This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.
The Subtle Way Out:
Cinematic Thought, Belief in the World,
and Four Contemporary Filmmakers

Tyler Munroe Parks

Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh
2014
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments  
Author Declaration  
Abstract  
Introduction  
1. Cinematic Thought and Belief in the World  
   Wong Kar-wai  
   2. An Unforeseeable Nothing That Changes Everything: *In the Mood for Love*  
   3. The Vertigo of Immanence: *2046*  
   Nuri Bilge Ceylan  
   4. The World and Others: *Distant*  
   5. The Nothing That Is: *Climates*  
   Pedro Costa  
   6. Being Just So: *In Vanda’s Room*  
   7. Domination of Black: *Colossal Youth*  
   Apichatpong Weerasethakul  
   8. Becoming Animal, Desire, and Repetition: *Tropical Malady*  
   9. Hypnosis, Intoxication, and Fog: *Syndromes and a Century*  
Conclusion  
Notes  
Works Cited  
Filmography
Acknowledgments

I would like to heartily thank the University of Edinburgh for their award of an Edinburgh Global Research Scholarship, and the College of Humanities and Social Science for granting me a College Research Scholarship. I would also like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dan Yacavone and Martine Beugnet, whose comments and advice were indispensable throughout the research and writing of this thesis. In addition, I would like to thank Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, whose guidance helped me begin on the path that lead me to complete this work. I am also grateful to Drs. Jamie Pitts and Gary Slater, as well as soon-to-be-Dr. Alastair Cole, all of whose conversation has rejuvenated my thought at any number of crucial junctures. Martine Miller has been indispensable in innumerable small ways along this journey, and they have made a big difference. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Bill and Kai Parks, and my brother, Casey, without whose support I would surely not have arrived at this fine vista.
Author Declaration

I hereby declare this thesis to be entirely my own work.

Tyler Munroe Parks
September 2014
Abstract

In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Gilles Deleuze distinguishes two regimes of audiovisual thought. In the regime of the movement-image, such thought is constituted by two processes. The first, differentiation/integration, expresses a whole that changes through the intermediary of the shifting relationships between the objects and people on screen. The second, specification, gives images a determinate function in a sensory-motor schema, through which perceptions are linked to actions in rational intervals of movement. With the regime of the time-image, as I understand it, thought instead comes to mean, as Deleuze puts it in *Foucault*, to experiment and problematize, and “knowledge, power, and the self are the triple root of a problematization of thought” (95). It is my argument in this thesis that Deleuze’s work on cinema is of great utility in carrying out filmic analyses that seek to detect and draw out the consequences of strategies of filmmaking that make knowledge, power, and self problematic. Furthermore, such a mode of analysis is particularly valuable in attending to new films that confront us with novel means of organising problematic audiovisual thought.

My arguments are made through consideration of two films each from four directors: Wong Kar-wai, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Pedro Costa, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. While there are many important differences between the works of these filmmakers, their films nevertheless lend themselves to an approach that seeks to determine how thought becomes problematic in specific cases. Similarities and resonances are brought out between these films and those that Deleuze uses himself in making his arguments and shaping his concepts, but I also identify new problems that we encounter in the works of these filmmakers, which extend the range of meaning of some of those concepts. One such concept that is of particular importance in this thesis is “belief in the world”. There is always something in those films that pass into the regime of the time-image that is systematic, which breaks up and multiplies thought, multiplies the thinkers we are made to inhabit. Our relation to the world of the film is therefore unstable and uncertain, and calls for belief, since films themselves in this regime produce new links between humans and the world, rather than firmly establishing a realistic state of things, a temporal and spatial matrix that accords with that which we experience in everyday existence. Such films thus make us receptive to a
thought different from that interiorised thought through which, as Nietzsche writes, the apparatus of knowledge abstracts, simplifies, and takes possession of the world and others (Will, no. 503, 274)
Introduction

In the introductions he wrote for the English translations of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, and *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze makes reference to Friedrich Nietzsche’s comparison of the thinker to an arrow shot by nature, which is picked up by other thinkers and fired elsewhere.¹ In *Difference and Repetition*, the presentation of this image is part of Deleuze’s reflection on the difference between writing history of philosophy and writing philosophy itself. “In the one case”, he writes, “we study the arrows or the tools of a great thinker, the trophies and the prey, the continents discovered. In the other, we trim our own arrows, or gather those which seem to us the finest in order to try to send them in other directions, even if the distance covered is not astronomical but relatively small (xv). For those that find themselves attracted by, and incited to work from, Deleuze’s two books on cinema – *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* – the case is somewhat more complicated.² Due to the complexity of the books, there is little doubt of the necessity of commentaries like those of, for instance, D.N. Rodowick and Paola Marrati, which elucidate both the project as a whole, and the lineage of specific concepts made use of in Deleuze's particular arguments.³ When the objective is rather to put Deleuze’s thought on cinema in touch with contemporary films, we have to ask ourselves what we hope to gain through doing so, as well as be careful not to simply interpret the narrative and aesthetic strategies at work in a film by uncritically invoking Deleuze’s concepts and classifications. This is especially true with regard to films that pass into the regime of the time-image, since such films are distinguished by the singularity of the thought they constitute.

My arguments in this thesis rest on the fact that in differentiating two regimes of the image – that of the movement-image (associated for the most part with “classical cinema”) and that of the time-image (associated for the most part with “modern cinema”) – Deleuze distinguishes between two regimes, or systems, of audiovisual thought. These are, he argues, two competing “modes of grouping visual and sonorous images” (“Portrait” 214). With the regime of the time-image, as I understand it, thought comes to mean, as Deleuze puts it in *Foucault* – a work in which he further develops a number of arguments from *The Time-Image* – to experiment and problematise, and “knowledge, power, and the self are the triple root of a problematization of thought” (95). In this thesis, I will therefore argue that through locating
and analysing those points in particular films at which such problems arise, we are able to recognise the manner in which these films make thought a matter of producing images and relationships for which there are not yet concepts. I will argue as well that in time-image cinema the processes constitutive of thought in the movement-image are not absent, but that the “clear thought” they constitute – which offers us, according to Antonin Artaud, only the “mere skin of life” – is broken up into incommensurable segments, and put in touch with features (images, sequences, or combinations of images and sounds) that are themselves problematic. Both the relationship between these features and movement-image thought, and these features and their relationships with one another may be conceived as problematic.

The first chapter will develop the theoretical arguments that will underpin my readings of specific films, which make up the bulk of this thesis. Most importantly, it will distinguish the two types of “spiritual automatism” – or automatic thought – associated with the two regimes of the image distinguished by Deleuze, and elucidate the difficult concepts associated with the spiritual automatism of time-image cinema: “the outside”, “the unthought in thought”, and “belief in the world”. I will show the close relations between these three concepts, and ultimately argue that the notion of belief in the world must be understood in order to comprehend Deleuze’s provocative claim that, “An author’s strength is measured by the way he is able to impose this problematic, uncertain and yet non-arbitrary point: grace or chance” (TI 169).

