewer mostly has access to Shadow, and therefore we are thrust into an almost active role. The film's concern with the body is another way in which it manifests its concern with the individual within a scarred society – the body is the primary indicator of individuality and identity.

Caruth (1996) talks about the shift from the original Greek understanding of trauma as a wound inflicted on the body to the understanding of it as a wound inflicted on the mind. One way that representation becomes possible is to refigure the mental wound as physical, to mark it on the body. Mahlatsi's film takes this further by paralleling the mark of the body with a mark on the film text, thereby afflicting the viewer in the process. It assaults the viewer with images that do not quite belong and then forces them to draw on their subjective resources in order to create sense and to complete the image. This is the making explicit of the inaccessible, thereby externalising interior processes. The film indicates different ways of materialising trauma, the cut on Shadow's body that vexes him throughout and drives his search for water, functions as a cipher for an internal wound; it is the mark on the material. The psychological trauma finds an external manifestation on the body, which then takes on the internal disorder; it carries a disease of sorts which is replicated by the film itself. The cuts which disrupt the film become markers of violence in the same way as the cuts on Shadow's body, as the stab that Shadow inflicts on the rapist. The integration of continuity editing and discontinuity works in a way that indicates rupture: the inserted images indicate the moments that will not be contained.

The wound functions in a similar way, as the indelible stain: it signals a hidden or repressed trauma; it draws our attention to itself. Interrogating the film's cuts, like picking at scabs, begins to unravel what has been hidden or repressed. This is how we can begin to excavate the text in order to understand its relationship with cultural memory. In this short film, memory is inscribed at various levels: it emerges through the temporal interruptions and it is written on the body. This is seen for example

through Shadow's wound which acts as a constant reminder of the violence that plagues him; the man in the wheelchair (an image to which I will return later) also carries the weight of cultural memory. The memory of township violence is imprinted into the physical landscape:

...those houses are real. I shot in the neighbourhood (Thokoza, East Rand, Johannesburg) that experienced this kind of violence: the political violence of the early nineties between ANC supporters and Inkatha supporters from the hostels. Houses were burnt down, people slaughtered and this house was burnt down during those days and many years later I found it still abandoned.¹⁸

The political violence is scored into the landscape of the film; many of the images carry the weight of a violent or corrupt past. And violence begets violence: the rape, the vigilantism, the element of crime – these are the effects of the earlier political violence; a new incarnation of the same trauma. The film requires us to read the contemporary violence in relation to the past but the relationship with the past is not simply causal and continuous. LaCapra's idea (1998) of the shattering of identity occurring through memory rupture signals a break in continuity with the past. There is an important gap or silence between the past and the present; a missing link which does not immediately recognise the relationship between the past and present. Memory cannot be relied upon. The breaks in continuity in the film enact LaCapra's larger break in continuity, and gaps and silences abound in the narrative.

There are two elements that signal the importance of memory in this film: the first includes the inserted images which disrupt the continuity of the film; and the second is a small moment near the beginning of the film when Shadow is first introduced. This is a moment which potentially offers an explanation for Shadow's lack of identity, for his behaviour, for the overwhelming sense of loss which drives the film. Inside the shack, after the prologue, the viewer's introduction to Shadow is given a sharp sense of texture which links the shots of the ceiling, the corn-rows on Shadow's head. These lines not only create a sense of texture, but function as vectors which guide our attention to the mattress, beneath which Shadow hides a photograph

¹⁸Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

of a woman. It is a casual action, hardly worth noticing. The picture looks dated, so the film encourages us to believe that this is an image from the past, presumably his mother, as she carries a child, someone with whom he no longer has contact but who continues to haunt him. This moment is key and communicates the loss and mourning at the heart of Shadow's actions. It also establishes the origin of the film in the past without indicating how the past is continuous with the present. It is important that the picture is hidden (beside his knife): by repressing this image, other images rupture the narrative and spill out of its seams. Through this image, Mahlatsi offers an object around which the ruptures may cohere. Shadow's missing mother is not an important narrative element in the film. Rather, the picture stands in for another kind of loss, in the same way that the image of the mourners indicates bereavement as metaphor for social processes. The hiding of the mother's picture alludes to the original loss, the fall, the expulsion from Eden; it is also the loss of home and the betrayal of the motherland.

In talking about the elusive referentiality of traumatic experiences, Caruth (1996) argues that it is often through forgetting that these experiences become available. The unspeakability of trauma also means it is inaccessible even to the one who experiences it. The failure of memory becomes a way of accessing what may be otherwise inaccessible – these experiences need to be detached in order to be inhabited. Caruth argues that the experience of trauma is filtered through the fictions of traumatic repression which is what then allows the event to become indirectly available – historical memory is always a matter of distortion, of filtering. That historical gash which rives South Africa, becomes obliquely visible through the ways in which the repression of trauma is rehearsed in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*.

The insertion of images – like that of Shadow carried by the funeral procession – engages a hyperreal layer and interrupts the primary narrative level. The film is persistently interrupted by images that flash outside of “real” time and space and it is difficult to locate these in terms of the established film world. It is unclear whether these are hallucinations or else distorted memories of the main character Shadow. Nor is it clear whether these belong to the film's diegesis or exist outside of it. The use of point-of-view suggests that they originate from Shadow but they could also be read as

a kind of commentary by the filmmaker, a means of communicating something to the viewer about the nature of the world or the consciousness or mood that is engaged in the film. This detaches the viewer from the protagonist – we have greater empathy with Shadow if we have access to what is inside his mind. But it draws our attention to the spectacular element of representing violence.

If we read these images as belonging within the diegesis, then this becomes a means of refiguring narrative time. In this view, which the film encourages, the images are evidence of some kind of psychic trauma, a manifestation of repressed memories which have made their way to the surface, or parallel world that hovers just alongside and occasionally interrupts the ordinary of the township world. A third reading that the film alludes to is the sense of premonition: while these images may not exist in the past or a parallel present, there is a sense of foreboding that allows the viewer to infer the future. Either way, the inserted images blur temporal divides and reject a linear progression of time.

While these narrative intrusions allude to a surfacing memory, they also indicate a kind of fantasy. This is not the depiction of a clear or coherent fantasy world, concerned with wish-fulfillment, as in *Divine Intervention* (see Chapter Six). Rather, they indicate an alternative perception of the world, particularly Shadow's distorted interior vision thereby giving us access to his subjectivity. Their most striking features include their fragmentedness, but also their possibility within the fictional world. They show the world of the township and its inhabitants, but with some distortion. They depict things that are plausible within that established world: Shadow looks down and instead of seeing his hands as they are, they are covered in blood; Shadow looks at the man in the wheelchair and then sees him having fallen out. This suggests a misconnection between the mind and the world around it. It comments on the nature of the specific trauma as well as on the uncontainability of trauma. Janet Walker (1997) points out that modifications in memory are one of the effects of trauma. Post-traumatic stress, in particular, is accompanied by disruption and dissociation of memory. The film therefore alludes to the mental processes that accompany the resurgence of memory following trauma. It relies partly on the interruptions to continuity editing to communicate this.

These memory modifications engage an element of fantasy. Rose (1996) identifies the role of fantasy as not simply inhibiting memory, but also in recognising memories that cannot otherwise surface. In this way, an element of fantasy is present as it addresses that which “hover[s] in the space between social and psychic history” (1996, p. 5). Again, the question of Shadow’s identity in relation to his community emerges. The film sets up a complex interaction between Shadow’s psychic and social life. We could read his inner life as haunted by the actions of his social identity; but could also consider that his social identity is informed by a disturbed psychology. Either way, Mahlatsi is attempting to depict this complex relationship within in the structure of the film.

The fantasies/memories to which we have access are revealed to the viewer through various shots. They are very brief, and we could almost have imagined them. These include Shadow looking at his hand while there is blood on the floor, the second is the man struggling to get back into the wheelchair, the shot of the funeral procession with him carrying the coffin, the shot of Shadow hoisted by the procession. The first image to intrude, and thereby alter the psychic landscape of the film, is an image of hands with blood. The inserted shot jars because in it his hand moves up, while in the preceding and following shots his hand does not move. This sudden movement where there was none causes a degree of anxiety in the viewer, especially because this is the first insert; we are not entirely sure what just happened.

The township in space and time

Mahlatsi’s aim from the start is to establish the sense of “stepping into another world, slightly removed from our reality”¹⁹ – it is clear that his filmic world is meant to be somewhat off-kilter. The *mise en scène* shows distinct signs of abandon: the flames licking the edge of the frame at the beginning, the burnt out interior which introduces

¹⁹ Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

the film. But the structure is solid, the walls are mostly intact, the bath hints at a previous order. There is a sharp contrast between the ordered regularity of the image – clear lines, neat squares and rectangles – and the sense of disorder and abandon created by the searching camera. This serves to heighten the disorientation through the contrast between the two. Mahlatsi's use of township iconography such as the ruined houses, the wheelchair and the dead township dog is grounded in the real: these are images that correspond to experience. But they simultaneously suggests a particular kind of stylisation as they function as heightened signifiers rather than as entirely realistic images. This is partly an effect of *mise en scène* – the colour and design of the shots – but mostly because the images are held just that fraction too long which then yields a sense of portent. An example of this is the moment when, after Shadow sees the funeral procession for the first time, he limps across the screen and passes an extremely still man (see figure 12). The camera lingers on him a bit too long and the effect is discomfiting. It is also significant that the film chooses to begin with the shot of the ruined interior, to search through it, and then dip out and find Shadow in a nearby shack. The use of this image as the opening image of the film foreshadows the end, and highlights the importance of the setting in the film. The viewer is not able to make sense of the space beyond this inward spiral. We assume the ruined building at the end is the same as the ruin at the beginning – we are not given any reason to believe otherwise – but then Shadow's wandering in the township takes him right back to where the film started. The weaving camera in the beginning, the weaving of the funeral procession, the return to ruin in the end – all suggest a kind of entrapment, a circularity of space which closes in around Shadow until he finds himself at the centre of the funeral – in the water traditionally reserved for the mourners to wash their hands. The spatial snare corresponds to Shadow's search for identity – the search motif is established spatially from the very start – and it is only fitting that his moment of confrontation with his sense of self occurs at the heart of the inward spiral. The film therefore replicates this at a structural level: Shadow is stuck with himself and stuck in the township.

Laura Marks discusses how in intercultural cinema there is an “additional, more overtly political suspicion of the image, given that its clichés bear the weight of

dominant history” (2000, p. 42). The image of the township is weighted down by the history of South Africa. This refers to the historical positioning of black people in townships through the social and geographical architecture of apartheid, but also refers to the history of representation. Situated on the outskirts, the township is usually perceived as a marginal space, usually associated with violence and with masses rather than individuals.²⁰ Mahlatsi’s attempt to make a township western is in some ways an ironic revisiting of the township as it harnesses the marginality, and elaborates on this to create a frontier land.

I was trying to make a western in many ways, a township western – the harmonica/accordion on the soundtrack, a lonely outsider hero, a bleak landscape.²¹

Walker (2001, p. 2) offers a definition of the frontier as it “signifies edges, extremities, limits”:

These contemporary uses of “frontier” continue to deploy the term as a kind of barrier or division, and/or something that is difficult or dangerous to cross, and/or as a transgression: there is always something on the other side of the frontier, and that something (or the frontier itself) is usually forbidden or forbidding, occasionally unchartered or unsanctioned (Walker 2001, p. 5).

By drawing on western aesthetics, Mahlatsi casts the township as a frontier land or border space. Casting the township through the lens of the western frontier allows for the creation of an alternative kind of township, which allows for this representation to elude the burden of “dominant history” and coincides with Mahlatsi’s idea of magical realism. This is one of the ways in which he infuses a “normal” landscape with the “abnormal”, as the opening quotation indicates. By revising the space of the township, Mahlatsi begins to revise the dominant history. This occurs in relation to the exploration of memory through the inserted images but also through the *mise en*

²⁰ Compare this stark township with the gentle yellow of the township in *Tsotsi*, or the almost comfortingly quirky space (in apparently close proximity to the city and easily accessible) in *The Wooden Camera*. I would tentatively suggest that the tendency is often to soften when telling stories of individuals, and to make harsh when representing the township as the place of the masses.

²¹Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

scène as Mahlatsi begins to alter the township space by extending the characteristic yellow glare of townships to an overexposed blue-white light.²² These suggest a heightened reality, furthered by images such as the man in a wheelchair:

It seems like every township has a man on a wheelchair, the result of our violent past and present. I just took it a step further by making him fall off the wheelchair and have him struggle to climb back on. There is something both absurd and sad about that image and that attracts me as a central element in my work: to always explore contrasting elements and let them rub against each other - reality and fantasy, violence (Shadow stabbing the alleged rapist) and moments of silence (Shadow and the old man in the house) and so forth.²³

Mahlatsi conflates his use of space with memory through the image of the man in the wheelchair. It is an image that Mahlatsi has drawn from his experience of the township. But he has chosen to portray it in a particular way, through the zoom/jumpcut – a technique made famous by *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski 2003) with Samora's shimmy forward from the well; it is also how Hitchcock makes Marion Crane scream in the shower – which suggests a heightened reality. Shadow's encounter with the man in the wheelchair is awkward because it is removed from causality, we do not know why he laughs. The inserted image of him struggling to get back into the wheelchair reads like a hex or premonition: while it cannot have happened, it is almost as though it happens in another dimension, as if Shadow is putting a curse on him. There is a different kind of causality here: the man in the wheelchair was nasty to Shadow and it appears that Shadow is responding.

Similarly, the violent past of South Africa, as it played out in the townships is indicated through this representation. It is not burdened by cliché and therefore allows the viewer to consider the relationship between violence and the township (which is created by the past) in a new light. By viewing the township in this way, Mahlatsi effectively defamiliarises the viewer from the habitual, thereby requiring that we

²² This is the light frequently, but not exclusively, found in documentary depictions of townships, for example, *Amandla! A revolution in four part harmony* (Lee Hirsch 2002) and is the effect of the natural light interacting with the environment.

²³ Appendix A, unpublished interview with Teboho Mahlatsi, Mary Watson, 29 January 2004.

reconsider the township as landscape, and the relationship between the individual and community there.

But most important is the sense of an alternate space that is linked to an alternate temporality. The film sets up a second space which interrupts the linearity of the film. The idea of frontier space then suggests a different way of being on the edge: the border is between this world and psychological wild lands. Frontier space is the last outpost of civilisation, it is the final word before chaos. It is also a liminal space and this coincides with the dual nature of the screen world, Breton's capillary vessels linking dream and reality (1990), as well as the border nature of film editing. Mahlatsi's interest in juxtaposition, in letting contrasting elements "rub against each other" can be seen here. At this frontier space history and memory merge. Frontier space, not unlike the carnivalesque, allows one to step outside of normal time because it carries a sense of timelessness. Mahlatsi's alternative township simultaneously invokes the past, yet also conveys a detachment from it. By recasting the township as a frontier space, Mahlatsi allows for a sense of timelessness in which the past may inhabit the present. The film carries its own shadow: things are not quite what they seem as they carry the echoes of something else. The violence in the township is a front for another kind of violence, a more deep-seated violence, just as the search for water is a front for a different kind of search: for redemption, for compensation for an inarticulable loss (for which the missing mother stands in). The two levels that the film engages, the parallel reality and the primary level, alerts us to the duplicitous nature of the film: it is not really about what it pretends to be about. And it is in the interaction between these two layers that the relationship between them becomes evident.

Alternative continuities

Images are combined in ways that emphasise a fractured reality, a disturbed psychology, which is revealed through new meanings that arise through association. The protagonist is clearly dissociated from everyday reality and the film makes new

associations from the ways in which images are combined. For example, the still is juxtaposed with the violent, the sexual with the murderous; the fluidity of water stands out in the dry landscape. This becomes an alternate way of plotting our way through the film: the linkage of symbols, motifs, myths.

Throughout the film, the image of the dog appears: the women refer to the rapist as a dog; in one of the early shots, a township dog lies in the field – Shadow limps about like a rabid stray, particularly when the children throw stones at him saying “his bite will make you mad” (sequence 11), and at the moment of confrontation, he asks in English “why”. The response, also in English, is: “You’re amaKiller amaKiller, the man from the jungle. You’re the killer dog.” (sequence 10). The film establishes a kind of continuity through the shifting reference of “dog”. By juxtaposing the killer dog with the dead dog; Shadow, as killer dog, rapist as dog; killer dog and mad dog, there is a different kind of linkage that endures. These images of dogs are contrasted when Shadow visits Tata Phiri, a community elder. Tata Phiri’s house in its doily domesticity contrasts with the burnt-out shells and shacks. When Shadow enters the house, the elder is inexplicably sitting at the dinner table watching TV snow. The snow suggests a reflected blankness, contained within the small box on the table, served up as if it were a meal.²⁴ There are other elements, which when outside in the township resemble something wild but within Tata Phiri’s house become literally contained. The kitsch porcelain dog adds a completely different take on the township dog and hovers behind Tata Phiri, just out of focus. Similarly, the idea of knife wounds becomes a rhyme to sex – as Shadow fingers the cut on his chest, his friend says “they fucked you up too much in prison”; the rapist earns himself a vicious, and somehow complementary, knife stab in the chest. When the women call to Shadow, he sees fragments of their bodies which are dissected through the editing. Their bodies drip sweat in a way that is depicted as sensual and which elaborates on the water motif that is present throughout. The sexuality of skin is therefore conflated with the call to kill but also with the idea of redemption. The sweaty

²⁴ The small box TV on the table is an incongruous image and resonates with the striped box in *Un Chien Andalou* and also the boxes in Kusturica’s films. These boxes encapsulate a sense of mystery as either their contents are unknown or blank and they are objects for the characters to fixate upon, or they are used in inexplicable ways.

skin and tongue licking the lips as if thirsty transfixes Shadow in a way that can only be sexual, yet also reminds Shadow of his need to be clean. This is immediately juxtaposed with the shot of another woman's hands in water as she washes clothes in a zinc tub. The latter shot speaks to the earlier shot of Shadow's hand above a bloody floor, but also anticipates the shot of him washing his hands in the funeral-goers water and of him emerging from the tub. The images of water refer also to the images where purposeless flames lick the edge of the frame. I discussed earlier the likening of Shadow to Christ, and there are several instances which encourage this view, including the red shot of his hand pierced in the centre. The film therefore works laterally to establish alternate continuities.