While Deleuze’s work allows us to better think the thought constituted through novel strategies of organising images and sounds in time-image films, the films themselves in turn help us to understand and perhaps even broaden or transform his theoretical claims. In this thesis, Deleuze’s arrows and that strange, mutable continent of the time-image will thus be studied anew alongside two films each from four directors: Wong Kar-wai (In the Mood for Love [Hua yang nian hua, 2000] and 2046 [2004]), Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Distant [Uçak, 2002] and Climates [Iklimler, 2006]), Pedro Costa (In Vanda’s Room [No quarto da Vanda, 2000] and Colossal Youth [Juventude em marcha, 2006]), and Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Tropical Malady [Sud pralad, 2004] and Syndromes and a Century [Sang sattawat, 2006]. It is not my intention to simply show that the films of these directors should be classified as time-image cinema, or that certain aspects of their work can be explained with recourse to Deleuze’s concepts. It is rather that Deleuze’s concepts both resonate with and are useful in detecting and addressing many of the most fascinating aspects of these films. There will be no futile attempt to
exhaust these works of what is of interest in them, and numerous other approaches are of course possible. Nevertheless, a number of problems related to cinematic thought are produced by each of the films selected. In tracing the lineaments of this thought, many “problematic” aspects of Deleuze’s own arguments may well be cast in a new light.

**Methodology and Deleuze**

Thinking methodology in relation to Deleuze is a tricky proposition. This is because he attacks the very notion of methodology as a presupposition of the dogmatic image of thought that lies at the root of an ideal of truth he follows Nietzsche in critiquing. His own arrows are often fashioned and fired in order to move outside of the territory illuminated by this dogmatic image of thought, which he first formulates in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1961). It then appears again in a chapter, which takes “The Image of Thought” as its title, in *Proust and Signs* (1964), and is given its most extensive treatment, in another chapter titled “The Image of Thought”, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968). In the last work, Deleuze exhaustively describes and critiques eight postulates – each of which takes two forms, natural and philosophical – of which he argues the dogmatic image of thought consists (129-167). For my purposes here, the problem of methodology raised in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* should, however, be sufficient. In this text, Deleuze limits himself to a description of three postulates, the third of which, according to him, tells us the following:

all we need to think well, to think truthfully, is a method. Method is an artifice but one through which we are brought back to the nature of thought, through which we adhere to this nature and ward off the effect of the alien forces which alter it and distract us. Through method we ward off error. Time and place matter little if we apply method: it enables us to enter the domain of ‘that which is valid for all times and places’. (96-7)

To the contrary, for Deleuze time and place are of the utmost importance, and thought is not the exercise of a faculty, but must be reborn in an encounter with something from outside that cannot initially be thought. As he writes in *Foucault*, “Thinking does not depend on a beautiful interiority that would reunite the visible and the articulable elements, but is carried under the intrusion of an outside that eats into the interval and forces or dismembers the internal” (72). From this perspective, thought begins with an encounter that makes evident a disparity between what we see and what we are able to articulate about what we
It begins when it must begin again, at a point at which it has been disempowered. It begins when we encounter—as in a claim of Heidegger’s that Deleuze adopts— the thought-provoking thought that we are not yet thinking. Yet this very disempowerment is a feature, Deleuze argues, of the type of thought produced in the regime of the time-image (TI 160-2).

My method in this thesis is to locate specific times and places at which thought becomes disempowered in this way, those points at which what we see (and hear) exceeds our capacity to speak of it (in an interior monologue of sorts) with apparent sufficiency. This means identifying the moments at which we as spectators become “seers” who are made to see “better and further than [we] can react, that is think” (TI 164). Through close readings of these “visionary” moments, we can come to recognise the problems of identity, knowledge, and power that they introduce. We may become seers as a result of unthinkable relations in particular images, like the strange “investigations” undertaken by the camera in Syndromes and a Century, or the many images of Mahmut (Muzaffer Özdemir) and Yusuf (Mehmet Emin Toprak) in Distant that seem to be both objective and suffused with the characters’ mental states. Such relationships may, on the other hand, be established between images, sequences, or images and sounds. We can think here of apparent continuity cuts in In the Mood for Love that are belied by the fact that Su Li-zen (Maggie Cheung) has come to wear a different cheongsam; such instances sometimes open up problems related to the indiscernibility of the film’s reality and the fantasies or memories of the characters. Alternately, we can consider the uncertain relationships developed between Costa’s shadowy still lifes of Fontainhas interiors, and the conversations and stories of the neighbourhood’s residents.

Whether the problem arises in the image, or across an interstice, thought ceases to be solely a reaction to the image as a sensory-motor sign (a rational link between perceptions and actions), which allows it to be thought clearly in relation to the film’s other images. It ceases to be defined as a kind of inner speech that proceeds by way of ideas or signs that can be rationally deduced from one another. Thought is now constituted as well through the production of problems in images and sounds. These relationships between different forms of thought will be returned to again and again in this thesis. Rodowick writes that, “the curious thing about Deleuze’s treatment of authorship is that he approaches film authors no differently than philosophical authors” (xiv). This variant strain of auteurism will be adopted here as well, and questions of film as thought, and filmmakers as thinkers will ground my analysis and interpretation.
Another more practical aspect of my methodology has to do with the way I have used Deleuze’s work. For the most part, I have drawn on certain arguments he makes in *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*, and used his other texts to clarify points that are made in these books, as I have done with *Foucault* above. This is not, however, always the case. For instance, the concepts of “becoming-animal” and “haecceity” are borrowed from *A Thousand Plateaus*, despite the fact that they do not appear in the *Cinema* books. In any case, it is not my intention to simply apply Deleuze’s concepts as if they could explain the meaning of the films selected. I try to arrange encounters between his ideas, and some of his analyses of other films, and those problematic aspects of the films that they are of facility in describing. Where his other books – from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* to *What Is Philosophy?* – have seemed valuable in carrying out this strategy, I have made pragmatic use of them.

I also find a number of texts that are key to Deleuze’s arguments in *The Time-Image* to be of great utility in clarifying particular aspects of many claims he makes. Among these texts, perhaps the most important are Noël Burch’s chapter on Yasujiro Ozu in *To a Distant Observer* (1979), Maurice Blanchot’s *The Infinite Conversation* (1969), Andre Bazin’s “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism” (1948), Pier Paolo Pasolini’s “The Cinema of Poetry” (1965), and Alain Robbe-Grillet’s essay, “Time and Description in Contemporary Narrative” (1963). I have also made use of the writings of those philosophers whose work plays such a large role in *The Time-Image*, Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche. Some aspects of Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy also seem to me to resonate with certain arguments of Deleuze’s in a productive way, which is perhaps most comprehensible if one considers Blanchot’s equation of the Levinasian *visage* with the concept of the “outside” in *The Infinite Conversation*. This is not a connection that Deleuze himself addresses, but even disregarding Blanchot’s text, the fact that what comes first is the difference of the ethical encounter for Levinas, rather than a lost unity, makes linking him with Deleuze through certain aspects of these films an interesting proposition.

Rodowick, Marrati, and John Rajchman’s work on Deleuze has been of particular assistance in arriving at my own interpretations of the arguments about thought and cinema that Deleuze makes. While I do not return to these works with great frequency in this thesis, I have tried to note the points at which their readings of certain features of Deleuze’s arguments are particularly helpful, or can clarify the relationship between a concept and the features of a film. I have also drawn on the work of numerous film critics and theorists who
have written about the films under consideration in this thesis. Generally, I include the points that they make about certain features of the films that are of assistance in framing the strategies that make knowledge, forces, and identity become problematic features of a cinematic thinking. Sometimes, on the other hand, my engagement with others who have written about a film is more extensive. This is especially the case with *In the Mood for Love*, of which so many strong pieces have been written. Both Rey Chow and John Orr’s writing on the film challenged and stimulated me to reformulate my own tactics in bringing together Wong’s film and Deleuze’s work on cinema.

**On the Selection of Films**

For the purposes of this thesis, I define contemporary cinema as those films released after the millennium, and, in fact, all of the films selected for this thesis were released between 2000 and 2007. The determination of the turn of the century as a cut-off mark is obviously somewhat arbitrary, but it allows me to begin with *In the Mood for Love*, a film in which a number of striking problems appear. Wong’s work may seem a strange fit with that of Ceylan, Costa, and Apichatpong, but it nevertheless allows me to identify a number of problematic features that appear in somewhat different form in the work of these other directors. The reason for my choosing two films by each director is perhaps also most obvious with regard to Wong. If we consider filmmakers as thinkers, there will of course be important connections across a director’s oeuvre. All of the films included here are feature-length, and those by each director followed one upon the next, and exhibit many significant lines of connection. The importance of exploring these connections is most obviously essential when the second film is a sequel that seems to both belong to a world the same and different from that of its predecessor. While this is clearly true of *In the Mood for Love* and *2046*, it is applicable as well to Costa’s *In Vanda’s Room* and *Colossal Youth*, in which the filmmaker uses two distinct strategies in collaborating with the residents of the Lisbon neighbourhood of Fontainhas.

Costa’s work initially appears to be the most distant from Wong’s, and in many ways the two directors operate at a great remove from one another. For instance, *Colossal Youth* and *In Vanda’s Room* are dependent upon non-actors, while *In the Mood for Love* and *2046* feature some of the biggest stars in Chinese-language cinema. Costa shoots with a cheap digital camera and, in accordance with the possibilities it offers, explores a minimalistic style
and the living spaces he finds in Fontainhas and Casal de Boba. Wong, on the other hand, depends on bigger budgets and makes extensive use of elegant camera movements, and expressive set design and lighting to (re)-create a 1960s Hong Kong. These differences could be taken as crucial in another study, but from the perspective I adopt in this thesis the resonances between the problems of thought raised by the films of the two directors are more important than these other considerations.

Nevertheless, I have chosen to interpose Ceylan between Wong and Costa in recognition of the fact that the work of the Turkish filmmaker exhibits similarities with both of them. The themes of Distant and - especially - Climates, as well as the atmospheric aspects of these films reveal certain affinities between Ceylan and Wong. On the other hand, the prevalence of static shots (and the use of a digital camera in Climates), as well as the essential role played by ambient sound, and the use of non-actors all link the work of Ceylan and Costa. I have left Apichatpong for last for a number of reasons. In one sense, it gives the thesis a circular structure that harmonises with the fact that the last film analysed is Syndromes and a Century, which, I argue, is a novel attempt at reconciling the circle and the straight line (the time asymmetric unreeeling of a film). The circularity is a result of the fact that both Wong and Apichatpong claim a Buddhist influence more philosophical than religious. This affinity is reflected in the fact that issues surrounding fullness and emptiness raised in the first chapter are echoed in the last.

I would like to conclude here with a reflection on one more quote from Deleuze, which will give this introduction its own sort of circularity. “In the field of knowledge as problem”, he writes in Foucault, “thinking is first of all seeing and speaking, but thinking is carried out in the space between the two, in the interstice or disjunction between seeing and speaking. On each occasion it invents the interlocking, firing an arrow from the one towards the target of the other” (96). In what follows, this relationship between seeing and speaking will be recast a number of times. What interests me in this quote here is this notion of the arrow, which in being fired from one form of knowledge to another describes a new image of thought. Perhaps, where I have been most successful in this thesis, I have managed to fire arrows from film analysis toward philosophy, and others toward film analysis from philosophy, and in so doing made a few of them my own.
1. Cinematic Thought and Belief in the World

In an interview in *Le Monde* shortly after *The Movement-Image* was published, Deleuze claimed that the central thesis of the book was simple: “the great auteurs of film are thinking, thought exists in their work, and making a film is creative, living thought” (“Portrait” 220). In *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*, then, he distinguishes two distinct forms of thought made operable through two regimes of the image, two modes of organising images and sounds. Further, he claims that these two regimes are defined by two different types of what he calls “spiritual automatism” (*TI* 160-2). In this chapter, I will describe the way in which these two “systems” of automatic thought are constituted. The greater part of the chapter will be taken up with interpreting the three concepts that Deleuze uses to formulate the automatism of time-image cinema: “the outside”, “the unthought in thought”, and “belief in the world”. First though, we need to establish what constitutes spiritual automatism in the regime of the movement-image.

Spiritual Automatism, Thought, and the Movement-Image

According to Deleuze, thought is constituted in the regime of the movement-image by two processes, which he calls “noosigns”, or “images of thought”. These are “differentiation” and “specification” (*TI* 27-8), and it is the first process that he describes as a form of spiritual automatism. The notion of spiritual automatism itself is adopted from Spinoza, and appears in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, which was first published after the philosopher’s death, in 1677.¹ To say that the soul is a kind of spiritual automatism, Deleuze argues in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, is to claim that, “in thinking we obey only the laws of thought, laws that determine both the form and the content of true ideas, and that make us produce ideas in sequence according to their own causes and through our own power, so that in knowing our power of understanding we know through their causes all the things that fall within this power” (153). This means that the true idea does not find its inner content in logically and distinctly representing its object, as for Descartes, but in being a link in a chain of thoughts that could be infinitely extended back to the idea of God, or the nature of things. The idea not only represents something, but also expresses a whole.

As thought unfolds the things it represents (ideas), an autonomous order of ideas (a
whole) is also unfolded, and it is this whole that most powerfully affirms the necessity of each individual idea. This is a circular, spiralling movement of spiritual automatism, which expresses the parallelism of thought and things. An idea, being a mode of thought, “has its (efficient and formal cause) nowhere but in the attribute of Thought”, just as “any object has as its efficient and formal cause only in the attribute of which it is a mode, and whose concept it involves”. But despite the different lines of causation of thought and things, “to each idea there corresponds some thing” (Expressionism 115-6). Things open onto ideas, and the necessity of these ideas is affirmed by their operating as links in a chain of thoughts that forms a coherent whole.

Deleuze sees a similar sort of parallelism between image and thought in the regime of the movement-image, and argues that it therefore constitutes a sort of Bergsonian spiritual automatism of matter (movement-image) and duration (the whole). This is clear in his restatement of Bergson’s third thesis on movement: “Movement relates the objects between which it is established to the changing whole, and vice versa” (MI 11). It is this relationship that describes spiritual automatism in the regime of the movement-image. This automatism consists of a circuit in which an open whole in another dimension (thought) is externalised in “objects between which movement is established” that are at the same time internalised in that whole. This whole is spiritual or mental because it “creates itself, and constantly creates itself in another dimension without parts” (MI 11). The whole exists nowhere except in the thought produced by the film, which the spectator internalises. It is an open duration, since the chain of connections between situations and actions presented by the film could be hypothetically stretched back beyond the beginning of the film, or continued beyond its end. The necessity of each shot is affirmed not by what it represents, but by the role it plays as a link an open, organic totality.

This spiritual automatism is, however, dependent on specification, the second process characteristic of thinking in movement-images. What is specified through this second process is the place occupied by an image in a rational interval of movement. These signs form links in a sensory-motor schema, according to Deleuze, and at its most basic, this schema ensures that, “actions are linked to perceptions and perceptions develop into actions” (Negotiations 51). It is this construction of rational intervals of movement that makes possible “realistic” narratives in which situations are modified by actions, or actions disclose situations. To give a general and common example: we see what a character sees
(perception-image), that the character has seen and is processing what has been seen
(affection-image), and that he or she then carries out an action in response (action-image).
This is a rational interval of movement. Through the composition of such rational intervals,
filmmakers develop an extendable world of milieux, such that the world beyond the frame
can be depended on to be determined by the same natural laws (relationships between time,
space, and movement) that seem to reign within the frame.