Another sense of continuity emerges through the representation of the body and its movement through the film. There is a contrast between the wriggling of the crowd at the end, Shadow's stiff jerky gait and the eerie stillness that sometimes descends. Susan McCabe identifies one of the legacies of cinematic modernism as raising questions about "cohesive corporeality", which places emphasis on body rhythms and gestures rather than on narrative continuity (2005, p. 5). McCabe highlights how the movement of the body works to propel a film forward. One of the alternative means of forging associations and links becomes the rhythm of the body on screen rather than a story with conventional continuity. Shadow's physical journey – his search for water in the township – is clearly one of the strands that bind the story together. But the way that this is realised is significant. We do not know where or why or what he is doing – we are not given any access to the rationale behind his actions. On the contrary – what we are told can only confuse: he says that he is going to the funeral; he is told that the rapist is caught; he needs to wash himself. After his encounter with the man in the wheelchair, there is a shot of Shadow limping in shadow. The next shot is of Shadow looking towards the funeral procession. He stops. The procession moves in slightly slowed motion; there is a sense of fluidity to their movement. The camera zooms in and the next shot is a red inserted shot of the procession with Shadow struggling beneath the weight of the coffin. A close up follows and in the next shot, which is long again, the procession sways forward and Shadow jaggedly limps away. As the camera turns to follow him, there is a shot,

mentioned earlier, of the man just on the edge of the frame, facing forward, who is extremely still. These short sequences, like many others, are marked by the movement of the bodies, the varying paces, the flow as well as the sense of movement juxtaposed with stillness. There is, again, that sense of orderedness which is communicated through regularity and precision and against which Shadow, the jagged figure, is contrasted – he does not fit in. His is the shuffle of an outsider, an injured man. The sequences are combined in order to heighten Shadow's awkward fit into his society.

McCabe (2005) explores the relationship between modernist poetry and film and she argues that cinematic montage and camera work can expose the body's malleability as the pacing and piecing together of film can recreate the moving lived body. But this simultaneously brings a sense of rupture. There is always that sense of images being put together, a fragmentation of the original coherence. The piecing together of Shadow's body as an alternative continuity upon which the film may find cohesiveness alerts us to the ways in which normal continuity and narrative logic let us down. The body's trajectory across a fragmented narrative then becomes an alternative way of working through time and story.

Memory and hysteria

The jerky figure of Shadow contrasts with Mahlatsi's other hysteric, the still and silent Meokgo, in his most recent short film, *Sekalli le Meokgo* (2006).²⁵ Both communicate psychological disease that realises itself through the material: the protagonists' bodies and the texts of the film; in Meokgo's case, this occurs through her splitting and living across two bodies. Freud and Breuer's case studies in hysteria highlight the relationship between the psychological and the physical, and in particular, that "products of hysteria are just as strictly related to the precipitating trauma" (2001, p. 4). Because the distorted psychology is replicated on a textual level, the films themselves indicate a kind of hysteria.

²⁵ This can be translated as Meokgo and the Stickfighter.

Beyond the concern with physical and psychological disorder, there are several themes and images common to both films. *Sekalli le Meokgo* hints at a story told around a campfire – there are only a few shots to suggest this and Mahlatsi makes sparse use of voiceover narration but the combined effect is sufficient to set the scene as storytelling at the campfire. It tells the story of Kgotso, a mysterious hero who is an acclaimed stickfighter and wields a magical concertina bestowed upon him by a witch/mother figure in his childhood. The sheep owner asks Kgotso to protect his sheep and, while in the forest, Kgotso becomes entranced by a beautiful woman and does not hear the evil horseman, Mokgodutswane, approaching from behind. Kgotso is wounded by a knife – another significant cut – and when he returns to health, he finds out that the sheep owner has a daughter, Meogko, who has been enchanted by Mokgodutswane. As a result of the enchantment, she has split in two: she remains in the village and her shadow walks the mountain, one assumes, bewitching men. As with *Shadow*, one of the core images of the film is the spirit of Meogko, lushly bedecked in fur, walking around and curiously looking at herself, white-faced and still, wrapped in a blanket. Kgotso plays his magical concertina, vanquishes the evil horseman and restores Meogko to herself and to her father.

Both films draw on the western and recreate a frontier space but *Sekalli le Meokgo* locates this in isolated mountain regions rather than on the margins of urban experience. The western motifs are more obvious in *Sekalli le Meokgo* but also more distorted: there are no guns. Instead the weapons of choice are knives and sticks, and a magical concertina. Mahlatsi's particular South African filmic take on magical realism is more pronounced in this film. The soundtrack of the film draws on and departs from the soundtrack of the western – it is an intrusive soundtrack, led by the piercing wails of a concertina which adds presence to the magic concertina in the film.

Sekalli le Meogko also integrates memories of the past into the present, as well as premonitions of the future, but in this instance there is no red grading to indicate the temporality of the film, so the interruptions from the past are not marked as such but they are usually signified through the use of dialogue, particularly the voice of the storyteller recounting Kgotso's background.

A further source of interruption is the landscape itself as shots of mountains, particularly images of mountains dwarfing small figures, recur and distance the viewer from the story. One of the primary emphases of the film is on aesthetics – it is a very beautiful film – and the interruptions of landscape, while retaining a symbolic value, also indicate aesthetics intruding into story. This is evident in the use of motion effects, for example as Kgotso practices his stickfighting, which function to disintegrate movement. Shadow finds two equivalents in this film – there are traces of him in both Kgotso, the hero, and Meogko, the bewitched. The film starts with a storyteller introducing Kgotso saying, “no-one knew where he came from” and telling the story of the loss of his mother and his rearing by an old traditional healer. Again, there is a central loss which pervades the story, and is taken up by the sheep owner’s loss of his daughter, but in this film, it gains mythic proportions. The story draws on African oral traditions²⁶ and this is particularly evident through the device of a storyteller narrating the film around a campfire. Thematically and stylistically, there are many similarities between Mahlatsi’s two short films but I am most interested in the dis-ease that pervades: Shadow, Meogko and Kgotso are all unwell in one way or another, and this is communicated at a textual level.²⁷ There is a resonance here with Marks’s (2000) ideas about the materiality of film as communicating through contagion, and also McCabe’s (2005) recognition of the similarities between the body and the text, discussed earlier. McCabe extends this to her analysis of male hysteria in relation to the modernist text. She notes, “these films depict and enact attempts to control the involuntary reflexes and instabilities of the somatic experience” (2005, p. 20). And more specifically: “these ‘montage pieces’ coincide with the jerks, tics, and flaying of hysteric and automaton bodies” (p. 21). McCabe therefore identifies a correlation between hysteria and the fragmented text. Her discussion of modernist male hysteria is linked to the trauma of war, but specifically to Freud’s identification of the war neurotic as suffering from “an overly feminine responsiveness to shock”

²⁶ Brenda Cooper discusses the relationship between magical realism and African oral traditions in *Seeing with a Third Eye* (1998).

²⁷ While I hesitate to read *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* as a film about AIDS, I acknowledge Ian Glenn’s recognition of illness in the film (personal communication) by reading it in terms of a more general malaise, a pervading sickness that functions in a more metaphorical way.

(2005, p. 20). A reading of Shadow as a male hysteric therefore highlights questions of masculinity, particularly black masculinity after apartheid. On the one hand, Shadow, like Meogko, is weakened, passive and in a feminised position and on another, there is an excess of aggression and violence which attempts to compensate for this. The excess of violence attempts to align itself with versions of black masculinity that have the most currency. Adam Haupt argues that these are the versions of black masculinity that embody the “heterosexual streetwise gangster”,²⁸ the kind encountered in *Yizo Yizo*, in the figure of the gangster, Papa Action. Kgotso, in contrast, functions as a redeemed Shadow, an unambivalent hero with an uncompromised masculinity and the hysteria is transposed onto the figure of the bewitched woman, Meokgo.

Conclusion

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning engages with issues of narrative and trauma by rupturing its narrative with images that function as distorted memories or fantasies. By interrupting the temporality of the film, Mahlatsi is able to explore issues of identity and community, using the landscape of the township which still bears the effects of apartheid and the continuing social problems that are its legacy. The film engages a stylised use of images, symbols, myths, township icons and motifs. The editing in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* combines images in ways that emphasises a fractured reality and a disturbed psychology. The lack of identification with Shadow, despite his role as protagonist, can be understood in terms of the creation of an alternative kind of township, through the influence of magical realism and the western aesthetic as well as through editing. The interrupted text correlates with the diseased body and this is further developed in Mahlatsi’s most recent film, *Sekalli le Meokgo*.

²⁸ Haupt, A Film and Media Studies Workshop, Mont Fleur, 12-14 September 2006 in press for Wasserman, Louw, and Hadland *After the Rainbow*, HSRC Press.



Figure 12



Figure 13

Chapter Six

The Promised Land: Space and Disruption in *Divine Intervention*

Previous chapters have highlighted the body and time in relation to film and editing. This chapter turns to film space. Through an analysis of Palestinian filmmaker Elia Suleiman's most recent film, *Divine Intervention* (2002), I consider the representation of space in the context of Palestine. I begin my analysis of space in *Divine Intervention* with a brief discussion of Palestinian identity, history and narrative in relation to place, drawing on Rose (1996; 2000), Gertz and Khleifi (2002; 2003; 2005) and the ideas of Edward Said, particularly his 1984 essay, 'Permission to Narrate' (2000). Suleiman's approach to film is influenced by Walter Benjamin, and this is particularly evident through the use of non-linear narratives. Instead of constructing a coherent spatial geography through the standard conventions of editing, Suleiman conceives of "poetic space" which is achieved through non-linearity and I consider the ways in which he constructs the film screen as poetic space. The film communicates a dialogue between physical space and psychological space, specifically through the idea of psychological occupation where the effects of the physical occupation have become internalised. The depiction of physical space through the lens of the psychological also indicates the filmmaker's exilic relationship with Palestine. Finally, I discuss the emergence of a fantasy space through the representation of the checkpoints, which are infused with fantasy in *Divine Intervention*.

Introduction

Elia Suleiman responds to the difficulties of constructing a Palestinian narrative by defamiliarising the ordinary and invoking elements of fantasy in *Divine Intervention: Chronicle of Love and Pain*. The breakdown of realism in the film occurs through a persistent and underlying subversion of the ordinary as well as through the integration of more obviously fantastic sequences in which unmarked interludes of fantasy emerge. Disruption in *Divine Intervention*, as with other films in this study, is embedded in the structure of the film through the use of specific editing techniques. A non-linear narrative emerges through the use of editing as *Divine Intervention* undermines conventional causality and operates according to a more lateral logic coinciding with Ella Shohat's assertion that "[f]ragmented cinematic forms come to homologize cultural disembodiment" (2006a, p. 83). But it is primarily Suleiman's representation of space that offers a complex argument about Palestinian experience by departing from the norms of continuity editing. The film is contextualised by the contested narratives and conflicting land claims and dispossession that mark the recent history of Palestine. Gertz and Khleifi argue that it is difficult to construct a "whole imaginary map" in a context where "public space is blocked, the private space is missing or destroyed and the only place left intact is the border" (2005, p. 319). Through its construction of a labyrinthine spatial geography, its non-linearity and its engagement with fantasy, *Divine Intervention* begins to communicate Palestinian experience.

Divine Intervention has frequently been described as surreal,¹ in the casual sense of the word – the widespread use of the term where it departs from its original meaning yet retains a descriptive value. It is clearly not surreal in the same way as more recent examples of surrealism such as Švankmajer or even later Buñuel films. Yet, the tendency to call the film surreal, suggests that surrealism, in its more specific understanding, may cast light not only on the film's representation of reality, but on its mechanisms and techniques. Similarly, Suleiman refers to film as an "aesthetic metamorphosis", implying

¹ See Linda Butler 'The Occupation (and Life) through an Absurdist Lens' (2003, p. 63). See also Ahdaf Soueif 'Lost in Translation' (2004, p. 16).

that the film itself is a “potential reality” and this resonates with the idea of surreality.² In order to understand the blend of politics and fantasy in *Divine Intervention*, it is useful to remember Breton’s image of “communicating vessels” from his 1932 book of the same name in which he considers the dream as capillary tissue, “connecting the communicating vessels of psychic and material life” (Cohen, 1995:3). By looking obliquely, as surrealism has shown us, it is possible to arrive at an understanding of the things that fall in between, the debris that collect in the gaps. This corresponds with Benjamin’s writing on surrealism, where he reads surrealist montage as “profane illumination”.³ Using montage, Suleiman engages with the political potential of fantasy to take on the complexities of history and narrative.

The film depicts the relationship between the character called ES (played by Elia Suleiman, the film director) and the woman from Ramallah, as it plays out on the border between Nazareth and Ramallah. But the film begins with the Arab community in Nazareth where the father of ES lives and traces the relationships between various neighbours there. The father suffers a heart attack and is moved to hospital. ES moves between visiting his father at hospital and meeting the woman from Ramallah at the checkpoint. But the woman disappears and “returns” in a controversial sequence in which she takes out the soldiers at the checkpoint with fantastic powers. Describing the action of the film does not entirely engage with the story – the form cannot be divorced from the content and a summary of the plot imposes a coherence upon the film which belies the openness of the narrative. This is Suleiman’s second feature-length film after *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, and was made following the death of his father. The film won the Jury Prize and the International Critics Prize at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival. Suleiman’s short films include *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (1990), *Homage by Assassination* (1992), *Arab-Dream* (1998) and *Cyber Palestine* (2000).

² For a further discussion of aesthetic metamorphosis see Appendix B, unpublished interview with Elia Suleiman, Mary Watson, 11 February 2007.

³ See Chapter Two on surrealist montage.

Border spaces and narrative

The story of Palestine can be thought of as a story about a constant struggle against negation, both physically and psychologically. Edward Said locates this in terms of a problematic relationship with the visual by claiming that the history of the Palestinian struggle is bound up in a “desire to be visible” (Said 2006, p. 2).⁴ The Palestinian people’s relegation to invisibility is inextricably linked to the problem of place. The idea of people made invisible through a contested relationship to place resonates with the disqualification of *Divine Intervention* from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards in 2003. There are two related accounts of this: Dabashi notes that the exclusion of the film was based on the objection that Suleiman is a “stateless person” (2006, p. 8). Newspaper accounts of the time say that the film was excluded on the grounds of Palestine not being a country (French 2003). While the emphasis is slightly different, the implication remains the same, that is, the negation of Palestine and its people, and draws attention to the relationship between identity, nation and place.⁵

But a refusal or inability to recognise does not erase: the unassailably physical presence of the Palestinian territories marked out by checkpoints and the notorious wall is weighed against its lack of UN recognition as a sovereign state; the security measures that control the space effectively shrink Palestine into a ghetto, reducing a country to a set of disconnected territories. The wall and the heavily policed checkpoints function as pronounced markers of terrain but they serve more to indicate the extent to which boundaries can fail, rather than effectively demarcating Palestinian and Israeli areas. The extensive control of borders shows mainly how imprecise borders can be and highlights the ways in which they do not naturally contain movement. And particularly in the case of Palestine and Israel, the borders also indicate how the division of land is at once contingent on and yet removed from constructions of nationhood. That this space should be so overvalued and undermined – two nations, according to Said, “both condemned to

⁴ Said contrasts this invisibility against media stereotypes of “masked Arabs” and “stone-throwing Palestinians” (2000, p. 3). But the use of stereotypes functions as another kind of invisibility, a wilful refusal to see beyond the type.

⁵ See Nizar Hassan (2006) for a discussion of how he was told his film, *Invasion* (2003), should be classified as Israeli, and not Palestinian, when he informed conference organisers that he was from Nazareth.

the same piece of land” (Rose 2000, p. 30) – questions the process by which land is invested with meaning. In *States of Fantasy*, Jacqueline Rose observes that land is always overdetermined; it carries the investment of meaning rather than its own significance (Rose 1996).

The instability of geographical boundaries extends to a porosity of filmic boundaries in Suleiman’s films. *Divine Intervention*, embodies the unreliability of borders through the way in which it undermines the conventions of editing, resulting in a non-linear narrative structure. The checkpoints, which are recast through fantasy, loom as obvious markers of borders in *Divine Intervention*.⁶ The two explicit fantasy sequences that spill out of the seams of the film both occur at the checkpoint thereby suggesting that the border negotiates the territory between fantasy and real, as well as between Israel and Palestine. But re-imagining also serves to undermine; the checkpoints read as disturbingly neurotic attempts at control and order.⁷ In addition to communicating a disjointed sense of place, the film comments on the excessive urge to contain and guard space while exploring the effects of that containment.

This discussion of borders in *Divine Intervention* is informed by the idea of border spaces as interstitial or in-between spaces, which facilitate deconstruction and allow for binary oppositions to merge and break down. Nurith Gertz (2002) locates Palestinian and Israeli cinema at an interstitial space, positioned between local and global, national and post-national, thereby emphasising a similarity of experience. For Gertz, both Palestinian and Israeli cinema operate from within the ideological frameworks of their respective societies while simultaneously retaining a distance, thereby enabling an “elastic and more inclusive language” (2002, p. 159). Considering borders in relation to film therefore opens up the possibility of dialogue, particularly

⁶ Compare representation of checkpoints in *Divine Intervention* to the representation in *Checkpoint* (Yoav Shamir 2003) an Israeli documentary that surveys the interactions at several of the checkpoints. By comparison, Suleiman’s stylised representation clearly glosses over the quiet terror of these checkpoints, for both Palestinians and the Israeli soldiers. Yet he does convey a sense of the relentless banality and petty aggression. Similarly, the film has been met with a complex response: some Palestinians feel that the stylised representation of the checkpoints has the potential to obscure rather than effectively depict the high surveillance which inhibits Palestinian movement (personal communication with Dima Abu Ghoush, Palestinian filmmaker). See my interview with Suleiman in Appendix B for a further discussion of this.