The concept of the sensory-motor schema is adopted by Deleuze from Bergson’s
*Matter and Memory*, and has two main aspects. First, living beings “allow to pass through
them, so to speak, those external influences which are indifferent to them; the others
isolated, become ‘perceptions’ by their very isolation” (*Matter* 36). Through “the discarding
of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally, for our functions”, we isolate those
bodies encountered upon which we may profitably act (38). Deleuze describes this
subtractive movement of perception as an act of framing, and in terms of cinema, we can say
that by way of this schema, we as spectators subconsciously reduce the image to a sign and
discard to varying degree whatever is seen and heard that plays little or no role in the
constitution of this sign.

The second aspect of sensory-motor perception is the forming of a horizon around
the body, allowing it to organise a response to the perception received. Bergson argues that
this occurs because “as my body moves in space, all the other images vary, while that image,
my body, remains invariable. I must therefore, make it a center to which I refer all other
images” (*Matter* 46). In this way the body prepares itself to react to the stimulus it has
received. For the spectator, this means that he or she constitutes a centre of vision, and no
matter how dramatic the leaps through time and space undertaken by the film, this centre
will anchor a horizon within which a stable state of things exists, wherein the actions and
perceptions will be comprehensibly related to each other. The breakdown of this sensory-
motor schema, according to Deleuze, allows new types of images, and a new regime of
cinematic thought, to appear. The absence or cessation of this rational linking of movement
and perception also puts a halt to the spiritual automatism by which the images of a film all
differentiate the aspects of a single whole that integrates difference into self-identity.

In *The Time-Image*, Deleuze returns to the spiritual automatism of movement-images
in order to differentiate that of time-images from it. He claims that three relationships
between cinema and thought are to be found everywhere in the cinema of the movement-
image: “the relationship with a whole which can only be thought in a higher awareness, the relationship with a thought which can only be shaped in the subconscious unfolding of images, the sensory-motor relationship between world and man, nature and thought: Critical thought, hypnotic thought, action-thought” (TI 158). These are replaced by the relationship with an outside that cannot be thought, the relationship with a plural thought which is shaped in a free indirect discourse or vision, and a breaking of the sensory-motor links joining world and man, nature and thought, such that we are left only with belief in the world (181). In the regime of the time-image, according to Deleuze, the whole is constituted as “the relation between automatism, the unthought and thought” (172). In order to explain what he means here, I will take up the three key concepts associated with thought in the regime of the time-image.

**The Outside**

Rodowick notes that the concept of the outside – adopted by Deleuze from Blanchot’s work, and Foucault’s essay on Blanchot, “The Thought of the Outside” – undergoes subtle transformations throughout The Time-Image. He also, justifiably, claims that the outside is without doubt the most complex and elusive idea in the book (140). Deleuze is certainly wilfully obscure to some degree in developing the concept, as if he wants to give shape to the horizons of it rather than define what it is in itself. Blanchot’s endless descriptions of encounters with the outside operate in a similar manner; each time we feel that we may have finally encircled the notion, another evocation of it appears and it slips out of our grasp. Therefore, rather than attempt to analyse and interpret the concept in the different guises in which it appears in the work of these three writers, which would doubtless lead me to construct a labyrinth of my own, I will give a skeletal account of the nature and importance of the outside here, and then detail other aspects of it in relation to the unthought in thought and belief in the world, as well as in my analysis of the films.

First of all, we must address Deleuze’s claim that, in the passage from the regime of the movement-image to that of the time-image, the whole ceases to be the open and becomes the outside (TI 173). We can begin with his description of the outside as a certain type of “line” of connection between things, in Foucault. “This is the outside”, he writes: “the line that continues to link up random events in a mixture of chance and dependency.” (96). In relation to cinema, then, we can say this: the whole as outside is the assemblage of images and sounds, in the course of the film’s unreeling, by way of connections that are both
rational and irrational. Many of the images (and sounds) still constitute, or at least contain, signs that compose rational intervals of movement. These images are dependent on one another to operate in this way. Sometimes, on the other hand, the connections between features are instead “irrational”. They are not articulated clearly by the film, and their relationship seems to be either random or inexplicable. These relationships constitute problems, since the manner in which they are to be thought together is not given.

What are the new features that constitute thought in the regime of the time-image? They are the outside itself and the unthought in thought. “The direct time-image effectively has as noo-signs the irrational cut between non-linked (but always relinked) images, and the absolute contact between non-totalizable, asymmetrical outside and inside” (TI 266). The outside is the irrational cut, the interstice between two features that establishes a problematic relation between them. It is what Deleuze sometimes, following Blanchot, calls a non-relation, since it both links and divides two features. This may be the cut between two images or two sequences of images, but also the link between sound and image, between the speech of the characters and the visions produced by the camera. It may appear at its clearest in the cut between two worlds which appears at the centre of both Tropical Malady and Syndromes and a Century. But it is also the line of (dis)-connection between Costa’s still lifes and the speech of Ventura in Colossal Youth, and the cut in In the Mood for Love that links Chow Mo-wan and Su Li-zhen’s rehearsal of a future farewell with a taxi ride that stands in an indiscernible relation to it. In all these cases, the problem constituted by the interstice is that of the relationship between separate features. These may be the two narratives of Tropical Malady, the two images on either side of the cut in In the Mood for Love, or the speech of Ventura and the still lifes of Costa. Through this last example, we can see that the features do not necessarily even have to be contiguous.

Why should the outside, which can “appear” innumerable times in a film, in a number of different “connections”, become the whole? The reason for this, which Deleuze does not overtly state in The Time-Image, is that the identity of a film comes to be defined by difference, by the appearance of new relations as yet without classification. The whole is determined on the basis of problems that present a difference (or differences) that cannot be subsumed into a totality, rather than by the integration into a single whole of the parts that have been differentiated by the images of a film. Again, we can think of Apichatpong here. The identity of Syndromes and a Century is dependent on the difference between, or
incommensurability of, the two worlds it presents. The thought of this particular film becomes marked not only by the distinct styles of narration on either side of this central divide, but also, especially in the second half, by the presence of unattributable instances of camera consciousness. There is ultimately an approach toward paradox through the concept of the outside: according to Deleuze, the outside is “more distant than any external world” (TI 266), and cannot be contained in the images of a film. Nevertheless, in establishing itself between these images and other features, the outside becomes the distinguishing feature of an entire asystematic system of thinking in images and sounds.

**The Unthought in Thought**

What then does Deleuze mean by “the unthought in thought”, which he claims is “the absolute contact between non-totalizable, asymmetrical outside and inside” (TI 266)? This absolute contact is produced by images that constitute “free indirect vision”, which is defined by Deleuze in reference to Pasolini’s notion of the free-indirect point-of-view shot. “We are no longer faced with subjective or objective images; we are caught in a correlation between a perception-image and a camera-consciousness which transforms it” (MI 76). It may be the case that an image both shows us a character, and seems to convey to us something of that character’s mental state: there is “a reflexion of the image in a camera-self-consciousness” (78). Pasolini gives the example of Antonioni’s *Red Desert* (*Deserto Rosso*, 1964), in which the filmmaker substitutes “*in tuto for the world-view of a neurotic his own delirious view of aesthetics*” (Pasolini 179). The visions we are granted of Giuliana (Monica Vitti) are infused with her hysteric state of mind, which also reflects, and acts as the excuse for, Antonioni’s own aesthetic vision. The camera enters “into a relation of *simulation…with the character’s way of seeing*” (TI 143). It is also true that such images “double” the character, since he or she is both seeing and seen, and it is this relationship that reflects Foucault’s concept of the unthought in thought.

The unthought in thought designates the fissure that is constitutive of the *cogito*. “An empirical subject cannot be born in to the world without simultaneously being reflected in a transcendental subject which thinks it and in which it thinks itself” (TI 76). Images in which these two positions become imbricated therefore express a difference internal to identity, or the indefinite and infinite relation between these two aspects of the self: the I that relates the present to past and future, and the ego that exists *in time*. This conflation of these two
aspects of the self is characteristic of “opsigns”, pure optical images, which loosen or undo the sensory-motor relations established by a film. There are two poles to this type of image: “reports”, which Deleuze calls constats, and instats, which are “subjective images, memories of childhood, sounds and visual dreams or fantasies, where the character does not act without seeing himself acting, complicit viewer of the role he himself is playing” (TI 6). Deleuze associates reports with Antonioni, and instats with Fellini, and we can align the former with the rarefaction (focus on a single object, or a space emptied of humans) of the image, and the latter with a certain form of its saturation (its appearance as both an objective perspective and a camera consciousness, which are not identical, yet cannot be detached from each other). In both cases, we are no longer able to recognise and react subconsciously to a sign that is constituted by the image, and thus see further than we can think.

In the report, Deleuze claims, “the most objective images are not formed without becoming mental, and going into a strange, invisible subjectivity” (TI 8). We encounter a camera consciousness that is unattributable to the point-of-view of a character, but which is not wholly objective either. In addition, no event that could serve as a sign in a sensory-motor schema materialises, and we may well not see any characters at all. However, whether through the duration and composition of the image (Costa’s still lifes), or conspicuous camera movement (Apichatpong’s “investigations” in Syndromes), the image seems to be the vision of a sentient being. We are not implicated in the vision of a character by the report, but aligned with an image-thought unattributable to anyone but the filmmaker. There is neither a subject who sees, nor much to be seen that is concretely related to the film’s other images. Or, the images is only related to the film’s other images by presenting a space, or a portion of a space, that we have already seen, or will see again. Deleuze claims that encountering a report “we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do not have to know and there is no longer even a place from which to ask” (TI 7). The image is a kind of sensory-thought, freed of both any onscreen thinker whose subjectivity it would reflect, and the need of a language in which it would be equivalent to a concrete articulation.

On the other hand, with the instat the problem is that described above: we both see a character and seem to occupy a perspective inflected with that character’s subjectivity. We can here add a few examples that will be further explored in this thesis. In In the Mood for
Love, certain images – especially those in slow motion, during which Shigeru Umebayashi’s musical piece “Yumeji’s Theme” plays – seem to both show the characters in the film’s “present”, and belong to memory or fantasy, without being coded as such. It is undecidable whether the aestheticisation of the images should be seen as a sign of their status as memories, or a manifestation of Wong’s aestheticised vision of the past. In Ceylan’s work, on the other hand, we find images of characters that seem to be infused with their internal, mental or emotional, states at the point in time in which we see them on screen. We cannot say that the image is either wholly subjective or objective, and the thought it constitutes is therefore haunted by a relationship – an unthought – that we cannot think with finality.

But there is an unthought in thought of the film as a whole as well. There is no longer a single, indivisible “interior monologue” of thought constituted by the rationally linked images of a film, but a free-indirect discourse that brings together incommensurable features, linked on autonomous interstices, in a serial arrangement. The film becomes a plural thought, since the thought constituted by and across different features cannot be synthesised into a self-identical whole. We can here define the problematic relationships of the self, or identity, that result from the film being divided up in this way. Such problems can, as we have seen, be produced by particular types of images in which no distinction between subjectivity and objectivity is made possible: reports and instats. They appear as well when a film as a whole becomes defined by its difference from itself rather than the coherence of its identity, as in Apichatpong’s halved films, and the assemblage of Costa’s autonomous images and the speech-acts of Ventura. Such problems can even be constituted through the development of a problematic relationship between two versions of a character from one film to the next: Chow Mo-wan in In the Mood for Love and 2046. These problems of identity suggest related problems of knowledge: we sometimes cannot know if what we are seeing is mental or “real”, memory or “the present”. At other times, we are unable to know how to speak of the relations between the segments of a film, which are joined on autonomous interstices that are inhabited by an outside that is foreign to the world(s) within its images. This second problem brings us to the concept of belief in the world, for what makes such belief necessary is that both our relation to ourselves, and our relation to the world are not simply given.

Belief in the World
There are a number of different senses in which Deleuze’s now well-know notion of belief in the world can be understood. Most clearly, we are prompted to believe in the world when we are no longer sufficiently assured that the world on screen is continuous and orientable in the same ways as that in which we spend our everyday lives. Cinema has, according to Deleuze, always presented an autonomous world rather than reproducing the world (TI 35). Yet it is only when the movements presented cease to be specified and recognised (however subconsciously) as classifiable signs that this autonomy is clearly affirmed. Movements not only cease to be systematically relativised in relation to one another, so as to develop a stable field of forces linked by cause and effect, but become “aberrant” and “irrational”, frustrating our attempts to think them in relation to one another. In addition, the relations between space and time may not necessarily be the same from image to image, or, even within a single image. A very good example of this difference within a single image, as we will see, is presented in the long scene on the beach in Ceylan’s *Climates*, where the relation between time and movement becomes unthinkable. The first claim we can make is then this: to believe in the world in Deleuze’s sense, we must first recognise that we are among relations and forces that we are unable to think clearly. 

Deleuze seems to have taken this conception of belief in the world from Robbe-Grillet’s essay, “Time and Description in Contemporary Narrative”, and it is closely related to the idea of description that is developed in the same piece. According to Deleuze, Robbe-Grillet’s idea of a description that both absorbs and destroys its object accords with Bergson’s pure optical image, in that it involves the singularity of what it presents, rather than the abstract objects offered up by the sensory-motor image. That is, the “opsign” gives us a particular field of grass, rather than grass in general, the image of that which would interest a hungry cow such that it could act in order to feed (TI 42-3). The more our senses are opened up to the singularity of such a field, the less able we are to reduce it to a sensory-motor image. The senses are thus “emancipated” from the task of forming such images, as Deleuze claims with reference to the still lifes of Yasujiro Ozu (17). Having been made to see further than we can react, or think, we may come to suspect that our habitual relation to the world is not the only one we are capable of, and that we are unable to see the world as it truly is.

For Robbe-Grillet, the point is to force people to re-evaluate the relationship between art, life, and reality. He writes, “The true, the false, and making people believe, have more
or less become the subject of every modern work; this one, instead of claiming to be a piece of reality develops into a reflection on reality (or on the lack of reality, as you wish)” (148).
The truthful work is no longer conceived as that which constructs firm links between events, conceived as “rational” movements that take place in a world where fixed relations exist between chronological time and Euclidean space. What is affirmed to be false is the assumption that we have access to the nature of reality in the first place. We stop believing that the world in a novel or on screen is a “piece” of reality as it is; but then what do we believe instead? According to Robbe-Grillet, a cinematic image can be composed such that it “stops you believing something at the same time as it affirms it, in the same way as the description stops you seeing what it was showing you” (148). Deleuze simply calls such cinematic images descriptions, or opsings, and claims for them this same ability to stop us from seeing what is being shown. Actually, we see more, but because we are not able to translate what we see into what we are able to speak of clearly, we cannot be certain that we have seen what it was in our interest to see.