⁷ This is especially marked in the night scene where the soldier marches up and down, barking orders through the megaphone.

since film itself is inherently interstitial – the cinematic experience considered in light of Wendy Everett’s (1998) idea of the screen as threshold reminds us of the function of film as a medium.

The disputed land, that the borders attempt to delineate, is connected to a disputed history – the claims to land stem from incompatible accounts of history. Gertz and Khleifi (2003) identify an underlying tension in constructing Palestinian and Israeli narratives when they consider the difficulties of a “systematically organised history constructed on the basis of a series of destructive cataclysmic events” (p. 105). The link between narrative dispossession and national dispossession is discussed by Said (2000).⁸ Denying Palestinians a history – in the same way that bombing the Palestinian archives wipes out historical records and artefacts – becomes a premise for denying the existence of Palestine. Said observes that admitting to history admits existence (Said 2000, p. 250). This is evident in Golda Meir’s famous denial that Palestinians did not exist historically (Said 2000, p. 249).⁹ By denying the west “permission to narrate” as Said’s 1984 essay does, Said symbolically asserts an ownership over the Palestinian narrative and history; it is a repossession of the Palestinian experience and asserts a control over the processes that have undermined Palestine (2000). By wresting control of the Palestinian narrative, he serves to counter the way in which Palestinian nationhood has been undermined. Gertz and Khleifi comment on the fraught relationship between Palestinian history and narrative:

Palestinian history, then is torn between re-enactments of the past. It is a history of trauma, of an event that cannot be worked through in the conscious mind and can therefore hardly be organised within a systematic chronology of events, with rational causes and results (Gertz and Khleifi 2003, p. 110).

It becomes more possible to account for Palestinian experience by reconsidering how time, space and narrative work to communicate history. For example, Walter Benjamin’s

⁸ The question about how narrative corresponds to experience is one of the key concerns of this study and has been posed in various ways: Hayden White pursues a similar question about narrative and modernity (1996) which resonates with Hannah Arendt’s questions regarding Jewish history after the Nazis.

⁹ Joseph Massad connects Golda Meir’s denial of Palestinians to Portugal’s Antonio Salazar’s earlier declaration that “Africa does not exist” in order to locate the Palestinian experience within a broader context of colonisation (Massad 2006, p. 31).

ideas of dialectical images anticipate discontinuity by reconceiving time and considering how images reveal history.¹⁰ Suleiman indicates how Walter Benjamin influenced not only his thinking, but his approach to language:

When I read Walter Benjamin, I could relate to the way he wrote. He didn't make grammatical mistakes, but the way he broke and ruptured every single sentence he ever wrote gave me the space and freedom to express myself without any of the conventionalities that are imposed on all of us...I'd say that Benjamin was a typically diasporic writer. You see it in the structure of his language, and I can see the same chaos, or the same order that I put to the chaos, or the same chaos that I put to the order, in my films (Porton 2003, p. 26).

Suleiman's identification of rupture in Benjamin's writing resonates with his own use of film language in order to communicate rupture. He refers to his own writing as having a "stutter".¹¹ Specifically, Suleiman connects Benjamin's use of rupture to his experience of living in exile in Paris, having fled Nazi Germany; he identifies with Benjamin's diasporic experience.¹² The breakdown of conventional structure of Benjamin's language is perceived by Suleiman to correlate with his own preference for non-linearity which reveals itself primarily through an interrupted editing technique: the narrative structure of *Divine Intervention* rejects an obvious chronology and eschews linearity. Causality, although present, entails decoding riddles. By interrupting linearity, Suleiman also redefines and refuses spatial coherence. His frustration with the "usual mode of expression" led to a search for an alternative: "I discovered non-linearity was another way, and trying to question the image rather than preach it" (Butler 2003, p. 66).

Suleiman's affinity for Walter Benjamin emerges, in part, from their shared experiences of being removed from their home because of the political climate; Paris, the city of the surrealists, figures as the adopted home for both men. But Suleiman's sense of identity is further complicated by the ambiguous status conferred on Palestine by the rest of the world as well as by his own experience of having been brought up in an Arab

¹⁰ For a discussion on Walter Benjamin's concept of dialectical images see Gilloch (1997) and Pensky (2004).

¹¹ See Appendix B, unpublished interview with Elia Suleiman, Mary Watson, 11 February 2007 for a further discussion on rupture and Walter Benjamin.

¹² For an account of Benjamin's ideas in relation to his life see Roberts (1982).

community in Israel. He connects the issues of place with issues of identity as he says in an interview with Anne Bourlond: “the notion of space for me is mixed up with identity” (Bourlond 2000, p. 96). While geography is certainly not the determining factor of national identity, a lack of geographical coherence results in a dissipated sense of self in relation to community. Gertz and Khleifi write that the borders have become part of gruelling everyday experience so much so that they have become emblematic of Palestinian identity (2005). The related issues of history, narrative and land exacerbate this. Consequently, national identity is fiercely claimed and protected: Palestinian, and also Israeli, identities are experienced as constant assertion; the claims to land are also claims to legitimacy.

In his interview with Porton Suleiman says, “I don’t want to be identified as an Arab-Israeli filmmaker. I totally embrace a Palestinian identity. Until they regain their occupied land, I will be strongly and intensely Palestinian” (2003, p. 27). That he should embrace a Palestinian identity without reserve and in the same breath refer to Palestinians as “they” is telling. It indicates the ambiguity of his position, and communicates that Suleiman’s sense of his Palestinian-ness in relation to the land is partly characterised by absence. Therefore, when Suleiman says that space is mixed up with identity, he is indicating a necessary hybridity of his identity. While identity is never entirely fixed, the breakdown between geography and national identity in Palestine is jarring. Palestinian identity is claimed by Arab-Israelis, and also by exiled Palestinians like Suleiman and Said.¹³ Suleiman, rejecting identification as “Arab-Israeli” and considering himself fundamentally Palestinian while living as an exile, engages with the complexities of that identity by laying claim to a different kind of Palestine, an imagined community which, while connected to the land, transcends its limitations.¹⁴ He asserts that “Palestine does

¹³ Terms such as “Arab-Israeli”, while retaining some descriptive use, are problematic for various reasons, not least because they presume an identity distinguished primarily by the contested arrangement of space in the region. It also suggests a divisiveness which further erodes Palestine while aligning Palestinians with Israelis. But the term has currency and some Palestinians living beneath the Palestinian authority prefer the distinction. See Pruscher (1997) for an account of how Suleiman was “appalled” to find *Chronicle of a Disappearance* listed as a product of “Israel and the Palestinian Authority”. The article goes on to detail how the “dual loyalties” of Arab-Israelis creates tension between them and other Palestinians.

¹⁴ See Ella Shohat for a discussion for the converse hyphenated identity, “Arab-Jew”, in ‘Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions’ (2006c) and ‘Rupture and Return’ (2006b).

not exist. It has no borders. It has all the chaotic elements that could lead you to question space, borders, and crossings” (Bourlond 2000, p. 96). This, while appearing to echo Golda Meir, is not a negation of Palestine as a country but an assertion of the borderlessness of being Palestinian, an identity which necessitates a negotiation of the relationship between land and nationhood.

While his comment implies the separation between place and identity, it also introduces us to Suleiman’s conflation of external reality – land – and inner perception. There is an inherent contradiction in the above quotation because Suleiman counters his apparent negation (“does not exist”) with a statement that confirms “it” (Palestine) as implicitly able to negotiate ideas of space and borders and crossings thereby according some recognition of Palestine as a locus of blurred boundaries, of porosity, as Benjamin (1979b) would describe it. This is ascribing a more complex transaction between place and space where Gertz and Khleifi’s (2001) prescription for the fluidity of Palestinian cinema becomes possible; where borderlessness becomes a different kind of spatial experience. He immediately substantiates the above quotation by saying that he wants to be “fully Palestinian, to reach a total ‘Palestinian-ness’. I am not talking about blood or roots, but a more conceptual notion” (Bourlond 2000, p. 97). While Suleiman is able to abstract the idea of being Palestinian from the more usual, more basic ideas of nationhood – which may be the effect of an exilic contemplation from a distance – the discomfort is evident too. There is a persistent sense in several of his interviews of his attempts to reconcile this deep loyalty to the land with his identity as an exile of sorts. In this way his negotiation of Palestine is one which merges not only fantasy and the mundane, but the boundaries between inner and external space.

Divine Intervention, discontinuity and space

Divine Intervention can be divided into a prologue and three acts. The prologue depicts a frantic Santa chased up a hill by a group of teens and children. Gifts fall out of his sack, leaving a trail not unlike Hansel and Gretel’s breadcrumbs, but the children are out for blood. They pursue and then stab him on a hill in Nazareth. After this delightfully bizarre

opening that is seemingly unrelated to the rest of the film, the narrative settles into an uneasy pattern, then suddenly skips – this is twice marked by explosion – and a new pattern is formed.

The first act, made up of vignettes of neighbours, is twenty-five minutes long, and appears to be set in Nazareth, but the film does not clearly communicate its spatial location.¹⁵ This act is dominated by the use of long shots relentlessly strung together thereby highlighting the environment and the construction of space as well as inhibiting identification with the characters. The wide shots depict small movements and thereby resist the establishment of a conventional viewing relationship. They also overwhelmingly communicate place: the long shots highlight the physical landscape while dwarfing the characters thereby emphasising place above the individual. These vignettes develop the narrative strands in a way that gives little attention to causality and makes no attempt to locate the action in time. Indifferent neighbours do unpleasant things to each other with an impenetrable and vicious passivity. The vignettes depict small details of life in Palestine and revel in the pettiness of the neighbours: some throw dirt in each other's gardens; the road-digger punctures the child's ball; a man, after requesting that his uncooperative neighbour move his car, removes the registration plate with unnecessary violence.

The viewer experiences an ambivalent pleasure in observing the small nastiness that seems to drive the characters. This is amplified by a dissociation between the viewer and the characters as a result of the use of long shots in the first act of the film. Suleiman depicts the ways in which Palestinians turn on each other; what happens on the inside of their complex relationship with Israel.¹⁶ The people are gradually worn down by ghettoisation and dispossession until, eventually, neighbours turn on each other. But by eliciting laughter, Suleiman effectively implicates the viewer. The characters are also acted upon by unknown forces – there are disembodied voices made tinny by technology who order the removal of things and people. But this is not high political drama, it is

¹⁵ Dabashi (2006) reads the first act as occurring in Jerusalem; the half-dressed Santa in the hospital suggests that it is Nazareth, but this is hardly definitive. The spatial location is not immediately clear to the viewer.

¹⁶ See Porton (2003, p. 25) where Suleiman talks about how angry and frustrated Palestinians are and how this reflects in their behaviour towards each other. See also Butler (2003).

more the banality of unpaid bills rendered almost terrifying through the restraint of the representation.

The second act introduces ES and continues with vignettes, but this time it moves between Nazareth, Jerusalem and the checkpoint. It details the enigmatic love affair between ES and the woman from Ramallah at the Al-Ram checkpoint which connects Jerusalem and Ramallah. But the affair bypasses language and is revealed mostly through looking and touching, juxtaposed with the stylised representation of the checkpoint police. The interaction between ES and the woman is one of few medium shot reverse-shot edits in the film. Because shot reverse-shot editing is most frequently employed in order to structure dialogue, using this technique here highlights the wordlessness of their interaction and is sharply contrasted to the rest of the film which is lacking in reverse-shots. The lack of reverse-shots is emphasised by the abundance of long shots and this suggests not only an inability to empathise, but also highlights the absence of dialogue. ES and his father, and ES with the woman from Ramallah, are the only people who interact with each other in a meaningful way. The second act ends when the woman disappears.

The third act is marked by an eruption into fantasy when, after the lady lover disappears, she reappears as the “ninja babe” (Corliss and Farouky 2003) and vanquishes the soldiers at the checkpoint. Thereafter, the mundane reasserts itself (the spill is wiped up) and the film closes with the enduring image of ES and his mother (who suddenly appears at the end for the first time) watching “a pressure cooker about to explode” (Butler 2003, p. 65). The woman from Ramallah and ES do not meet again.

One of the attempts to delineate and communicate space in the film is through the extra-diegetic use of titles to name the different places where the film is located. The titles that name the cities are used inconsistently and therefore do not succeed in effectively communicating the onscreen space to the viewer. The viewer is alerted to being in Nazareth, but only at the end of the prologue; the Al-Ram checkpoint is labelled after it has already appeared in an earlier sequence. The third title is for Jerusalem, but again, this is not the first time the city is depicted. Because the narrative swings between the three different places, it is not easy for the viewer to be oriented in space. The titles are therefore confusing rather than helpful. There are obscure clues to where the first half

hour is set: the half-dressed Santa wheeling through the corner of the frame in the hospital links the prologue to the vignettes and alludes to an encrypted causality and spatial continuity. The viewer is required to make these connections, to piece together the spatial geography actively by finding the clues. The undetermined, disputed space is therefore communicated by disorientating viewers as they attempt to negotiate their way through the spatial geography of the film. The labelling of space also serves an alternative purpose. The withholding of the first title, “Nazareth” until the end of the sequence brings home the delightful irony of Santa being stabbed there by a gang of children. By not titling the first time we see the checkpoint in the watchtower sequence where the woman from Ramallah is introduced, Suleiman heightens the effect of fantasy. The next time the checkpoint is shown it is named, and this draws attention to the omission of a title in the first checkpoint scene, the watchtower sequence. This conveys a sense of this scene as existing outside of the ordinary time and space of the film.

Both the spatial geography and the non-linear narrative foreground the act of watching. As with Suleiman’s earlier feature *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), it is the relentless use of long shots that first demands a different way of seeing and constructs an alternative spatial geography in the film. *Divine Intervention* does not follow conventional editing patterns which would orchestrate establishing shots, close-ups and wider shots in order to position the viewer within the narrative and manipulate them to empathise with the characters and locate them within the situation. Departing from the norms of continuity editing in establishing screen space and time further estranges the viewer who has to piece together much of the narrative actively together with its temporal and spatial dimensions.

The film is plotted within several different kinds of spatial architecture. Firstly, there is the overall spatial coherence – or its apparent lack – across the three different locations; there is the complex relationship between off and onscreen space which is related to the representation of border space; there are the ways in which space is made fantastic; and linked to this, there is an attempt to construct what Suleiman calls “poetic space” (Butler 2003) through the investment of poetic intention into the screen space. These are all underpinned by the way that external space and more subjective states are indicated: I am interested in the relationship between physical space and psychological

space; what happens between land, mind and film. The relationship between space and the perception of this space becomes an important indicator here. Most basically, there is a blurring of boundaries between inner perceptions of space and a more objective sense of it, where both act upon each other: the external violates the internal perceptions and similarly external space is constructed through the projection of internal subjective states. This is particularly tied up with ideas relating to psychological occupation, fantasy and exile.

Psychological occupation

The way exterior realities are transformed by interior perceptions draws attention to a different kind of occupation: the psychological. Speaking of Nazareth, Suleiman says:

Well obviously I am talking about two different kinds of occupation. The occupation of 1948 Israel is no longer militaristic, there is no longer a military government with tanks and soldiers on the streets and all that. It's become psychological, economic, denial of rights, humiliation in all its forms, and its manifested in the film by the ghetto atmosphere (Butler 2003, p. 70).

One of Suleiman's primary aims in the first part of the film is to show how communication inside Arab communities has broken down and to indicate the ghetto atmosphere of Nazareth.¹⁷ The blurring of reality and fantasy also indicates a psychological realism that is more suited to representing the lived reality of Palestine. Suleiman observes:

During the period before I left Palestine, I had the feeling that I couldn't find my own space anywhere. Even in my own house. The images and the sounds I perceived were no longer anything but the representations of all sorts of occupations, intrusions (sirens, the sounds of tires). Even the silence had become noisy. It was a violation of my interior space. I was overwhelmed by external reality and being taken away from what was inside me and what is the most

¹⁷ See Oppenheimer (2003) and Butler (2003).

precious to me. I needed another perspective that would allow me to *see* again.

But now I am back. Well, more or less...(Bourlond 2000, p. 101).

Suleiman here indicates a psychological invasion – he suggests that the occupation of the exterior becomes internalised as his interior space (his house) is invaded by the exterior signifiers of the occupation. The boundaries between the personal and public are eroded and there is little discernment of the interior and exterior realities: the objective world is infused by his subjective experience of occupation as the ordinary makes way for an overwhelming sensory invasion. Similarly, the sense of shrill sounds ringing through these emptied spaces is communicated by the film. Crucially, he links his inability to find his sense of space with needing to find a perspective that would allow him to see. His perception of the exterior world is distorted by his inner perception.

This external manifestation of internal processes is particularly evident in Suleiman's representation of Jerusalem and Nazareth. The viewer has to work hard to enter, which is one way of representing a contested space: the shots are static, they emphasise walls and therefore their own frames in order to communicate a sense of being closed in. By depicting small figures in a frame, Suleiman effectively cages them in. Most immediately the unrelieved use of long shots distances the viewer from what happens on screen and the towns are made smaller and more foreign, unreachable and impenetrable. The long shots also serve to empty out the space – watching tiny figures scrambling in the corner of the frame mostly highlights the stillness.

Describing Benjamin's writings on perspectives and the city, Gilloch discusses how these spaces may become estranged:

... a subtle interplay of perspectives in which closeness is paradoxically achieved through distance. The city is rendered strange through not so much a simple effect of distance, but rather through the continual movement or fluctuation of vantage-points. Benjamin's images of the city are not static but dialectical in character.

His "doubly alien view" is precisely the sense of distortion by being too close to an object on one hand, and too far from it on the other (Gilloch 1996, p. 62).

Suleiman presents this fluctuating vantage point in his film by scrambling the laws of continuity editing. Editing constructs spatial geography in film through implicitly suggesting how space works off-screen in order to maintain the illusion of continuity.