Such images constitute a “power of the false” because they can be added to one another without having to accord to commensurable relations of space, time, and movement. Yet, it is not simply that any image can thus be combined to any other image to the same effect. We should attend to Deleuze’s claim that the strength of an author is measured by his or her ability to pose grace or chance as a problematic point, which is uncertain but not arbitrary (II 169). The features of a film must be linked such that we do not recognise the nature of certain relationships that are developed, but nevertheless recognise them as relationships. They must suggest the existence of links that we do not yet have names for. If only an arbitrary relation is suggested, then the question of preexistent connections that have simply not yet been identified and categorised is not raised.

Considering Pasolini, and the distinction between the problem and the theorem, Deleuze asserts the relationship of belief and the creation of problematic relations. Through “the problematic deduction…thought finds itself taken over by the exteriority of a ‘belief’, outside any interiority of a mode of knowledge” (II 170). We are presented with images, and relationships between them and other features, that oblige us to act as if we believe in our capacity to form new links with the world, links that are not simply given in sensory-motor images. The filmmaker constructs novel opportunities for us to reflect on reality’s horizons, and this is characteristic of time-image automatism. It tears belief away – in the way that
Nietzsche did, according to Deleuze – “from every faith in order to give it back to rigorous thought” (170). But the “rigorous” thought of a film as a whole is now constituted by a spiritual automatism that brings together “critical and conscious thought and the unconscious in thought” (160). We encounter both images predicated on an unthought relation, and interstices that both separate and form unarticulated connections between features.

These interstices are what Bazin called, in reference to Rossellini’s Paisà (1946), “great holes” (2: 35). These ellipses suggested to him the reality of an ambiguous world, in which we are granted no godlike, transcendent vantage. But for Bazin, such a perspective exists, even if it is only that of God. For Deleuze, these holes in the world tell us that our relationship to it is not given, that there is no true world that dictates such a relation, but that we can always create a new link to it. Belief in the world is the response to a specific situation. We find ourselves trapped between something intolerable in the world and something unthinkable in thought, and therefore are dispossessed of both, the world and thought (TI 164). Deleuze’s claim seems related to Nietzsche’s assertion that in rejecting the existence of a “true” world, the nature of which is beyond our transcendental perspective, we also lose the “apparent” world that we had before taken for true (Twilight 50-1). We cease to believe in the givenness of the connection it seems to afford through our sensory-motor images of it. For, according to Deleuze, what is intolerable in our relation to the world is that our actions are always reactions to the clichés constituted by such images. We recognise that our own thought and feeling are all too often predicated on clichés, which constitute each person’s “internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which he thinks and feels, is thought and is felt” (MI 213). What is unthinkable in thought, is of course what has been described as the unthought in thought: it is the relation between the I and ego, between thought and sense, which must be incessantly negotiated. We can rarely spontaneously respond to the world, since we are always subject to this epistemological mediation.

The sensory-motor schema is the manner we have evolved of linking these two dimensions of the self, yet if we reflect that its facility at doing so is no longer in our best interests, what are we then to do? Belief in the world is a middle path of sorts, “a subtle way out”, between assurance that we stand in a fixed relation to the world and natural law, and despair at the notion that there is nothing but chance linking us to the movements of the
cosmos. We must not believe in another, better world, Deleuze insists, but in this one, in which we must always recalibrate the relationship between our senses and the language in which we think. We must therefore believe in the body, in the relation between it and the world, which precedes our naming and classification of the things we encounter (TI 181). This is the role that is played by the free-floating affect, through which problems of power are developed. In the regime of the time-image, many affects formed by combinations of forces remain singularities, rather than being conferred a function in a state of things, such as the expression of the nameable emotional states of characters. For instance, music may be strategically employed, and combined with other elements, such that it ceases to code the emotional experiences of characters, and instead seems to become part of the expression of an event not contained in the images of a film, as in In the Mood for Love. Opsigns as a rule produce combinations of forces that are not reconciled in relation to sensory-motor situations. We can then see that the problems of identity they present are not only connected to problems of knowledge, but also to those related to power.

Belief in the world must be taken as an act here, even if that act is simply altering our receptivity such that we are able to recognise such problems. We must become receptive as well to the lack of correspondence between concepts, like love and life, and the diverse manifestations that they designate. Thus we have to believe in “love or life...as in the impossible, the unthinkable, which none the less cannot but be thought” (TI 164). Blanchot uses the term impossible to express our relation to the outside, considered as that which lies beyond the most distant horizon we can think up against, which we cannot help but think. Having understood that nothing within these most distant horizons tells us what exactly our relation to the world is, Deleuze seems to be saying, we should feel free to construct whatever links with it we find ourselves able to make, and in so doing redefine notions like love and life. This is what he means when he writes that cinema must film belief in this world, rather than the world itself (166). It has to constitute an act that produces new relationships, and allows us to reflect on the provisional nature of the limits we set on the potential for meaningful connections of images and sounds, of words, things, and events.

We invent a new relationship between the senses and the world through a vision that sees more than it is able to take possession of, which expresses a love of the world that precedes any recognition of what it offers us at a given moment. Robbe-Grillet clearly expresses what is at stake in works that no longer aim to assure certainty that they are pieces
of the world as it is, but offer instead new ways of reflecting on and inventing what life and
the world are and can be. What the spectator or reader of modern works is “being asked to
do”, he writes, “is no longer to accept a ready-made, completed world, a solid world, shut in
on itself, but on the contrary to participate in an act of creation, in the invention of the work
– and the world – and in this way to learn to invent his own life” (152). Yet, at least in
Deleuze’s view, whatever the spectator is able to think through an encounter with a film is a
result of having inhabited, or having been inhabited by, the thought on screen. This is the
meaning of his claim that the brain is the screen: the film is a movement of thought that
traces a new cerebral circuit (“Brain” 283).17 We can always extricate ourselves from this
thought, and in the case of many films we certainly would not lose much by doing so, but it
is through making ourselves receptive to it that we can experience it as a “living thought”
capable of giving new life to our own thinking about ourselves and the world.
2. An Unforeseeable Nothing that Changes Everything: 

*In the Mood for Love*

There are many images in Wong Kar-wai’s *In the Mood for Love* (2000) that may well haunt one long after the film concludes. This could happen after a single, initial viewing, though, perhaps more compellingly, as I have found, it tends to continue to occur after many subsequent encounters. One such image shows, in slow motion, Chow Mo-wan (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) walking down the street beside his neighbour, Su Li-zhen (Maggie Cheung Man-yuk). It is night, Hong Kong in the early 60s, and they move away from the camera, Mo-wan in a slick grey suit, Li-zhen in a colourful, floral cheongsam that clings to the contours of her body. [Figure 1] This image comes just after the two – who by chance had happened to find and then move into adjacent flats with their respective spouses on the same days – go out to eat together and confirm what they both already suspected: their spouses are having an affair together. As they walk, Nat King Cole’s “Te quiero dijiste (Magic is the Moonlight)” plays on the soundtrack; the song had begun to play as if it belonged to the diegetic setting of the restaurant, while Mo-wan and Li-zhen were still sitting in a booth talking, but as it continues to play its relation to the time-space of the film becomes more complex. As it turns out, this image haunts for good reason, and in briefly considering it we can begin to contemplate the way in which *In the Mood for Love* makes the relationship between what we see and what we know problematic.