This also sheds light on how the off-screen space is organised and made coherent in relation to onscreen space. Because he returns to the same images of the town, he creates a sense of familiarity. But the connections between various places in the vignettes become clear only after watching several times: the viewer is not really in a position to piece together, for example, that the flight of stairs in one vignette provides a link to another scene. Suleiman frequently repeats places, but from different perspectives and sometimes with different characters. Each time, there is a carefully controlled variation on what has been before, and how it is seen. This is particularly evident in the depiction of the road-digger. By doing this, he makes the street at once familiar and strange. Benjamin's conception of the urban landscape as maze in which to wander and lose oneself (Gilloch 1997) is therefore appropriated and reworked. In the first act, the maze is constructed by the same shots, but slightly altered, and compounded by the dizzying effect caused by defying the 180-degree rule. In this way, Suleiman effectively creates a one-street labyrinth which is underpinned by the sense of ruin and stagnation, highlighted by the crumbling buildings and peeled paint. This is exacerbated because the characters are often lost in the static frame; they are small figures doing things that are not always easy to decipher. In addition, there is an emphasis on flat surfaces: roads with little perspective, buildings with no depth. The flatness of the depth of field in the exterior shots accentuates the sense of entrapment already created by the framing which effectively communicates the claustrophobia of ghettoisation. The viewer's sense of the continuity of off-screen space is fragmented and this exacerbates the flatness of space.

The sense of decay permeates not only the external space but is also internalised by the behaviour of the characters. In addition to exhibiting an incompatibility with each other, they do not fit comfortably into their environment. In some ways, an underlying feature of these vignettes is a war over territory, as they are all also acting out a relationship to the land – a lot of the action involves the people desecrating their environment. The road-digger hacks at the road with his pick-axe, the neighbours throw their dirt into each other's gardens, the woman scrabbles about in an empty field; one neighbour objects to where the other has parked, therefore causing the car dispute. There is a sense of the characters being angry with the land and this is manifested through a hostile relationship with each other. The land becomes more than a background, rather it

functions as a central player in the film. Through the use of long shots, it becomes overwhelmingly present, emphasised by the comparative absence of interior spaces.

Another kind of psychological occupation is related to the ways in which the viewer is manipulated in space in the film through editing; the ways in which we are invited to occupy or inhabit the film psychologically. I have discussed how the arrangement of shots scrambles continuity editing and the consequences that this has for the viewer. The marked lack of reverse-shots means that the few present are striking. The second last image of the film (ES and his mother watching the pot) is the reverse-shot of the earlier images of the father sitting in the kitchen which progresses to the point where after opening his mail, he stands up and has a heart attack. Inserting the reverse-shot at the very end of the film creates the sense of having withheld that shot; it reminds us of the one-sided way in which Suleiman's editing works. The viewer is not sutured inside the screen space because of the lack of reverse-shots. Coming too late, the reverse-shot of the father's kitchen fails to pin us within the shots, yet belatedly offers us the other dimension. By letting us know what is on the other side of that room, it emphasises what has been withheld. Similarly, by showing the mother for the first time at the end in the withheld reverse-shot of the kitchen, the viewer realises how the film has been communicating through absence. When the viewer finally sees the reverse-shot of the earlier shots that capture the father within the privacy of his morning routines, it engages a different kind of dialogue – one that speaks to many of the earlier shots, emphasising the lack of linearity to the film.

The idea of psychological occupation also resonates with many of the issues that emerge in exilic cinema. Palestinian cinema can be read in light of Nacify's writing on exilic cinema because of the way in which the checkpoints and wall disconnect people from their own spaces; one could argue that most Palestinians who are denied free movement from one part of their home to another experience some elements of exile.¹⁸ *Divine Intervention*, specifically, can be read as exilic because of Suleiman's relocation to Paris. The nature of exilic cinema is to carry a conflicting sense of being involved with

¹⁸ My discussion here draws primarily on Nacify (2001) but see also 'Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics' (Nacify 2003); 'Palestinian Exilic Cinema and Film Letters' (Nacify 2006) and *Home, Exile, Home* (Nacify 1999) for a more complete discussion on exilic cinema.

and yet at a remove from the represented space (Naficy 2001). Naficy talks about space in exilic films in terms of two distinct attitudes as he says that their necessary “preoccupation with place is expressed in their open and closed space-time (chronotopical) representations” (Naficy 2001, p. 12). In other words, he identifies representations of homelands as emphasising a “boundlessness and timelessness” marked by a “fetishisation and nostalgic longing to the homeland’s natural landscape” (p. 5). Exile is usually represented as claustrophobic, confined and controlled while the homeland expands in space and time. While there are elements of open space and expanded time in *Divine Intervention*, these contrast with the tighter, more claustrophobic representations of space and this engages a tension between the two.

Suleiman’s representation in *Divine Intervention* contrasts with *Wedding in Galilee* (Michel Khleifi 1987), which also explores a relationship between landscape and occupation. Suleiman describes Khleifi’s representation as a “folklorist” and “orientalist” representation of Palestine from which he deliberately moved away (Porton 2003, p. 27).¹⁹ Khleifi depicts a more metaphorical landscape: a classic example of the boundless exilic camera can be found in the core image of a horse breaking free and running across open land riddled with landmines.²⁰ The boundless exilic camera is meant to imply an imaginary repossession; it suggests a very subjective relationship between the land and the filmmaker which is frequently filtered through nostalgia and longing.

Naficy (2001) ascribes an underlying continuity to narratives of homeland, while the exilic experience is characterised by rupture. *Divine Intervention*, on the other hand, introduces rupture, discontinuity and confinement to its homeland, while retaining a sense of nostalgia, of boundlessness and timelessness. Suleiman depicts both the beauty of the landscape and simultaneously communicates a sense of desolation. The cypress trees at the beginning and the architecture are simultaneously beautiful as the camera emphasises landscape through long shot, yet the flaws are revealed in greater detail: the

¹⁹ Khleifi has for many years been one of the best known Palestinian filmmakers outside of Palestine; see Khleifi (2006). With *Divine Intervention* winning at Cannes, Suleiman is increasingly garnering interest from outside of Palestine; the ninja sequence caused some controversy.

²⁰ *Wedding in Galilee* caused controversy when it was first released as it was thought to show excessive female nudity in addition to dealing with sexual impotence (Naficy, 2006). The impotence can be read as analogy, as well as commenting on Palestinian masculinity in a context where agency is consistently undermined.

half-built buildings create a sense of ruin and the rocks and wasted ground are blights on the landscape.²¹

Because exile is marked by alienation, transposing the effects of exile onto home territory highlights the connections between the people there. These may be ambivalent, as the opening sequence where the father curses his neighbours indicates, but the sequence also reveals that he has a relationship with everyone in the street; the pettiness of the hostility suggests an underlying familial closeness. The idea of a fraught connectedness is communicated in many ways: through the hostile behaviour of the neighbours to one another and by repeating different characters in different contexts. For example, one of the first characters we are introduced to is the man who waits at the bus stop. This same man is also shown, with a double, at the father's panel beating place in the strange sequence with the man who compulsively says six. Having the viewer recognise these characters in different contexts, like the Santa in the hospital, makes for an underlying continuity through the community.

Screen space as poetic space

In his interview with Linda Butler, Suleiman observes, "If you have answers for an image, there is no poetic space for it. Already there is a closure of some kind" (Butler 2003, p. 65).²² Suleiman's construction of an open, non-linear narrative with images that may be interpreted in multiple ways, draws on what he terms "poetic space"; he aligns his non-linearity to what he calls his "lack of narrative".²³ His idea of poetic space is the translation of the non-linearity of poetry to film (Butler 2003). These images form a montage that is reminiscent of Eisenstein's writing on the relationship of the 'haikai' and 'tanka' to editing (Eisenstein 2004a) and Man Ray's cinemoems. Eisenstein's discussion of the poetry of the image in terms of a third meaning hinges upon the association –

²¹ See Gertz and Khleifi (2005) for a discussion of the differences and similarities in Suleiman's representation of space in *Chronicle of a Disappearance* and *Divine Intervention* as the films respond to an increasingly tense political situation.

²² The idea of poetic space is a topic that Suleiman frequently discusses and recurs in several of the interviews cited in this chapter. See also Bourlond (2000) and Porton (2003).

²³ See Appendix B, unpublished interview with Elia Suleiman, Mary Watson, 11 February 2007.

collision – of different images; in addition to allusion, the poetry of the image is also developed by the ways in which it relates to other images in the film. Because the film works with minimal dialogue, it relies heavily on telling its stories through pictures, thereby emphasising the editing of the film in order to construct its poetic space. Susan Buck-Morss (1989) in her attempt to reconstruct Benjamin's Arcades project, sums up the two alternatives by which montage may engage with reality. Either "the construction makes visible the gap between the sign and the referent, or fuses them in a deceptive totality so that the caption merely duplicates the semiotic content of the image instead of setting them into question" (Buck-Morss 1989, p. 68). Suleiman rejects totality and draws his images together in a way that creates questions. His attempt to construct screen space as poetic space allows for the viewer to insert themselves and to read images as open, filled with multiple layers of meaning. The relationship between images in sequence directs the ways in which the viewer may interpret these images

Divine Intervention is cut together in a way that serves primarily to contain; it is sequenced so as to hold back, to keep at bay any underlying volatile elements, particularly violence.²⁴ One of its techniques for restraint is the establishment of poetic space which serves to displace meaning through sequences of images. Branigan (1984) links condensation and displacement in film narratives to metaphor and metonymy and the effect here is similar. Suleiman's restrained control of images entails meaning displaced into consecutive images – a series of waves, as it were – until it can no longer be contained.²⁵ The images are layered and encrypted and serve to deceive the viewer; it is as if they are in disguise and it is only by looking askance that their meanings may be discerned. The logic and order are clear, but it is an alternative logic and order, one that re-inscribes conventional ideas of causality. This displacement is also realised through the framing, and through the use of devices such as mirrors and windows to mediate

²⁴ Suleiman says to Butler "You can say that *Chronicle* depicts the calm before the storm – there's still a sweetness and tender moments despite the great underlying tension. But in this latest film things broke loose. There's a total breakdown in communication, and the occupation is far more evident – even though the film takes place before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada. There's also the uncensored violence of the director, which is myself. If *Chronicle* is the silence before the storm, *Divine Intervention* is the very early stages of a volcanic eruption, before it actually spews out the lava, but where you can see the sparks and all the warning signs that you have to evacuate immediately" (Butler 2003, p. 63).

²⁵ See my discussion on psychoanalytic displacement in Chapter Two.

images, particularly shots of characters, before the viewer receives them. For example, the opening sequence in which the father drives past his neighbours invites a limited insight into the father's point-of-view by using an over-the-shoulder shot. It simultaneously allows the viewer to watch his eyes in the rear-view mirror. The viewer is then caught, Janus-like, between watching from a character's point-of-view while watching the character at the same time and is immersed in neither. This split is echoed by the content of the shot as the father simultaneously waves to and curses his neighbours who are out of hearing. The displacement also indicates one of the ways in which the film is playfully duplicitous, how the film lies to the viewer and retains its distance by keeping the viewer uncertain about what is true and what is not. The blurring of fantasies and the real means that viewers are not entirely certain where they stand. There are no dissolves, fades or colour-graded sequences to neatly point the way to a linear reading and distinguish the various narrative strands from each other.²⁶ Therefore, the film maintains a steady distance; it is always one step removed. But the displacement is also a deferral of meaning, where each shot is imprinted with the meaning of the previous shots. Because there is no immediate significance to much of the action in the vignettes, it can be read in terms of an accumulated significance, that relies fundamentally on the shots around it, on the scenes that have come before. For example, the sequence of ES with the Yasser Arafat balloon does not simply begin with the two faces (ES and Arafat on a balloon) and end with the soldiers shooting at the balloon; rather they allude to references outside of the film (Arafat) as well as to other sequences within, particularly those relating to the woman from Ramallah at the border.

On a broader narrative scale, the little movements in the vignettes in the first act are displaced into the love sequence at the checkpoint – this sequence bears the weight of the vignettes. For example, there is a sequence that is repeated three times with some variation: a man waits at the bus stop while knowing that the bus will not come. Each time a second man comes out of a building and gets frustrated because the first is waiting

²⁶ While there are fades, these are not used in a way that would structure the film according to time, or to mark fantasies as such. Suleiman says in an interview that he did not want to “segregate the fantasy from the reality by putting the dream in blurry images or showing that it’s a flashback in some other technical way” (Butler 2003, p. 69). The fade to white after the watchtower sequence only registers in retrospect; on first viewing it does not signal an alternate realm.

for a bus that will not arrive. Because there is clearly some development – we are not caught in a time loop – the repeated vignettes have slight variations that shift and revise the scene just a bit. The first time it plays, the second man is frustrated because he knows that the bus will not arrive. Later, the second man is frustrated because he knows that the man who is waiting knows that the bus will not come. The third time, instead of talking about the bus, both men are wordlessly alerted to the graffiti that says “I am crazy because I love you”. The graffiti is balanced above the two men positioned at either end of the frame, thereby linking them through the composition of the shot while simultaneously alluding to the love story at the core of the film. When we encounter causality in the film, it is removed from conventional reasoning; the graffiti attributes a causality to love: madness. In the logic of the film, love entails madness – as it did for the surrealists – and consequently another layer is added to the romance on the border, thereby weighted by meanings that do not quite fit in the first part of the film. I am reminded particularly of Bataille’s (the erstwhile surrealist) link between copulation and copula: that linkage between sentences somehow corresponds to a more sexual connection.²⁷ This of course resonates with editing, that other kind of linkage. The romance in the *Divine Intervention* becomes another way of exploring linkage with its inevitable gaps. Romance then reads as analogous to border spaces, particularly since the romance between ES and the woman from Ramallah occurs in the area around the checkpoints, the border space. This resonates with the recurring theme of weddings and marriage in recent Palestinian film: *Wedding in Galilee* (1987), *Rana’s Wedding* (Hany Abu-Assad 2002) and *Wedding in Ramallah* (Sherine Salama 2002). Weddings allow these filmmakers to explore social dynamics through social gatherings and these dynamics usually show a society somehow misshapen by the political situation. For example, in Khleifi’s film, in order to avoid the curfew affecting the wedding, the father negotiates with the Israeli soldiers and the condition for having the wedding is that the soldiers attend. Weddings therefore function in the same way as borders do, they

²⁷ “...[B]ecause with aid of a copula, each sentence ties one thing to another; all things would be visibly connected if one could discover at a single glance and in its totality the tracings of an Ariadnes’s thread leading thought into its own labyrinth. But the copula of terms is no less irritating than the copulation of bodies” (Bataille 1985, p. 5).

highlight the ways in which things can be separate and joined at the same time and indicate the potential for dialogue.

In *Divine Intervention*, the romance functions to highlight the simultaneous link and divide between Palestinian areas. The checkpoints resurface in the film as the backdrop to love, that other interstitial zone. Juxtaposing the checkpoint with the silent lovers infuses the romance with a restraint and a constraint which is further communicated by the structure of their interaction – the shot reverse-shot and wordless touching, discussed earlier. The restrained passion with which the romance is depicted is, in turn, displaced into the “ninja” sequence rather than culminating in any kind of union between the two characters. By engaging with the poetry of the border, Suleiman highlights juxtaposition; he is positioned to explore the places where the contradictory meet. By emphasising boundaries, his representation also draws attention to the nature of editing – that filmmaking is also about negotiating boundaries. The shot is inherently bordered as it begins with its head and ends with its tail;²⁸ the joining of shots necessitates that these borders are porous. The border romance has elements of the implausible: the immutable border that divides the lovers is a poetic effect rather than an attempt to capture a realistic image of the border checkpoints. Suleiman’s depiction takes the checkpoints to their logical conclusion by highlighting their absurdity; it engages with that other kind of fantasy, the bizarre and unreal. By engaging with the bizarre, Suleiman adds an additional layer to his narrative and this further informs his construction of poetic space.

The element of the absurd is introduced from the very start and Suleiman cues the viewer how to read the film already in the prologue where Santa, in his incongruously hot woolly suit, is stabbed by the gang of children. The stabbing of Santa, not unlike the slicing of an eyeball, signals the premise from which the film must be viewed. As I have shown, the image of the sliced eyeball in *Un Chien Andalou* comments on the act of viewing through its assault on the eye (Chapter Two). Fotiade (1995) refers to a “parted” or “untamed” eye which presumes a fundamental split in vision – cutting the eye implies access of vision to the realms that lurk beneath; to see beyond the immediately visible.

²⁸ “Head” is the term used by editors to refer to the beginning of the shot, and the “tail” the end.

Because Suleiman's Santa is stabbed just beneath the frame, the viewer is required to piece together the shots in order to realise the violence and thereby actively participates in constructing the narrative: we take on the action of stabbing Santa. This is not unlike the stabbing in the shower scene of *Psycho*, discussed in Chapter One. Both the killing of Santa and the slicing of the eye indicate an underlying violence; both draw attention to the act of seeing. But in *Divine Intervention* this occurs primarily through what we do not see, what happens outside the frame, as opposed to the close up of the sliced eyeball – so carefully exposed – which demands a visceral response.

Like *Un Chien Andalou*, this prologue introduces the alternative logic upon which the film is premised. Both work at levels of allusion – stabbing Santa in Nazareth recalls and deflates Christmas stories by drawing the two rival myths together. This violence, indicated just out of shot, is typical of the way that violence is depicted in the film. It is possible to interpret Suleiman's twist on Santa in Nazareth as culturally significant – there are many good reasons for wanting to stab Santa, for example, an assault on Western narratives of Nazareth.²⁹ But I am more interested in the way that Suleiman orchestrates this scene in order to develop an associative logic marked by things that happen at the edges of the frame, just out of our line of vision. Suleiman uses this, not unlike Buñuel and Dalí did, in order to signal to the viewer their role in constructing meaning through the rest of the film. In itself, the prologue is not an integral part of the film as none of the characters in this sequence reappear, but for a man in a Santa suit wheeled by in the hospital. As a prologue, this scene fails to introduce the story of the film. Rather, it introduces the element of underlying violence and also indicates how the images in the film should be read. It introduces the conflicting claims that permeate the film through the juxtaposition of Christian mythology and the children of Nazareth. The image of Santa is unexpectedly out of place as it is superimposed on the play-territory of the Palestinian children. The ensuing violent conflict leaves no room for the co-existence of these opposites.

²⁹ In the interview with Richard Porton, Suleiman says, "Nazareth is the best place to stab Santa. When people know that I'm from Nazareth, they say, "Wow, that was where Jesus walked." But you should go and see for yourself the kids who live in Nazareth today. They lost their innocence years ago and there is nothing left for them to do. So, fuck Santa... In fact, it's a great opening because you get a definite idea of the breakdown in communication that comes later in the film" (2003, p. 25).

It is also significant that the violence occurs off-screen – it is another way of articulating the underlying violence of the film that is contained through the editing, through absence and through displacement. The violence is hidden, along with the sense of the continuity of space. But this, like the slicing of the eyeball, is not a haphazard violence: it is very carefully controlled, very precise and masked by a dark humour. Asked about the relationship between the violence and the fantasy sequences, Suleiman responds:

...after seeing the film twice I noticed that, consciously or unconsciously, every time there is violence, it gets aborted in some way. Even structurally. For instance, right after the Ninja sequence we cut to a banal everyday scene when I'm chopping onions in the kitchen. It's the same impotence I show at the checkpoint scenes. I now see that I interrupt this violence myself – I guess this is who I am in a way (Butler 2003, p. 65).

Suleiman draws attention to how the violence is structurally restrained by the narrative through the editing. The promise of violence in the Ninja sequence is displaced into the sharp knife chopping onions in wide shot. In addition, many of the low-level, unexplained bouts of violence, particularly in the first twenty-five minutes are filtered by the onscreen/off-screen spatial divide. The off-screen violence is alluded to through sound and, like the stabbing of Santa, the father beating up the road-digger – for what might or might not be related to the punctured ball. The interrupted causality leaves a gap here and what happens is inferred by piecing shots together. This serves to fragment the action, and thereby to further displace and mediate. In the case of the onscreen images that actually depict violence, for example, the road-digger throwing bottles, the actual puncturing of the ball, the beating of the snake, the violence is perpetrated by figures made so tiny by long shot that it is as if looking down the wrong side of a telescope. This also serves to remove and sustain the underlying low-grade violence. Suleiman's attempt to construct poetic space therefore becomes a way of transmuting horror to poetry.

Poetic space is linked to another way in which filmic space is layered with meaning: the creation of fantasy space:

I think that to give a little metaphor, when I make films, I finish a tableau and then make another and another and another; I think they fit into some kind of

cosmos, and that cosmos is in motion. And so this is an ideal situation for me, that the spectator looks at this cosmos with different circulation, and different movement and different temporalities and can democratically move or be seduced by one temporality or go to another and live in that cosmos, rather than if it had, let's say a beginning middle and an end.³⁰

The montaged tableaux, which make up the non-linear poetic space, can also be read as an alternative realm or a different temporality. In *Divine Intervention*, this becomes the site for wish-fulfilment.

Fantasy space

An alternative way of looking is encoded by arranging shots in a way that departs from editing norms. This coincides with the underlying preoccupation of surrealism and magical realism: the perception of mystery behind the implacable materiality of the depiction; how, by scrambling the cues of perception, the ordinary is offered up for reinterpretation. The way that the material is organised alters the viewer's perception and introduces elements of fantasy into the real. Rather than a fantastic representation as Todorov (1973) describes, the fantasy in *Divine Intervention*, is best understood in psychoanalytic terms. This is fantasy as psychic process which indicates a working through as it intersects the real and the imaginary. In their essay in *Formations of Fantasy* (1986), Laplanche and Pontalis locate fantasy in the opposition between subjective and objective; "between an inner world where satisfaction is obtained through illusion and an external world which gradually, through the medium of perception, asserts the supremacy of the reality principle" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1986, p. 6). Again, there is a correlation between the border space in the film and the idea of fantasy emerging from an interstitial space between the psychic and external world. Since these fantasies occur at the checkpoint, they emerge quite literally from the border space. This becomes a way of refiguring the checkpoints through the interaction between the imagination and reality.

³⁰ Appendix B, unpublished interview with Elia Suleiman, Mary Watson, 11 February 2007.

What I wanted to do in this film was to bring the imagined to potential reality and vice versa. For instance, all those Nazareth scenes might just be part of a script that I am writing. Because later in the film, in Jerusalem, you see me with all those cards, remember? I'm working on the scenario, shifting these cards that represent scenes: "father gets sick" and so on. So it's not clear whether what we saw up until then – that is, all the Nazareth scenes – are supposed to have just happened or whether it's a script he wants to make, a flashback – we don't know in fact. I was trying to blur the boundary between the reality and the imagined. Just like you're daydreaming while driving in a car, and then you come to yourself and you're just driving along. That's what I did in the film (Suleiman cited in Butler 2003, p. 69).

Fantasy works at different levels in *Divine Intervention* – first, there is the "potential reality" infused with the imagined, in other words, the subtly undermined ordinary. The very mundane content of some of the images (like the long opening sequence in *Chronicle of a Disappearance* where a tiny figure on a couch gossips to the camera), heightened by the static, wide framing, makes for a bizarre yet subtle subversion. The undermining of the ordinary also occurs through the way in which objects are reconceived: an apricot pip may become a grenade and explode a tank; a balloon bearing the image of Arafat wreaks havoc at the checkpoint; the watchtower at the checkpoint, invested with an obvious allusion, collapses as a consciously beautiful woman walks across the border. There is a similar kind of reworking of the object in surrealism most famously exemplified by Magritte's pipe and apple. Gertz and Khleifi consider Suleiman's use of objects in terms of their symbolic value as Palestinian artefacts (or even souvenirs) as they say:

Suleiman's film *Divine Intervention* for instance, avails itself of the entire inventory of symbols used by Palestinian culture in general and by Palestinian cinema (including Suleiman's other films) in particular: *keffiyeh*, rifle, Kalachnikov, hand grenade, broken down car, barricaded road, the mosque in Jerusalem, pictures of Arafat, kites and birds in the sky, the Muslim symbol of star and crescent, and a map of Palestine. There is hardly a symbol that has ever

adorned a Palestinian film or literary work that didn't find its way into this film (Gertz and Khleifi 2005, p. 328-9).

But Gertz and Khleifi go on to discuss Suleiman's distinctive use of these symbols through "parody, humour and the absurd" which simultaneously restores meaning to them while revealing them as a "stereotype that conceals the impossibility of grasping reality itself" (2005, p. 329). Suleiman therefore presents his objects as simultaneously material and symbolic, ordinary and infused with fantasy.

But there are also fantasy sequences that operate outside of the recognisably real. While the first level of engagement with fantasy in *Divine Intervention* occurs through the rendering strange of the normal and correlates to Freud's uncanny, the second can be seen in the two interactions between the woman from Ramallah and the checkpoint police. Linked to this second level of fantasy, is the most immediately recognisable fantasy space: the alchemical space of the film screen itself. This is the screen as a magic canvas upon which the viewer's (or filmmaker's) fantasies may be projected and where underlying psychological processes are at play. These fantasies are moments of escape in the film: they erupt from the tightly controlled and restrained sequences that precede them. They are the kinds of fantasies that Jacqueline Rose calls the "dirty tricks of the mind"—the kind of fantasy that "sheds its illicit private nature and goes to work in the world at large" (1996, p. 3). Rose discusses the role of fantasy in sustaining the idea of Israeli nationhood:

[I]t seems as if Israel cannot grant statehood to the Palestinians, not just because of felt real and present danger, but also because so great is the charge of fantasy against such a possibility that, were it to be granted, the nation would lose all inner rationale and psychically collapse in on itself (Rose 1996, p. 4).

Rose is identifying the way nations fantasise themselves into being; at the core of Israel's fantasy of itself, she suggests, is the inability to recognise Palestine. It is significant that Suleiman's engagement of fantasy as psychic process occurs at the border, it is at the space just between Israel and Palestine that these erupt, reiterating the dangers of interstices. Interestingly, much of the film is set in East Jerusalem and Nazareth; while hovering at the checkpoint to Ramallah, the film hesitates there and does not venture in. The fantasy, like the woman from Ramallah, emerges from Palestine and moves out

towards Israel. The woman from Ramallah is invested with a mystery and this is related to the viewer's inability to locate her spatially – she appears to emerge from a fantasy and then disappears into one.

My discussion of frontiers in relation to Teboho Mahlatsi recognises that border spaces also function as extreme spaces; they signify places that are on the edge, forbidden and potentially transgressive. Gertz and Khleifi discuss Palestinian space as “threatened, narrowed or reduced” as a result of the intifada and of Israeli occupation (2005, p. 319). The fantasy sequences communicate both transgression and also threat; they clearly indicate a reaction against the checkpoints. In these fantasy sequences, the woman from Ramallah, escaping momentarily from her powerlessness, takes agency and acts against the checkpoint soldiers. Because of the stylised nature of these encounters, these figures do not signify Israeli military power as much as they are guardians of space. They function more metaphorically to inhibit movement, and Suleiman uses the border romance between ES and the woman from Ramallah to indicate this.

In the first fantasy, it is a sexualised aggression that emerges: a beautiful woman walks down the road and through the restricted zone while the soldiers are powerless to stop her (see figure 14). The watchtower –indicating masculinity as well a means of policing space – collapses. The scene enacts the desire to reclaim space and also to reclaim agency from a position of powerlessness, as the sequence begins with a long, frustrated, unmoving queue of cars waiting to cross the checkpoint. But this fantasy is conscious of the medium of film. It is the kind of image with which the viewer is acquainted; it is borrowed or recycled from other moments of popular culture: shampoo or perfume adverts.³¹ This invests the image with a sense of playfulness and humour, flirting with the absurd. Similarly, the second sequence, which Batigne, the cinematographer describes as “kind of like *The Matrix* but shot like Bresson” (Oppenheimer 2003, p. 14) also takes its currency from popular culture. It is interesting that this fantasy draws on the currency of popular film. There is a resonance with my earlier discussion of how it becomes possible to articulate violence by using images from films (Chapter Five). In *Divine Intervention*, this is simultaneously a way to express an

³¹ Batigne says that “... the sequence was filmed like a surreal shampoo commercial” (Oppenheimer 2003, p. 14).

underlying violence, but also manifests as fantasy and coincides with the idea of the film screen as a fantasy space. This fantasy is an eruption of violence as the woman from Ramallah takes agency and acts against the soldiers. The violence is stylised and unreal; synchronised cart wheeling from the Israeli soldiers does not create the impression of unrestrained violence. But it is also quite unambiguous as she destroys the men; the scene does not shy away from guns and grenades. The woman from Ramallah vanquishes the soldiers before flying away with a halo of bullets like a crown of thorns (see figure 15). It seems an obvious kind of fantasy: the desire to strike back and to do so in a spectacular way; a moment that erupts in response to the frustration and humiliation of having one's movements restricted by the checkpoints. The fantasies appear to belong to ES, and he projects the desire for agency onto the woman from Ramallah. These fantasies are significant because they enact a symbolic escape; they function as wish-fulfilment, externalising the interior world of the ES character and redressing the powerlessness of the characters. The narrative depicts the entrapment of the Palestinians on a structural level as well as through the composition, framing and content. By using fantasy, Suleiman breaks down the narrative in order to show an alternative route, one that eludes the preset paths. These fantasies can be considered as subjective states: spaces where political subjectivity intersects with interior experience; they begin to reveal how subjective experience is linked to the construction of political subjectivity.

Conclusion

Palestinian filmmaker, Omar al-Qattan observes of filmmaking in Palestine:

One of the things that I have learnt over the last fourteen years making films as a Palestinian is how organically linked are the subjective and objective, metaphor and militancy, the aesthetic and the political (Al-Qattan 2006, p. 111).

In *Divine Intervention*, Suleiman, like al-Qattan, merges the subjective into the objective, communicates militancy and the political through metaphor and the aesthetic. *Divine Intervention* constructs a playful and complex representation of space in the film and engages two different levels of fantasy: an interrupted or deviant realism and a more

psychoanalytic understanding of fantasy as psychic process. The alternative spatial geography undermines the effect of realism and works in conjunction with the more obvious fantastic elements. Similarly, Suleiman's fictionalised insertion of himself as ES in the film is marked by the sense of being unable to place him in space and time while disorientating the viewer by further blurring the line between what is fiction, real and fantasy. The fantasies in *Divine Intervention* emerge primarily through the structure, rather than through the cosmetic appearance of the unreal. They spill out of the seams, or else they are undermined through an attention to detail. There is a sense of a minutely detailed reality that is out of kilter or off centre. As with surrealism, objects are redefined by the way that they appear in sequence. The eruptions of fantasy correspond to the eruptions of violence in the otherwise taut and restrained narrative.



Figure 14



Figure 15

Conclusion

Cutters usually say that once they see the warm red blood flowing out of the self-inflicted wound, they feel alive again, firmly rooted in reality. So although, of course, cutting is a pathological phenomenon, it is none the less a pathological attempt at regaining some kind of normality, at avoiding a total psychotic breakdown.

(Žižek 2002, p. 10)

Cutting in film can at times signify pathology, as my discussion on Teboho Mahlatsi's short film suggests, but it can also potentially reconcile representation and experience. The cutters in Žižek's discussion find that the act of cutting (as self-mutilation) helps them to root themselves more firmly in reality and similarly filmic disjuncture, brought about through discontinuous cutting, can serve to ground representation in an underlying reality that eludes a smoother and more contiguous telling. Žižek considers that, rather than a destructive act, cutting is affirmative and counteracts the "unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as non-existent" (Žižek 2002, p.10). My argument for the emphasised cut also works against invisibility and erasure, the side effects of seamlessness. In the last few chapters, I have considered several possibilities for how disrupted editing may offer an alternative construction of reality; I have also considered how representations which deviate from realism, such as magical realism and surrealism, structure narratives, with particular emphasis on editing.

Magical realism and surrealism present realisms that veer off course. Surrealist art can gain access to a surreality in which the dream and the quotidian are fused. Similarly, magical realism presents a world where the ordinary and the magical co-exist; where the magical emerges through detailed depiction of the commonplace and where the ordinariness of magic provides fresh insight into the objective world. Because both

modes are essentially forms of realism, the incorporation of the phantasmagoric signals formal disruption to narrative. Through the incorporation of dreams, fantasy and the marvellous, both modes have codified ways of communicating experience such that the objective world becomes infused with the subjective.

My three case studies, Švankmajer, Mahlatsi and Suleiman, all make distinct uses of fantasy as interruption. In all three cases, there is a clear relationship between the particular kind of fantasy, how it disrupts the narrative, and the function of this fantasy in relation to the context of the film. Švankmajer's films are contextualised by his identity as a surrealist, working as an animator in a city with a legacy of artistic representation through puppetry, and in a country whose political context over the years has informed his subterranean subversions. Fantasy, or rather the marvellous, for Švankmajer occurs through his relationship with objects which he considers to be charged through their contact with the world. His style of filmmaking is a kind of enchantment as it animates these objects. Fantasy is often experienced as integration, and the disrupted narrative is evident through a steady blurring of the line between alive and inanimate, the magical and the quotidian. The revision of objects in Švankmajer's films resonates with the reconceived object in both magical realism and surrealism, as well as with the representation of objects in *Divine Intervention*; this is taken up by Mahlatsi as he pins narrative continuity on his use of symbols which are effectively township iconography (township dog; wheelchair) made laden with meaning and also through his use of magical objects in *Sekalli le Meogko*. These films offer meditations on the world of objects, and by incorporating these into the disrupted narratives, they function to illuminate or communicate the subjective. Objects may be redefined through the use of disruption and disjuncture and therefore become exterior manifestations of interior processes. In my discussion on surrealism, on magical realism, and all three case studies, there is an underlying connection through the way in which objects become mysterious: the androgen's box, Kusturica's boxes, Švankmajer's objects, Suleiman's Palestinian artefacts and Mahlatsi's concertina and TV box all speak to each other as they share a similar disruptive quality.

Teboho Mahlatsi's filmmaking occurs in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Made in 1999, in what can be considered the transition years, *Portrait of a Young*

Man Drowning contains some of the core contradictions of its context: on one hand, it grapples with the effects of a difficult past, while on the other attempting to free itself of that past by drawing on a popular aesthetic. In this film, fantasy is discordant and almost violently disruptive; it ruptures the narrative and forces its way out. These fantasies are aligned with false memories; the film consolidates around loss and absence which emerge through the inserted shots, falling somewhere between memory and fantasy. My reading considers the film itself as diseased or injured through its cuts and therefore materially embodying the traumas it explores.

In *Divine Intervention*, there are two different ways in which fantasy is introduced and this reads as a middle path between the violent insertions in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* and the more integrated magic of Švankmajer. The film combines unmarked fantasy eruptions with a more subtle and persistent undermining of the mundane. The restraint of the film suggests a furious calm which occasionally flares – the two fantasy sequences with the woman from Ramallah – then subsides, but is never resolved as the film’s final image of ES watching a pressure cooker reminds us. Suleiman’s fantasies enact a kind of wish-fulfilment; this does not seek to escape but to take imaginary repossession.

This study focuses on formal disruption through editing but there are other ways in which films may exhibit disjuncture, for example, an incongruous *mise en scène*, or through the use of counterpoint between sound and image or within narrative content. By examining disruption both through interruption and through a more subtle undermining as a formal effect, this study also sheds light on three different elements, usually fragmented by the process of filmmaking, that are joined seamlessly in continuity editing: space, time and the figure in frame. My discussion of discontinuous editing considers the representation of space and time as it questions the relationship between experience (the burden of the past; contested places) and representation. It also draws attention to the figure (human body/puppet/animal) in the film frame: how the body signifies in continuity editing; how disruption and alternative continuities may signify through the body.