“Te quiero dijiste” serves as a bridge that impedes the spectator’s recognition of two leaps through time and space. It brings together the conversation in the restaurant, Mo-wan and Li-zhen’s walk down a deserted street, and, finally, the two, again walking in the street, pretending to be their spouses in an attempt to understand how the affair between them began. Were it not for the fact that Li-zhen wears different cheongsam, there would be no reason to believe that the three images do not belong to the same evening, and that the two separate strolls are not parts of a single one, taken after the dinner sequence. The changing cheongsam alert us to the passing of time – as Giuliana Bruno and Audrey Yue, among others, note – but more importantly they communicate that things are being withheld from us.¹ The song links these three scenes, indeterminately distant from each other in time, such that they seem to belong together, beneath a single umbrella, within one evening, an impression
heightened by the fact that over the image of the two walking away from the camera in slow motion, we hear Li-zhen say, “I wonder how it began”. There is no ambient sound at this point, only Li-zhen’s voice and the song; her line could belong to any of the three points in time. It makes sense to think of it as coming at the end of the restaurant scene, but it could also belong to the moment just before we see the two of them acting as their spouses, in the third image. Or, she may say it as the two walk away from the camera, in the image to which it is actually connected, which would make it the only line of whatever was said during that particular walk given to the audience. In any case, days pass in a mere moment of screen time, and this recognition is masked by the romantic music, and the seeming continuity it confers on the movement from the restaurant into the street.

Such points of indetermination recur throughout the film, framed by montage cuts that function to form genuine interstices, ellipses separating images by unknown amounts of diegetic time, and obscuring the distinction between real and imaginary. The impact of the problems presented by such ellipses is softened by the moods composed from shifting constellations of affects. These affects are produced by the slowed movements of bodies, often captured at close range, as well as the faces of the film’s stars, which often conceal as much or more than they reveal. There are, as well, the clouds of colour imprinted on Li-
zhen’s *cheongsam* and vibrating through the sets designed by William Chang, the smooth cadences of Nat King Cole, and Shigeru Umebayashi’s darkly melancholic waltz, “Yumeji’s Theme”. The latter casts its spells in conjunction with the use of slow motion, capturing and transforming, most unforgettably, the mundane trips to a local noodle restaurant taken by the two protagonists.

There is no pressing reason to believe, considering the scenes on either side of it, that the image of Mo-wan and Li-zhen walking away from the camera does not belong to the reality portrayed by the film – that it, for instance, is a fantasy image. Yet, there are images in the film the diegetic status of which is more clearly problematic. The most extreme case arises with images inside the hotel in which Mo-wan rents room 2046, which appear before Mo-wan or Li-zhen has been seen there, before he has even rented it, according to the chronological sense given by the flow of the film. There is no way to reckon with finality whether such an image is fantasy, dream, or flash-forward, or, perhaps, whether what we are seeing has been infiltrated by the memory of one of the character’s from a point within or beyond the diegetic timeframe of the film.

We can say of Wong what Deleuze writes of Welles: “he provokes undecidable alternatives and inexplicable differences between the true and false, and thereby imposes a power of the false as adequate to time, in contrast to any form of the true which would control time” (*TI* 128). With these undecidable alternatives appear illusions of transcendence, the thought of a position offscreen from which such undecidable alternatives would be resolved. But there is no such position created by this film, and so transcendence remains an illusion. The affective intensity generated by *In the Mood for Love* by far exceeds the emotional states clarified in the relations between the film’s characters, and the ellipses between disparate sequences open onto unresolvable problems. A disparity therefore becomes apparent between the emotions represented and the forces of affection that remain unnamed and unattributable, between the chronology of the film and the absent time and events that we may imagine to dwell in its interstices. How could we not think of a position from which these problems are resolved, a vantage from which we could think clearly the relationship between the forces released and the knowledge of the story narrated?

For Deleuze, belief in the world is a mode of existence opposed to any such mode derived from transcendent principles. The appearance of transcendence within the immanent, however, is an event that shatters just such certainties, hollowing out the precepts
of judgment. This is perhaps best expressed in the return to the question of belief in *What Is Philosophy?* “Even illusions of transcendence”, write Deleuze and Guattari, “are useful to us and provide vital anecdotes – for when we take pride in encountering the transcendent within immanence, all we do is recharge the plane of immanence itself” (73). Notions of transcendence that appear within the worlds of films that offer no such position make those works opportunities for believing in the world: not by making us doubt our connection to nature, but rather those presuppositions and habits of thought and perception, of forming opinions, from which judgment operates automatically. Our thought moves with the images and sounds of a film, though we are unable to interiorise what is most important in a form of knowledge dependent on language. Encountering *In the Mood for Love*, we are often made aware that we do not have enough information to exhaustively understand the film, and yet we are drawn along, implicated in its affective tides. Attracted by this spectre of transcendence, we nevertheless may find ourselves engaged by sensations for which we have no names, without wishing that they were classifiable. The film pulls a bit of chaos back under the umbrella, back into the everyday world, where it is concentrated in problems, paradoxes, and nameless blends of sense and narrative information that present new strategic regions for thought to experiment in. What is at stake could be summarised in a phrase of Ingrid Bergman’s Irene in Rosselini’s *Europe 51* (1951), which Deleuze was wont to quote: “Something possible, otherwise I will suffocate”.

**The Everyday and Memories Without a Subject**

In *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films*, Rey Chow argues that however meticulously 1960s Hong Kong is evoked in the mise-en-scene of *In the Mood for Love*, the film ultimately presents us with a nostalgic recreation of the past that is historically empty. That is, the film is not actually concerned with the historic conditions of the period in which it is set, but through the affective force of setting – period clothing, décor, and music – seduces with nostalgia. In the “image-proliferating nostalgia” of *In the Mood*, Chow writes, “history tends always already to have transmuted into pastiche and simulacra” (81). Furthermore, she claims, the film stages “an essentially human drama”, the structure of feeling of which transcends national history and local cultural identities, while its focus on a diasporic community makes it trans-ethnic and portable. In concluding, Chow argues that the film asks us to “merge with the global flow of chance affinities in the spirit of a seasoned
and resigned ‘human understanding’ – of the way things are and will always be” (82). While also finding the distinction between emptiness and fullness pertinent to the discussion of Wong’s film, I disagree with both the claim that In the Mood for Love suggests that we should resign ourselves to the way things are and will always be, and the criticising of the film on the grounds that it is not actually an attempt to objectively reproduce the way the past “really” was. The assumption of a distinction between truthful images and simulacra, however they may be distinguished, is at the root of Chow’s critique, and making such distinctions problematic is one way that Wong’s film forcefully addresses us.

In addition, In the Mood for Love develops a problematic relation between history and memory, and perhaps we can begin to address this with a consideration of its nostalgic atmosphere. Nostalgia is certainly a key feature of the film, yet it is only that, not an overriding theme to which the film’s affective and narrative forces necessarily accede. A sense of nostalgia attaches to images that seem to present a lost world, a world to which one desires to return. This is most palpable in the slow-motion sequences of Mo-wan and Li-zhen, which are conjoined to “Yumeji’s Theme”. Certainly, we are asked to take part directly in the mood of longing developed by such sequences, yet we are never made privilege to the source of this longing. These images suggest processes of attentive memory – slowing down, returning, repeating. It is as if we enter the consciousness of someone scanning moments that passed without event for the lost opportunities they are believed to contain. Yet, there is no single memory to which we could attribute them, no voiceover that tells us someone is looking back, as will be the case in 2046.