The films in my study do not function only in an indexical way, pointing to difficult experience through choppy narratives. While films that highlight discontinuous

cuts can manifest disordered states through non-linearity, disruption may also become a means through which new alternatives for experience may be explored and negotiated.

Stam and Shohat attribute an active function to narrative:

[I]t inscribe[s] onto a multitude of events the notion of a linear, comprehensible destiny, so films arrange events and actions in a temporal narrative that moves toward fulfilment, and thus shape thinking about historical time and national history. Narrative models in film are not simply reflective microcosms of historical processes; they are also experiential grids or templates through which history can be written and national identity created (2003, p. 10).

Stam and Shohat identify the ways in which film functions as a reference for making sense of the world; film influences how history is understood as it materialises “time in space” (2003, p. 10). While Stam and Shohat refer specifically to linear narratives as a model for experience in their discussion, I have argued for the possibilities of non-linearity and disruption. Not only do they begin to articulate experiences which resist and elude linear three-act narratives, disruption also opens up new possibilities or alternative understandings of experience. By holding dialogue with experience, disruption in film offers a different kind of experiential grid which admits a broader concept of reality.

Filmography

Primary sources

- Black Cat, White Cat* dir. Emir Kusturica. Yugoslavia: 1998
- Chocolat* dir. Lasse Hallström. UK/USA: 2000
- Conspirators of Pleasure* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1996
- Darkness, Light, Darkness* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1989
- Dimensions of Dialogue* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1982
- Divine Intervention* dir. Elia Suleiman. Palestine/France: 2002
- Emak Bakia* dir. Man Ray. France: 1927
- Eréndira* dir. Ruy Guerra. Mexico: 1983
- Faust* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1994
- Food* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1992
- Gabbeh* dir. Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Iran: 1996
- Jabberwocky* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1971
- Like Water for Chocolate* dir. Alfonso Arau. Mexico: 1992
- Little Otik* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 2000
- Lunacy* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 2006
- Marnie* dir. Alfred Hitchcock. USA: 1964
- Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* dir. Teboho Mahlatsi. South Africa: 1999
- Psycho* dir. Alfred Hitchcock. USA: 1960
- Sekalli le Meokgo* dir. Teboho Mahlatsi. South Africa: 1999
- Un Chien Andalou* dir. Luis Buñuel. France: 1929
- Woman on Top* dir. Fina Torres. USA: 2000

Additional sources

- 21 Grams* dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu. USA: 2003
- A Very Old man with enormous wings* dir. Fernando Birri. Spain/Cuba: 1988
- Alice* dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1988

Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony dir. Lee Hirsch. South Africa/USA: 2002
Anemic Cinema dir. Marcel Duchamp. France: 1926
Arrivé d'un train en gare à La Ciotat dir. Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière France: 1895
Ballet Mécanique dir. Fernand Léger. France: 1924
Between Joyce and Remembrance dir. Mark Kaplan. South Africa: 2003
Boy called Twist dir. Tim Greene. South Africa: 2004
The Butcher Boy dir. Neil Jordan. Ireland: 1997
The Butcher's Wife dir. Terry Hughes. USA: 1991
Chronicle of a Disappearance dir. Elia Suleiman. Palestine/France: 2002
Citizen Kane dir. Orson Welles. USA: 1941
City of God dir. Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. Brazil: 2002
The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1990
Demolition d'un Mur dir. Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière France: 1895
Down to the Cellar dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1983
Et Cetera dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1966
The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier dir. Ruy Guerra. Spain/Brazil: 1988
Forgiveness dir. Ian Gabriel. South Africa: 2004
Hijack Stories dir. Oliver Schmitz. South Africa: 2000
I'm the one you're looking For dir. Jaime Chávarri. Austria/Spain: 1988
In my country dir. John Boorman. UK/Ireland/South Africa: 2005
L'Age d'Or dir. Luis Buñuel. France: 1930
L'Arroseur arrosé dir. Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière France: 1895
L'étoile de Mer dir. Man Ray. France: 1928
La Sortie des ouvriers l'usine Lumière dir. Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière. France: 1895
The Last Trick dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1964
Le Repas de bébé dir. Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière. France: 1895
Le voyage dans la lune dir. Georges Méliès. France: 1902
Letters from the Park dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Cuba/Spain: 1989
Meat in Love dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1988

Memento dir. Christopher Nolan. USA: 2003
Miracle in Rome dir. Lisandro Duque Naranjo. Columbia: 1988
Mistress of Spices dir. Paul Mayeda Berges. USA/UK: 2005
No-one writes to the Colonel dir. Arturo Ripstein. Mexico: 1999
Punch and Judy dir. Jan Švankmajer. Czech Republic: 1966
Red Dust dir. Tom Hooper. UK/South Africa: 2004
Requiem for A Dream dir. Darren Aronofsky USA: 2000
The Ring dir. Gore Verbinski. USA: 2002
Simply Irresistible dir. Mark Tarlov. USA: 1999
Stander dir. Bronwen Hughes. Canada/South Africa: 2003
The Summer of Miss Forbes dir. Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. Cuba/Mexico/Spain: 1988
Symphonie Diagonale dir. Viking Eggeling. Germany: 1924
The Wooden Camera dir. Ntshaveni Wa Luruli. South Africa: 2003
Time of the Gypsies dir. Emir Kusturica. UK/Yugoslavia: 1988
Tsotsi dir. Gavin Hood. South Africa: 2005
Until the End of the World dir. Wim Wenders. Germany: 1991
Wings of Desire dir. Wim Wenders. Germany: 1987
Yesterday dir. Darrell Roodt. South Africa: 2005

References

- Adamowicz, E. (1997). 'The Surrealist (Self-) Portrait: Convulsive Identities.' *Surrealist Visuality*. S. Levy. New York, New York University Press: 31-44.
- Adamowicz, E. (2001). 'Bodies Cut and Dissolved: Dada and Surrealist Film.' *Gender and French Cinema*. A. Hughes and W. J.S. Oxford and New York, Berg: 19-33.
- Adorno, T. (1999). *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940 - Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge, Polity Press; Blackwell.
- Aitken, I. (2006). *Realist Film Theory and the Cinema: The Nineteenth-Century Lukacsian and Intuitionist Realist Traditions*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Al-Quattan, O. (2006). 'The Challenges of Palestinian Filmmaking.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London, Verso: 110-30.
- Alexandrian, S. (1970). *Surrealist Art*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Andrew, G. (1988) 'Malice in Wonderland.' *Time Out*. October 19-26, 16-7. Retrieved 12 January 2004, from www.illumin.co.uk/svank/biog/inter/andrew1.html.
- Andrew, G. (1994) 'A Faust Buck.' *Time Out*. September. Retrieved 12 January 2004, from www.illumin.co.uk/svank/biog/inter/andrew2.html.
- Arnes, R. (1974). *Film and Reality: A Historical Survey*. Middlesex, Penguin.
- Artaud, A. (1978). 'Witchcraft and the Cinema.' *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. P. Hammond. London, British Film Institute: 63-4.
- Aumont, J., A. Bergala, M. Marie and M. Vernet (1992). *Aesthetics of Film*. Austin, University of Texas.
- Austin, G. (1996). *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1968). *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge Massachusetts, The MIT Press.
- Bataille, G. (1985). *Visions of Excess*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Bazin, A. (1967). *What Is Cinema*. 1 Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Bazin, A. (1976). *What Is Cinema*. 2 Berkeley, University of California Press.

- Bazin, A. (1980). 'William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Mise En Scène.' *Realism and the Cinema: A Reader*. C. Williams. Henley and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 36-52.
- Bazin, A. (1997). 'William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing.' *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*. A. Bazin and B. Cardullo. New York and London, Routledge 1-23.
- Beitrose, H. (1964). 'On the Search for the Real Nitty-Gritty: Problems and Possibilities In "Cinema Verité.'" *Film Quarterly*. 17(4 Summer): 36-40.
- Bellour, R. and C. Penley (c2000). *The Analysis of Film*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1979a). 'A Small History of Photography.' *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. London, NLB: 240-57.
- Benjamin, W. (1979b). 'Naples.' *One Way Street*. London, NLB: 167-76.
- Benjamin, W. (1979c). 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia.' *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. London NLB: 225-39.
- Bing, J. (2001). 'Chocolat'. Retrieved 11 October 2006 from www.variety.com
- Bordwell, D. (1986). 'Classical Hollywood Cinema.' *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*. P. Rosen. New York, Columbia University Press: 17-34.
- Bordwell, D., J. Staiger and K. Thompson (1985). *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Bordwell, D. and K. Thompson (1994). *Film History: An Introduction*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Bordwell, D. and K. Thompson (2004). *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Bourlond, A. (2000). 'A Cinema of Nowhere: An Interview with Elia Suleiman.' *Journal of Palestine Studies*. 29(No 2, Winter): 95-101.
- Bower, M. A. (2004). *Magic(al) Realism*. New York and London, Routledge.
- Branigan, E. (1984). *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*. Berlin, New York & Amsterdam, Mouton Publishers.
- Branigan, E. (2006). *Projecting a Camera: Language Games in Film Theory*. New York and London, Routledge.

- Breton, A. (1972a). 'Manifesto of Surrealism (1924).' *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press: 3-47.
- Breton, A. (1972b). *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Anne Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- Breton, A. (1972c). 'Political Position of Surrealism (Extracts).' *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press: 205 -78.
- Breton, A. (1972d). *Surrealism and Painting*. New York, Harper and Row.
- Breton, A. (1978a). 'A Visit with Leon Trotsky.' *What Is Surrealism*. F. Rosemont. London, Pluto Press: 173-82.
- Breton, A. (1978b). 'As in a Wood.' *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. P. Hammond. London, British Film Institute: 42-5.
- Breton, A. (1978c). 'What Is Surrealism?' *What Is Surrealism*. F. Rosemont. London, Pluto Press: 112-40.
- Breuer, J. and S. Freud (2001). 'Studies on Hysteria (1893-1895).' *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London, VintageII.
- Buck-Morss, S. (1989). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, The MIT Press.
- Burch, N. (1973). *Theory of Film Practice*. New York and Washington, Praeger Publishers.
- Bürger, P. (1984). *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Butler, L. (2003). 'The Occupation (and Life) through an Absurdist Lens.' *Journal of Palestine Studies*. 32(No 2 Winter): 63-73.
- Button, B. (2002). *Nonlinear Editing: Storytelling, Aesthetics, and Craft*. Kansas, CMP Books.
- Cardinal, R. (1995). 'Thinking through Things: The Presence of Objects in the Early Films of Jan Švankmajer.' *Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Švankmajer*. Westport, Praeger: 79-95.
- Carpentier, A. (1990). *The Kingdom of This World*. London, Andre Deutsch.
- Carrà , M., P. Waldberg and E. Rathke (1971). *Metaphysical Art*. London, Thames and Hudson.

- Carrà, M., P. Waldberg and E. Rathke (1971). *Metaphysical Art*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Carroll, L. (1996a). *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions.
- Carroll, N. (1996b). 'A Note on Film Metaphor.' *Journal of Pragmatics*. 26: 809-22.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Caws, M. A. (1989). *The Art of Interference: Stressed Readings in Verbal and Visual Texts*. Oxford and Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Caws, M. A. (1990). 'Introductions: Linkings and Reflections.' *Communicating Vessels*. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press: ix-xxiv.
- Caws, M. A. (1997). *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*. Cambridge Massachusetts, Massachusetts University Press.
- Chanady, A. B. (1985). *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*. New York, Garland.
- Chanady, A. B. (1995). 'The Territorialization of the Imaginary in Latin America: Self-Affirmation and Resistance to Metropolitan Paradigms.' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Zamora and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 125-44.
- Cohen, M. (1995). *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of the Surrealist Revolution*. Los Angeles and London, University of California Press.
- Cook, P. (1985). *The Cinema Book*. London, British Film Institute.
- Cooper, B. (1998). *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*. London, Routledge.
- Corliss, R. and J. Farouky (2003). 'Ninja Babe in Jerusalem.' *Time*. 10 February.
- Curtis, B. (1995). 'In Betweening: An Interview with Irene Kotlarz.' *Art History*. 18(1): 24-36.
- Dabashi, H., Ed. (2006). *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. London and New York, Verso.
- Dancyger, K. (2002). *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory and Practice*. Woburn, Focal Press.

- Davis, L. J. (1995). 'Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso.' *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. London and New York, Verso: 126-57.
- De Bruyn, D. (2002) 'Chasing Rabbits out of the Hat and into the Shedding of Childhood.' *Senses of Cinema*. May. Retrieved 7 April 2005, from <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/02/20/alice.html>.
- De Lauretis, T. (1985) 'Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema.' *New German Critique*. No. 34 Winter:154-175
- Deren, M. (2004). 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality.' *Film Theory and Criticism*. Braudy and Cohen. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press: 187-98.
- Doane, M.A. (1980). 'Ideology and the Practice of Sound Editing and Mixing.' *The Cinematic Apparatus*. T. De Lauretis and S. Heath. London, MacMillan: 47-56.
- Doane, M.A (1991) *Femmes Fatales Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, Chapman and Hall.
- Donald, J., Ed. (1989). *Fantasy and the Cinema*. London, British Film Institute.
- Donald, J. (1998). 'Enthusiasms and Execrations: Introduction.' *Close up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*. J. Donald, A. Friedberg and L. Marcus. London, Cassell: 28-35.
- Dryje, F. (1995). 'The Force of Imagination.' *Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Švankmajer*. P. Hames. Westport, Praeger: 119-67.
- Eisenstein, S. (1943). *The Film Sense*. London, Faber.
- Eisenstein, S. (2004a). 'Beyond the Shot.' *Film Theory and Criticism*. L. Braudy and M. Cohen. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press: 13-22.
- Eisenstein, S. (2004b). 'Dickens , Griffith, and Ourselves.' *Film Theory and Criticism*. Braudy and Cohen. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press: 436-44.
- Everett, W. (1998). 'Screen as Threshold: The Disorienting Topographies of Surrealist Film.' *Screen*. 39(2): 141-52.
- Fairservice, D. (2001). *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*. Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press.

- Faris, W. (2004). *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press.
- Faris, W. B. (1995). 'Scheherazade's Children.' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Zamora and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press.
- Felperin, L. (1997). 'Conspirators of Pleasure.' *Sight and Sound*. 7(2): 39.
- Field, S. (1986) 'Jabberwocky.' *Monthly Film Bulletin*. 53, 222.
- Fijakowski, K. (2005) 'Invention, Imagination, Interpretation: Collective Activity in the Contemporary Czech and Slovak Surrealist Group.' *Papers of Surrealism*. 3, 13 April.
- Flores, A. (1995). 'Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction (1955).' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Z. L and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 109-18.
- Foster, H. (1993). *Compulsive Beauty*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Massachusetts University Press.
- Fotiade, R. (1995). 'The Untamed Eye: Surrealism and Film Theory.' *Screen*. 39(2 Winter): 394-407.
- French, P. (2003). Divine Intervention. *The Guardian*. 19 January 2003. 3.
- Freud, S. (1953). *The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)*. iv London, The Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (2001a). 'The "Uncanny" (1919).' *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)*. London, Vintage. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud xvii 217-52.
- Freud, S., Ed. (2001b). *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life 1901*. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. London, Vintage.
- Gertz, N. (2002). 'Space and Gender in the New Israeli and Palestinian Cinema.' *Prooftexts*. 22: 157-85.
- Gertz, N. and G. Khleifi (2003). 'Bleeding Memories.' *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*. 10(4): 105-12.
- Gertz, N. and G. Khleifi (2005). 'Palestinian Roadblock Movies.' *Geopolitics*. 10: 316-34.
- Gilloch, G. (1997). *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

- Guenther, I. (1995). 'Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts During the Weimar Republic.' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Z. L and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 33-74.
- Gunning, T. (2004). 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (in)Credulous Spectator.' *Film Theory and Criticism*. L. Braudy and M. Cohen. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press: 862-76.
- Hall, W. (1997) 'Interview with Jan Svankmajer.' *Animato*. July. Retrieved 12 January 2004, from www.illumina.co.uk/svank/biog/inter/hall.html.
- Hames, P. (1995). *Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Švankmajer*. Westport, Praeger.
- Hames, P. (2001). 'Bringing up Baby.' *Sight and Sound*. 10(October): 24-7.
- Hammond, P. (1978). *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. London, British Film Institute.
- Hassan, N. (2006). 'A Letter from the Rest of the World Or "The Afghan Arabs"!' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London and New York, Verso: 106-9.
- Heath, S. (1981). *Questions of Cinema*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Higgins, J. (1991). 'Critical Cinema and the Reality of Reflection.' *Media Matters in South Africa*. J. Prinsloo and C. Criticos. Durban, Media Resource Centre: 110-22.
- Hjort, M. and S. MacKenzie (2003). *Purity and Provocation: Dogme '95*. London, British Film Institute.
- Indiewire (2006) 'Cannes L'atelier '06 Interview: Teboho Mahlatsi.' *Indiewire*. 19 May. Retrieved 10 October 2006, from http://www.indiewire.com/people/2006/05/cannes_latelier_1.html.
- Jackson, W. (1997) 'The Surrealist Conspirator: An Interview with Jan Svankmajer.' *Animation World Magazine*. 2,3. Retrieved 7 April 2005, from www.awn.com/mag/issue2.3/issue2.3pages/2.3jacksonsvankmajer.html.
- Jameson, F. (1986). 'On Magic Realism in Film.' *Critical Inquiry* 12, No 2, Winter: 301-25.

- Khleifi, M. (2006). 'From Reality to Fiction - from Poverty to Expression.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London and New York, Verso: 43-57.
- King, J. (2000). *Magical Reels* London, Verso.
- Kracauer (1960). *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Král, P. (1985) 'Questions to Jan Svankmajer.' *Afterimage* 13, 22-31. Retrieved 12 January 2004, from www.illumina.co.uk/svank/biog/inter/kral.html.
- Kuenzli, R. E. (1991). 'Surrealism and Misogyny.' *Surrealism and Women*. M. A. Caws, R. E. Kuenzli and G. Raaberg. Cambridge Massachusetts, The MIT Press: 17-26.
- Kuenzli, R. E., Ed. (1996). *Dada and Surrealist Film*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, The MIT Press.
- LaCapra, D. (1998). *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- LaCapra, D. (2001). *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Laplanche, J. and Pontalis, J.-B. (1986). 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality.' *Formations of Fantasy*. V. Burgin, J. Donald and C. Kaplan. London and New York, Methuen: 5-34.
- Linden, G. (1984). 'Film, Fantasy and the Extension of Reality.' *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. 18(no 3, Autumn): 37-54.
- Lindgren, E. (1963). *The Art of the Film*. London, George Allen and Unwin Limited.
- Lomas, D. (2000). *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity*. New Haven, London, Yale University Press.
- Lotman, J. (1976). *Semiotics of Cinema*. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- MacCabe, C. (2004). *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Macey, D. (1988). *Lacan in Contexts*. London, Verso.
- Marcus, L. (1998). 'Cinema and Psychoanalysis: Introduction.' *Close Up: Cinema and Modernism*. J. Donald, A. Friedberg and L. Marcus. London, Cassell: 240-6.
- Marks, L. (2000). *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*. Durham & London, Durham University Press.

- Marquez, G. G. (1996). *Collected Stories*. London, Penguin.
- Martin, M. T., Ed. (1997). *New Latin American Cinema*. Detroit, Wayne State University Press.
- Massad, J. (2006). 'The Weapon of Culture: Cinema in the Palestinian Liberation Struggle.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London and New York, Verso: 30-42.
- Matthews, J. (1971). *Surrealism and Film*. Ann Arbor, Michigan University Press.
- McCabe, S. (2005). *Cinematic Modernism*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Mendoza, P. A. (c1983). *The Fragrance of Guava*. London, Verso.
- Michelson, A., Ed. (1984). *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press.
- Mikics, D. (1995). 'Derek Walcott and Alejo Carpentier: Nature, History and the Caribbean Writer.' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Zamora and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press.
- Morgan, D. (2006). 'Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics.' *Critical Inquiry*. 23(Spring): 443-81.
- Morris, P. (2003). *Realism*. London and New York, Routledge.
- Moylon (1989). 'Magic Realism and Garcia Marquez's Erendira.' *Literature/Film Quarterly*. 17(no 2).
- Mulvey, L. (1975). 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' *Screen*. 16: 6-18.
- Murch, W. (2001). *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*. Los Angeles, Silman-James Press.
- Nadeau, M. (1968). *The History of Surrealism*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Naficy, H. (1999). *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*. New York, Routledge.
- Naficy, H. (2001). *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Naficy, H. (2003). 'Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre.' *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality and Transnational Media*. E. Shohat and R. Stam. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, Rutgers University Press: 203-26.

- Naficy, H. (2006). 'Palestinian Exilic Cinema and Film Letters.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London, Verso: 90-104.
- Nelson, R. (1999, 29 September). 'Kusturica Keeps the Peace.' *City Pages*. Vol 20, Issue 982. Retrieved 28 November, 2003, from <http://citypages.com/databank/20/982/article8007.asp>.
- Nichols, B. (1996). 'Historical Consciousness and the Viewer: Who Killed Vincent Chin.' *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. V. Sobchack. New York, Routledge: 55-68.
- O'Hehir, (1999, 23 September). 'Black Cat, White Cat.' *salon.com*. Retrieved 14 May, 2006, from <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/1999/09/23/cat>.
- O'Pray, M. (1989). 'Surrealism, Fantasy and the Grotesque: The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer.' *Fantasy and the Cinema*. J. Donald. London, British Film Institute.
- O'Pray, M. (1995). 'Jan Švankmajer: A Mannerist Surrealist.' *Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Švankmajer*. P. Hames. Westport, Praeger: 48-77.
- Oldham, G. (1995). *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press.
- Oppenheimer, J. (2003). 'Global Village: An Absurdist View of an Unending Conflict.' *American Cinematographer*. 84(6): 12-4.
- Oudart, J.-P. (1977-78). 'Cinema and Suture.' *Screen*. 18(4 Winter): 35-47.
- Pensky, M. (2004). 'Method and Time: Benjamin's Dialectical Images.' *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*. D. Ferris. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 177-98.
- Perloff, M. (1986). *The Futurist Movement*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press.
- Phillips, P. (2003). 'Spectator, Audience and Response.' *An Introduction to Film Studies*. J. Nelmes. London and New York, Routledge: 92-128.
- Porton (2003). 'Notes from the Palestinian Diaspora.' *Cineaste*. 28(3 /03): 24-7.
- Power, M. and A. Crampton (2005). 'Reel Geopolitics: Cinemato-Graphing Political Space.' *Geopolitics*. 10: 193-205.
- Prusher, I. R. (1997) 'Epic Mideast Drama Plays out in Film Credits.' *Christian Science Monitor*. 89, 1 19 November 2003.

- Pudovkin, V. (1935). *Film Technique*. London, G. Newnes.
- Ramsamy, P. (2001). Asmal Stands by Yizo Yizo. *Independent Online*. 16 March 2001
- Reisz, K. (1953). *The Technique of Film Editing*. London & New York, The Focal Press.
- Rich, B. R. (1997). 'An/Other View of New Latin American Cinema.' *M. T. Martin*: 273-97.
- Roberts, J. (1982). *Walter Benjamin*. London and Basingstoke, MacMillan Press.
- Rocchio, V. F. (1999). *Cinema of Anxiety: A Psychoanalysis of Italian Neorealism*. Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Roh, F. (1995). 'Magic Realism: Post Expressionism (1925).' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Zamora and Faris. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 15-32.
- Roscoe, J. and H. Craig (2001). *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality*. Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press.
- Rose, J. (1996). *States of Fantasy*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Rose, J. (2000). 'Edward Said Talks to Jacqueline Rose.' *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*. P. A. Bové. Durham, Duke University Press: 9-30.
- Rose, J. (2003). *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis and the Modern World*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Rosemont, F., Ed. (1978). *What Is Surrealism*. London, Pluto Press.
- Said, E. (2000). 'Permission to Narrate.' *The Edward Said Reader*. M. Bayoumi and A. Rubin. New York, Vintage: 243-66.
- Said, E. (2006). 'Preface.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London and New York, Verso: 1-6.
- Said, S. F. (n.d). 'After Revolution, the Shit.' *The Context*. Retrieved 7 April 2005, from <http://www.thecontext.com/docs/3804.html>.
- Schwarz, A. (1977). *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Shera, P. A. (2001). 'The Labyrinthine Madness of Svankmajer's Faust.' *Journal of Gender Studies*. 10(No 2): 127-44.

- Shohat, E. (2006a). 'A Cinema of Displacement: Gender, Nation, and Diaspora.' *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*. H. Dabashi. London and New York, Verso: 70-89.
- Shohat, E. (2006b). 'Rupture and Return: Zionist Discourse and the Study of the Arab-Jews.' *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 330-58.
- Shohat, E. (2006c). 'Taboo Memories, Diasporic Visions.' *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. E. Shohat. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 201-32.
- Shohat, E. and R. Stam, Eds. (2003). *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, Rutgers University Press.
- Short, R. (2003). *The Age of Gold*. London, Creation Books.
- Silverman, K. (1986). 'Suture (Excerpts).' *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*. P. Rosen. New York, Columbia University Press: 219-35.
- Simpkins, S. (1988). 'Magical Strategies: The Supplement of Realism.' *Twentieth Century Literature*. 34(2 (Summer)): 140-54.
- Smith, M. (1997). 'Imagining from the Inside.' *Film Theory and Philosophy*. R. Allen and M. Smith. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Soueif, A. (2004). Lost in Translation. *The Guardian*. 31 July 2004 16
- Stam, R. (2000). *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, Mass, Blackwell.
- Stam, R. and R. Johnson, Eds. (c1995). *Brazilian Cinema*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Stam, R. and E. Shohat (1994). *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. London and New York, Routledge.
- Steinhart, D. (2002) 'Interview: Alchemic Artist, Jan Svankmajer Discusses 'Little Otik'' *Indiewire*. Retrieved 7 April 2005, from www.indiewire.com/people/int_Svankmajer_Jan_020108.html.
- Tarkovsky (1987). *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Thiher, A. (1977). 'Surrealism's Enduring Bite: Un Chien Andalou.' *Literature/Film Quarterly*. 5(1): 38-49.

- Todorov, T. (1973). *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. New York, Cornell University Press.
- Walker, A. B. (2001). 'Dreams of the Wild Frontier: Imaginary Geographies and the America West.' (Frederick Jackson Turner), University of Massachusetts, Amherst. PhD.
- Walker, J. (1997). 'The Traumatic Paradox: Documentary Films, Historical Fictions, and Cataclysmic Past Events.' *Signs*. 22(4. Summer): 803-25.
- Warnes, C. (2003). 'Magical Realism and the Cultural Politics of the Postcolonial Novel.' St John's College. Cambridge, Cambridge. PhD.
- Wells, P. (2002) 'Animated Anxiety: Jan Svankmajer, Surrealism and The "Agit Scare".' *Kino-eye*. 2. Retrieved 7 April 2005, from <http://www.kinoeye.org/02/16/wells16.php>.
- Wexman, V. W. (2006). *A History of Film*. Boston, Pearson Education.
- White (1996). 'The Modernist Event.' *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. V. Sobchack. New York, Routledge: 17-38.
- Whitlock, T. (1990). *Metaphor and Film*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, C. (1980). *Realism and the Cinema: A Reader*. London and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Williams, C. (2000). 'After the Classic, the Classical and Ideology: The Difference of Realism.' *Reinventing Film Studies*. C. Gledhill and L. Williams. London, Arnold: 206-20.
- Williams, L. (1982). 'Personal Best.' *Jump Cut*. No. 27 (July).
- Wills, D. (1996). 'Slit Screen.' *Dada and Surrealist Film*. R. E. Kuenzli. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, The MIT Press: 86-98.
- Winston-Dixon, W. and G. A. Foster, Eds. (2002). *Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader*. London, Routledge.
- Wollen, P. (1979). *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. London, Secker and Warburg.
- Wollen, P. (2004). 'Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent D'est.' *Film Theory and Criticism*. Braudy and Cohen. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press: 525-33.

- Zamora, L. P. and W. B. Faris (1995). 'Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(ies).' *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Zamora and Faris. Durham and London, Durham and London.
- Žižek, S. (2002). *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. London & New York, Verso.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW BETWEEN MARY WATSON AND TEBOHO MAHLATSI, 29 JANUARY 2004

MW: *Is the final version of Portrait quite close to what was originally conceived prior to shooting? And in particular, how did the process of editing revise the pre-production script?*

TM: It is very close. I did about 15 drafts of the script, mainly fixing dialogue and some parts of the action and also shortening the length, the original script I had I think was about 20 pages and it needed to be 11. But the main difference was that the original script did not have the inserted surreal shots. I only came up with that when I was doing the shooting script, that's when a director breaks the script into series of shots. I was fascinated by this image of a man who sees his own death, sees people carrying him, dead. It then grew from there and I started adding more shots to help draw the audience into Shadow's head. Most people have said those shots made the film feel like a horror film, but I was only trying to condense into 11 minutes what otherwise could have been an epic external and internal journey of a man seeking redemption (internal)/ looking for water (external).

I think the editing was made easy by the fact that the shooting script already laid out the structure quite clearly. The only thing that I think I got wrong and should have done differently is that in retrospect I should have made the alternative reality shots the same colour as the normal shots instead of giving them a different grade. At the moment I think there too obvious, too self-conscious, they function too much like flashbacks as opposed to parallel reality, but that's just my opinion, I may be wrong. I think it would have been more interesting if you couldn't tell the difference what's real and what's not. But maybe that would have been too confusing, I don't know.

MW: *The inserted shots that depict an alternative reality are very effective. What made you decide to construct the film with those disturbing moments that step outside of the narrative?*

TM: As I mentioned, I wanted to draw the audience into Shadow's head, to indicate that there's a lot more going on. He has this need inside of him that is driving him and is different to what the people expect of him. To them he's just a township killer. But inside he is searching for an alternative, [a] new life and is haunted by things he has done, the violence he has committed and repentant, I

think. He sees himself the same as the dead man who is being carried in a coffin, he sees blood instead of water and so forth.

MW: *The opening sequence conveys a sense of disorientation and searching. Why did you choose to start with that montage of dissolving doorways with its geometrical precision? The handheld searching suggests a point-of-view – is this any particular point-of-view, and how did you intend this to affect the viewer?*

I wanted to indicate right on top that we are stepping into another world, slightly removed from our reality, I think those shots kind of suck you in. But at the same time those houses are real. I shot in the neighbourhood (Thokoza, East Rand, Johannesburg) that experienced this kind of violence, the political violence of the early nineties between ANC supporters and Inkatha supporters from the hostels. Houses were burnt down, people slaughtered and this house was burnt down during those days and many years later I found it still abandoned.

MW: *One of the really effective things about this film is that you allow the viewer room to interpret the events, yet direct them with precision so that the effect is mysterious but not confusing. What is your understanding of Shadow's journey?*

TM: It's a journey of redemption. I was trying to make a western in many ways, a township western - the harmonica/accordion on the soundtrack, a lonely outsider hero, a bleak landscape. He wants to find forgiveness, the search for water indicates that, to wash himself of his sins – so to say. To start again but the people around him won't let him be. Clint Eastwood wants to walk away but the people in the village won't let him be, they want him to protect them.

MW: *What was the main thing that you wanted to communicate by structuring the film in the way that you did?*

TM: To portray a sense of fractured reality. Shadow, an outsider is living in a different world to the rest.

MW: *The man in the wheelchair is really effective. What motivated you to use this image?*

It seems like every township has a man on a wheelchair, the result of our violent past and present. I just took it a step further by making him fall off the wheelchair and have him struggle to climb back on. There is something both absurd and sad about that image and that attracts me as a central element in my work: to always explore contrasting elements and let them rub against each other - reality and fantasy, violence (shadow stabbing the alleged rapist) and

moments of silence (shadow and the old man in the house) and so forth.

MW: *Yizo Yizo* was acclaimed for the brutal realism with which it depicted its subject matter. *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* strikes me as implicitly political (in addition to the spiritual and psychological journey it depicts) but chooses to engage with its subject in a mode of representation that deviates from realism. What would you call this mode?

I'm trying to construct some kind of magical realism [in] cinema usually found in novels, writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Zakes Mda, the paintings of Zwelethu Mthethwa are also an influence where you take a normal landscape like the township and then infuse it with things that are slightly abnormal. That interests me. At the same time is also so real even though some other people will claim that it's an intellectual exercise. But if you look closely you'll find that, it's not necessarily true. For an instance I once did a documentary series called *Ghetto Diaries* where I gave ordinary people in my neighbourhood small video cameras to film themselves. One of the people I gave the camera to was an unemployed, epileptic man who listened to opera, classical music, Maria Callas. Where the hell did that come from? Incidentally one of the people I gave the camera to was a young man who was a former Self Defence Unit member in the East Rand, Johannesburg, who after the political wars of the nineties, filmed himself going around his neighbourhood looking for a place to take a bath. But people did not allow him to enter their houses. Even though he had committed acts of violence to protect them against Inkatha attacks, they had still not forgiven him for his violence. That became an inspiration to write *Portrait* and then I came up with a narrative of using water as a symbolism for redemption.

MW: *Why did you choose such a stylised approach to engage with these social issues?*

TM: I love stylised cinema. Films like the ones by Hong Kong director Wong Kar Wai (*Happy together, In the mood for love*). In many ways I think African cinema has created a box for itself and I don't want to be confined in that. There more to play with, I grew up watching kung-fu movies, westerns, action movies and in many ways I'm a product of that and at the same time I also reject that cinema because it's not part of my reality. So there's constant embracing and rejecting going on all the time. I love music videos as much as art movies.

MW: *Following on from the previous question, Portrait seems an almost surreal film that blends a sense of the magical, of the symbolic, as well as depicting the world through a psychologically disturbed perspective. Which of these aspects is most important to your understanding of the film and why? How important is the editing in establishing these effects?*

For me editing is very important. In fact what I'm trying to learn now as a director is to shoot for editing. To shoot a scene with editing in mind. While most people will just shoot and then think about editing later, I'm trying to make editing part of my pre-production like in *Portrait*. Most of my work now has a lot of that parallel reality. One of my favourite films as far as that is concerned is *The Limey*. I love the way they play with editing in that film, where you are not sure whether what you are seeing is happening or has already happened.

MW: *One of the things that really strikes me about the film is the way that Shadow is dissociated from conventional meanings and makes new associations that appear to be governed by a skewed logic. For example, the way the Christ symbol is inverted by Shadow, the way that the implied sexuality of the women who call Shadow is reinterpreted by his desire for water. Is this a fair reading of the film?*

I think I have already kind of answered this. Taking what's normal and then giving it a new meaning. Shadow has already lost the reality of everybody else, he has created a new one for himself. Some people have even gone as far as to say that he is a ghost who is witnessing his own funeral, he haunts the living who are trying to bury the dead. What he wants and desires goes against everyone else's desire.

MW: *What gets lost in the translation to English? What gets lost for viewers who aren't aware of cultural practices, for example, the washing of hands after funerals? In other words, how deeply embedded is tradition in the narrative?*

What happens in black funerals is that after people come from the graveyard, they wash their hands before they re-enter the deceased's house. That's why there a bath out on the street. So Shadow finally finds the water and redemption from the very person he has killed. He washes at house of the person who was being buried, whose coffin was being carried earlier.

APPENDIX B:

EXTRACT FROM AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN MARY WATSON AND ELIA SULEIMAN, 11 FEBRUARY 2007

MW: *Sometimes realism doesn't quite work to tell certain kinds of stories and using fantasy seems to do the job slightly better.*

ES: There is an obvious reason for that. I think one has to redefine some terms. When you say "realism" – now realism, let's say it has encoded negatively. So one sometimes is cautious to use the term "realistic". But when you say fantasy and when you say experience – I could say it all boils down to the same reason. The fact is that from experience there is an aesthetic metamorphosis, no matter what that makes the film not necessarily a realistic film but a potential reality. And this is really the difference between what you're calling realism and what we're calling narrative Hollywood, because when you start to metamorphose your experience to some kind of aesthetic context, then it's no longer your experience. Let's say it's an experience you can have by watching the film.

MW: *What you are saying reminds a lot of surrealism because that was the aim there as well – the sort of aesthetic metamorphosis you're talking about.*

ES: Of course, of course. Otherwise I think if we are just coming to take what we consider reality and put it on film we might as well just witness it as it happens. We make it into a film and then the question of truth comes about. Why would you want to put a certain reality in film – it's probably sometimes the sense of truth – you know you sense the truth in the kind of experience you are having and then you want to communicate it to others. However the problem becomes when you simply reproduce that reality because it's a counter-productive activity because it simply reproduces the experience and loses the truth along the way.

MW: *I'm also interested in the way that we experience social and political realities in film and how they get represented by the fantastic element. That seems to me something that you do quite a bit in Divine Intervention.*

ES: The fantasy you mean?

MW: *Yes – the undermined reality, the metamorphoses you are talking about.*

ES: Is it a way of addressing the political? Well, I guess since we do not know each other slowly when we come to a common understanding of certain phrases and what they mean, also the expressions and what they mean, it will be much easier to talk about my work. To address the political, I don't know exactly what that means when I am in the process of making the film. In other words,

what is political? Everything I do is political. Everything everybody does is political. If I am asked if I am politicised, I am a politicised person, but then every time you perform an action in your every day life it is a political act, so I do not know then when I come to address the political. I can tell you that it was not the initial departure or a moment in film whether it is fantasy or a metamorphoses of reality I don't think the actual departure is addressing. This does not belong to the process of my work – the critical or creative process. It all initiates from an image or a sound and it does not have the ambition drawn of what it is supposed to address or what would be the conclusion. I do not have active images, it comes from an image that passes by, something that intrigues me, something that is even incomprehensible but seems to, let's say belly in it a certain sense for investigation. This all can be the initiation of an image. And then through the working process, through writing, through reflecting, through pigmenting one comes to draw a tableau, an image of some kind and then when it is pigmented, because there is a lot of work that comes with the initial departure of that one moment, from when you think this is interesting and you write that down in a notebook, when it comes the time that you are writing an image, not a script, you start to draw all sorts of elements in it to construct it. This can result in a fantasy, in other words, let's take an example, what would have been the initiation of the explosion of the tank?

MW: Yes.

ES: It was simply my driving one day on the highway, I don't know exactly where it was, but I think it was on the highway going to Jerusalem that I was eating a fruit and when I came to throw the seed I had just a little gag in my mind, I just found it would be funny. I parked and wrote it down and many years later it became a part of this narrative. If you come to analyse it further evidently this kind of fantasy is not detached from wanting to aggress the weapon machine. But I would say it is a fantasy that could relate to a lot of people who when they see tanks they would rather they didn't exist. So the same thing could be said about a lot of the fantasies of the film. Some of it is initiated from one moment. Say, let's talk about the balloon for instance. The balloon idea came when I was writing the script and I was stuck in the narrative structure. I needed to smuggle the woman who I'm with and I had no notion of how that could be. I knew we had to cross the checkpoint. One day I opened a drawer that I accumulate gadgets in and I found that balloon. It was melted from the heat and the idea comes. This is certainly not addressing, this is something that comes along the way in the creative process. Now the film is addressing and the fantasy is addressing, yes, that I think that is something the spectator can tell. Certainly the spectator can come and pinpoint what a certain image is addressing and will certainly never arrive to any sort of coherence because there is a lot of addressing in one image, a lot of different kind of meaning taking place and it always comes back to the spectator, who, according to what sort of experience he or she can have can interpret what the image is trying to say or even if it's not trying to say more than the little tickle that it produces or the gag that it came by with or, and that again depends on the experience of the spectator it can actually bring it to a political level. That all depends on who is watching the film.

Having said that I am just trying to say that I do not pre-construct a kind of centre to the image. I can even say that I try to deviate from centring or having a narrative inside the image. I try to open the image so that it can have different play-time. Sometimes it's in the foreground, other times it's in the background, sometimes it's the left and the right at the same time and for this reason some spectators can come and see only one side of it or come to see in a second screening of the film another level. I try not to be the absolute authority over everything that I do in order to leave a lot of room for the spectator to participate in the image. And myself, I can say, as a spectator when I do start to watch the film I made I also participate as a spectator and I start to actually sometimes start to centre the image through different kinds of coordinates. In other words, I don't think I have a monopoly over everything that is being said in my films in terms of the composition. Sometimes there are birds that cross the frame and I did not exactly direct them.

MW: *A Palestinian friend implied that the representation of the checkpoints potentially caused some criticism. Some people might not have been particularly happy with that, saying that the reality of them is so different and to represent them in that kind of way obscures the experience of many people.*

ES: Somehow it answers to what you were saying previously. I don't know if I have had any criticism about reproducing the reality of the checkpoints. It's evident that there is an aesthetic outlay of what is happening at the checkpoints; evidently it's not reality. Nobody is claiming it is. But still the question can be thrown to that person: what is the reality of the checkpoints; whose reality or truth of what the checkpoints are. I think if you are watching, whether you are Palestinian or not – first of all nobody holds monopoly over that sort of truth whether it's a Palestinian or non-Palestinian; who has the authority to say what is and what isn't? And this is not a "representation" of the checkpoint, so again there is a problem in terms of using that word. I do think that if you are watching and it holds, if the experience of watching elevates to a potential view for you as a spectator, that is what is essential in the communication between the film and its spectator.

MW: *So it's almost like a dialogue because it makes the spectator think about other representations or stories that we may have seen or heard about in the media, and looking at your version – that kind of ongoing, dynamic way of thinking about it is actually quite effective. It's an almost alive way of thinking about it.*

ES: And you know, it is a very ghettoised and tribalised approach for the supposed person who lives the checkpoints to tell you what he or she thinks is the checkpoints. We'll then traffic that one truth of that one eyewitness. I think that idea of making a film or art in general is not to go – and again what said about reality and non-reality: nobody is claiming that this film is about. I don't even want to hold it responsible for talking about Palestine. I do think this is an experience that is universalised so even in the checkpoints, one can see the love between this couple, no? And one can enjoy the erotics of what is happening. If

someone who criticises the checkpoints says that love does take place on the checkpoints, I can be argumentative about it as well and say that yes love does take place on the checkpoints, I personally lived it, you know? One should not go into these sorts of ... When I think of the victims, whether it's Palestinians, and I can say very much that it's the experience of the Israelis actually who want to pump and inflate their self-victimisation to actually justify the means of what the state is doing. In our case, the case of the Palestinians, there is no such a place evidently, but I think that the Palestinians should also take advantage of this counter-experience and not try to mimic the language of that sort of power structure. The idea of a checkpoint in Palestine should be, for those who want to live the image of that metamorphosed aesthetics, then that there has not to be denied. Now, if the sum total reality of the film, or films, could bring to the attention of the spectator that there is cruelty and violence, then that is great. And I do not think that it should be all in one film or one image. I think that if you are intrigued by a film because of a certain pleasure you have from watching it, you might then go and open a book about what the Palestine story is and start to research how it all happened; that can be an instigation that film as such can do, and that would be very complimentary to the film. But none of that could be an indication inside the film itself.

MW: *I think that is what the film achieves, and that is what I meant about how it engaging a dialogue and getting the spectator to think about issues rather than just showing.*

ES: Absolutely. Thinking, and not to reduce from the effect of pleasure and sexuality. Because that's really what might in a sense make us less violent or intrigued. I've said this many times: if the effect of the checkpoint (though this is first time I've said the checkpoint) can unconsciously bring a couple, let's say, to hold hands or to kiss or to be hungry after they've seen the film, can you accuse me of being mean to the Palestinian cause? It could be that they enjoyed the film and that they've been hungry or that they don't want to talk. I'm going to the extreme of saying, it's not just a question of thinking, it's a question of seeing, and a question of emotionally being engaged. And not necessarily with the film, but with the film and later, or in the same moment, with one another.

MW: *Talking about pleasure, I must say I got a lot of pleasure out of watching the film. Some of it was quite a guilty pleasure, particularly in the beginning when I was watching people being nasty to each other, there's a lot of pleasure in that.*

ES: Of course, there's a sense of humour. This has nothing to do with targeting, nothing to do with strategising, this part of who I am and how my self came to be, due to certain experiences and cultural background. But the fact that there is humour, I can talk a lot about that. I remember for my first film, how it was so attacked, you cannot imagine. I was taboo in certain Arab countries. I heard from certain festivals, I was being accused of being a collaborator to Israel – one of the many reasons why was the use of humour and this kind of moral attitude of how can you make laughter from such a tragedy. But this is *deja vu*, the Jews said the same thing to the Jews in the Second World War when the Jewish

humour was coming in the ghettos. They said how can you laugh at this miserable Jewish [experience]. Well there was an answer to that one, and to me it makes sense, that in the despair of the moment, in the absolute living hell that one can maybe ease the pain and actually produce a certain hope from the all the pockets that one can put his mind and his heart and his hands on, which is maybe humour. But you know I am not affected by this sort of criticism now. I was in *Chronicle*, I was quite disappointed. I had no idea that some people might accuse me of being antagonistic to the sentiment of the Palestinians, which is something that I am absolutely far from. I was naïve enough not to expect that people might come and say how could you do this and how could you do that. I think I was living in my own dream-world. But now I understand, years later, that this is typical actually from places where occupation and such intensity of cruelty is being exercised, such as what the Palestinians live. One could understand how there is no room for that humour to be had so that is also something one can understand. Now I understand, and I am not sheltered from the responses that I had, I would say similarly for *Divine*, as much as for *Chronicle*, but I must say that in *Divine*, ninety percent of that have gone away. I know that when I showed my film in Ramallah for example, that this was not an issue at all. Nobody actually stood up and told me how can you, how can you not. People enjoyed the film, they laughed. I wouldn't say the same about Nazareth which is inside the '48 – Nazareth is a bit of a ghetto so there's more produced ghetto humour; they understand this sort of humour which I come from. You know, it was a "nigger" talking to his fellow "niggers".

MW: Your film style is very unusual – innovative and precise. Can you explain some of your thinking with regard to film technique. What is film, as a medium, for you?

ES: This is a very, very difficult question. I do not know how to stand outside myself. I do know on certain issues and every once in a while my ghost stands and watches. But it is not always so easy to trace the very typical question I get many times which is a legitimate question: where does this kind of aesthetic come from, where do I come from and how does it all evolve into what it is? This is extremely difficult to trace and every time I try to trace it myself, I engage myself in going back into some kind of biography to see how initially I started to make film. Since I have not gone to study film at all, I really don't have the specific moment when I can say ... I'm not at all from any film background; I don't come from any kind of cinephile background and I really don't know how all this came to be what it is. What made me so obsessive with frames, and why are most of my image static, why do I have choreography in my films all the time? People walk as if they are dancing but in a very minimalist fashion. A lot of questions like that I don't really know that answer. It's probably the total sum of all the experiences I had, from the places I lived, the books I read and from the kind of films that not necessarily I saw, but that I saw and also I found myself in them. Because you can imagine that the filter was not there for me. In other words, I did not go to school and the teacher said Robert Bresson is your guy and not, let's say, Spielberg. I started watching films late in my life, it was my mid-twenties that I started to actually watch films with the intent of knowing who I am

in film and in the territory of cinema. I think it was just a kind of, how should I say, you know the glitter that takes place between two so that they can communicate. The love affair, or sometimes the engagement I found myself having with certain films and not with certain others. And I think that it is not rational, or intellectual even though I read critical writing, and that has contributed tremendously to how I see films, and certain writers, etc etc. But I do think though at some moments the intellectual and the rational go to some compartment at the back of the brain and what takes places is the poetic. And that poetic cannot be defined. Why is it that I am tickled by a certain movement, I have no idea but it came to be just that. That when I frame, usually when I am on the set, I can spend an hour going one centimetre to the right or one centimetre to the left, just trying to create that angle and one position of the tripod which can be no other. How does that happen to me? Why did I come to be so precise, or obsessive rather, it's really difficult to say. But certainly, a certain cinema or a certain kind of writing did that. I feel today when I see a film by Ozu, for example, I am filled with pleasure just in the way he puts a frame and the way he makes a man turn to another man and talk in that sort slow tempo that for gives me an enchantment of some kind. It's a tough question because I have to chase down so much of made me want to do films this way.

MW: *Does editing play an important part of your film process?*

ES: Yes. Let me start with something before that. Now, being a filmmaker is stuck on me. But between me and myself, it is not always the profession, just who I am. And this stimuli I have of writing down a sentence or an image, is a kind of seduction I have. It's a temptation. I come to write something I heard which I find funny or something which I find aesthetic etc etc. In the process of collecting so much of that the impulse comes to make a film. How can I describe it but by giving an example. There are certain filmmakers who make a film every year and who cannot do without this mode of producing. They are writing all the time, they are directing all the time, they finish a script, they shoot it, they are on the second film already. There's always the next film which they are about to make or they have five or six ideas jotted down somewhere. I am in no way that sort of filmmaker. I simply live – or simply does not belong to live because its more complex – I live, I experience, and due to a certain pleasure or pain or anguish or anxiety or political views, something gets produced, a culmination of all the above becomes a certain way of seeing. Then the absolute necessity comes to make a film, and that takes quite a period of time, and that is one reason, not all, why I do not make one film after another. And especially because my films are, in a certain fashion, semi-portraits. And they of course come many times from certain biographies and from certain people I know. This self portrait is not confined to just talking about myself, as the filmmaker, but a portrait of the ambience; it's a self-portrait of a certain ambience that I am living. And in the process, writing is an experience, shooting is another experience and editing is another experience – all of them include a certain creative process. I do not edit just what I shot. I engage again in the position of watching and composing and listening; and in editing there is not only the image, which is crucial to me, but also sound. I edit sound almost entirely like I edit image. If you watch the last film,

you can see the birds that you hear, they are composed, they are not arbitrary, they were not on the scene. I start to dream different kinds of birds who speak to each other, who laugh at each, who create a kind of temporality and so they become part of that musicality of the film. Every film and every step of the film has to ignite a kind of creative process. I take pleasure in editing, I take pleasure every step of the way. Each step had its great euphorias and then of course, you're many times overwhelmed by what its telling you and you have to take distance and sometimes you are sick and bored because of wanting to finish that process, especially because film is so much about pressure and budget. But usually there is a moment that is euphoric, and usually it's most of the process but there comes a moment when you've had enough and you want to bring it to some kind of completion. But every step has its pleasure; writing is where it starts. You're spending a lot of time with yourself, so it's not only about the scene, but inner dialogues that you're having and there is a pleasure in that too. But there is a moment when it might be too much, the days of solitude can be approaching craziness, so you have to watch out. In the balance of things its a beautiful process. And similarly when you're on the set, and this is the most tense moment, because there is so much pressure and budget and time, that you have to watch out for but at the same time you have to force yourself to be absolutely in the most alert and creative situation in a very short time. It has its euphoria, a very particular kind of euphoria. I must say that this is the only part of the process that I find exhausting because of that. If film was in a different kind of economic realm, and we were taking our time, things would be ideal but that is not the case. Writing is the most relaxed, especially because I do not personally adhere to deadlines. I would say that editing is in between, it's in the middle between the writing and the shooting, because it's not so tight in terms of time. And at the same time, you're watching, can have a walk, come back, you can evaluate, you can take a distance – so it has both actually.

MW: *I have two more questions and they're related, so I'll ask them together. I am interested in space and in how you represent space in Divine, and I wanted to know if this was something that you're consciously exploring. The second question is related. I read in an interview somewhere that you were influenced by Walter Benjamin and I wondered if his writing about space influenced you at all. I also find it interesting that you're living in Paris, which to me is haunted by Benjamin and also the surrealists. Do you have any consciousness of that?*

ES: Not at all (laughs). I would say that with all the readings that I've done of Walter Benjamin, I am so ignorant of his writing. So if he did influence me, it is probably something that I am not at all aware of. I just, not a long time ago, got a book by him about the passage ways of Paris and I haven't even flipped one page of it.

MW: *The arcades project? That's a bit of a strange book to read, it's non-linear; it's basically just fragments. A book in ruins, it's lovely.*

ES: I should start it because it's always on my shelf in my office. I'm always looking at it – it's always haunting me. But you know all of his writings are non-linear. I

find similarities in certain things, this is not being pretentious, I think for example, a lot of times, I "stutter" similarly. And these stutters, I find they are more evident in cases where I write an article. I see that I have a tendency to stutter rather than be coherent. I would say that if we draw a parallel, maybe the fact that it has become for me a way of making tableaux, for example. It's a way of trying to deviate from any kind of seduction, linear thought or linear narratives that I could slip into. I have a tendency to sometimes slip, like we all do, into classicist narratives. But when that happens, my critical eye right away prevents it from going anywhere and I lose pleasure. When I lose pleasure many times, I realise that the reason why is because I try to be coherent or I because I try to make narrative in a classicist fashion. This is interesting because I think that this is the way, and not because of a certain impotence. In other words, it could have started with a certain impotence. I have no way of knowing if my lack of narrative is what drew me to become this sort of filmmaker but I tend to think that it is part of my character. I do notice when I tell stories, it never stays in one realm. It always goes to a different tableau and another layer. I leave certain moments, and I depart from others. Sometimes I lose my way and other times I make the connection. I think that to give a little metaphor, when I make films, I finish a tableau and then make another and another and another; I think they fit into some kind of cosmos, and that cosmos is in motion. And so this is an ideal situation for me, that the spectator looks at this cosmos with different circulation, and different movement and different temporalities and can democratically move or be seduced by one temporality or go to another and live in that cosmos, rather than if it had, let's say a beginning middle and an end.