There is, however, the memory of Wong to consider. He recreates the 60s Hong Kong of his childhood through food, songs, clothing, furniture, and the close quarters of the Shanghainese community of the period. The sense of a historical era lost to the director combines with a different loss, a period of time disappearing in which there was the potential for an event to emerge that could have made a difference, longed for retrospectively, in the lives of two people. Mo-wan and/or Li-zhen’s nostalgia is mingled with Wong’s. The result is that, as Paul Arthur writes, “Although never explicitly bracketed as someone’s remembered images, the story emanates as if from the coils of a dream or a trance-state” (In 40). Some of the films images are like memories without a subject to whom they belong, although the potential remains to see the film as a whole as a trip through the memory of one of its protagonists.
In the Mood for Love quite clearly conceals portions of the stories that it presents. As John Orr writes, “The more concrete the detail of time remembered, and the more transparent the movie’s look, the more the image seems to withhold. The more truth eludes us” (53). The everyday life of a particular time and place is presented, but that everyday life is composed by images that are an indissoluble mixture of subjectivity and objectivity. In the Mood for Love presents us with free-indirect visions, since the camera consciousness suggests the work of a memory that we cannot locate, which is not attributable to a character. As in Pasolini’s example of Antonioni’s Red Desert, in which the vision of the camera seems to be filtered through the neurosis of the character of Giuliana, In the Mood for Love makes the distinction “between what the character saw subjectively and what the camera saw objectively” vanish (TI 143). But in In the Mood for Love, the vision of the past simulates a memory that is without a subject who remembers, while nevertheless identifying us directly with a consciousness that seems to recollect in images saturated with a sense of loss.

Nostalgia, like many of the other feelings and emotions represented and presented by the film, is unmoored. Its roots and meaning remain concealed. It reacts with the situations in which the characters are involved, but it is not contained in or revealed through them. In this, it is like the faces and gestures of the characters, which often resist our attempts to read them, and in which the affections of the characters are established without their being translated by later images. Like the striking combinations of colour, movement, and music, the forces presented by these faces remain outside the horizon in which human interactions depicted by the film sketch out a stable state of things. Yet the unstable relationships between narrative events and the affective forces that accompany them do accord with a sensibility - Wong's - for which they appear singularly appropriate.

Yuan and Anti-naturalism

The Buddhist concept yuan – which Chow claims is key to understanding Wong’s work – gives a grounding to the impetus to create an assemblage of images and sounds the appropriateness of which is not dependent on adherence to existing principles. Yuan, according to Chow, “can be translated as affinity, link, or connection”, and what is important is understanding that such links, affinities, and connections are “predestined or predetermined (in a previous life) in ways that defy or exceed conscious human decision or
present human understanding” (Chow 224). The paradox here is that a film that accords with yuan can be constructed according to no known principles, yet its principles have been predestined before one was born. Chance is posited as destiny, or grace. Wong has claimed that he believes “all events are about the word yuan. Gradually and steadily piling up, all things become related in the end. It’s the same with film” (quot. Chow 77).^3 Wong’s practice of filmmaking is then a search for links, affinities, and connections that he recognises as appropriate, yet for which there is no readymade rationale. Combinations of images (and sounds) thus raise the problem of chance or grace. Are these connections predestined, as Wong believes, or simply chance affinities invented or discovered? If she is willing to see Wong’s film as the result of a belief in the former possibility, what then does Chow find to be disconcertingly universal in it? Firstly, she argues, what is universal is a spiritual longing, expressed by the film, which is a response to the impermanence of the human universe. She contends that, the spectacular, indeed visually extravagant, images of Wong’s film are offered as a paradox: the more colourful and beautiful they are – and the more locally concrete they seem to be – the more they serve as an index to the capricious (that is, impermanent) nature of the human universe that revolves around/behind them. The luxurious images become in this manner a screen for a fundamental void. (77)

For Chow this means that “the everyday functions as artifice”, a means of creating a disjuncture or synergy between the “sensuous plenitude” of those things that anchor the film in a specific historical moment, and a “spiritual longing” that empties them of cultural content. Allegedly, then, through the thought constituted by the film we are made to identify with this longing, brought about by the transitory nature of our temporal existence, and take pleasure in the sensuous plenitude of the images and the film’s universally recognisable “structure of feeling”. Chow gives a negative connotation to void here, because what is voided in her estimation is engagement with the concrete conditions of a particular moment of history. Yet, the identity of the eternally transitory everyday and the void is not necessarily evoked as an act of renunciation, of surrender to the way things are and will always be.

In *Hitchcock and 20th Century Cinema*, John Orr connects *In the Mood for Love*, by way of what he calls an “anti-naturalist” aesthetic, to the famous kiss between Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious*. Orr explains precisely what he means by anti-naturalism in his description of this kiss:
As the camera moves in close on the gliding, rotating couple, they seem held together by glue. In unison they must move and talk and kiss, and Grant must use the telephone at the same time, in one continuous movement. Hence they naturalise the unnatural, or give to film a new convention of 'nature'. The style is anti-naturalist, a new artifice created in order to persuade us the intimacy is natural. (113)

The embrace and kiss themselves are not enough to convey to us the intensity of the characters’ connection to one another. Hitchcock thus fashions an event that is not merely a passionate kiss, but a kiss rendered unlike any other screen kiss. In *In the Mood for Love*, there is not even a kiss, however timid, to convey the intimacy of Mo-wan and Li-zhen. Instead, according to Orr, the (non)-event of their relationship is given expression by the camera and the music, and, especially, through slow motion and mise-en-scène. The minimalist acting, which restricts our access to the subjective life of the characters, is suffused in waves of affect that constantly modify the inside and outside of the film, the relationship between those for the most part vague emotions developed within the characters’ interactions, and the directly felt but fleeting forces created by music, slowed movement, and the other intensities, such as colour, with which they combine. The event of the film is constituted outside of, but in relation to, what takes place onscreen between Mo-wan and Li-zhen.

Robert Sinnerbrink astutely captures the way that Wong juxtaposes the aesthetic event with the non-events of the everyday. The “Yumeji’s Theme”, slow-motion sequences, he argues, are matched to their doubles, shots of similar movements in real time. In one such sequence, Mo-wan and Li-zhen pass on the stairs to the noodle restaurant in slow motion, accompanied by the sound of both music and rain, then are shown ascending the stairs in the hallway of their building at normal speed, the rain remaining audible as the music disappears. Sinnerbrink argues that in such instances, “The everyday and the lyrical, the ordinary and the sublime, are drawn together…the two are separated by nothing more than a shift in mood, disclosing a romantic undercurrent, a transcendence, resonating within the most ordinary of encounters” (159). Like Chow, Sinnerbrink identifies a disjunction between two registers: the sublimity evoked by slow motion and music transcends the emotions given representation within the “ordinary” world of the diegesis. While anti-naturalist use of music and slow motion creates empty events, the naturalist – in the behaviourist sense, where what takes place is revealed through the actions of people – everyday is for the most part all but empty of events.
In the Mood for Love brings together sensory-motor, narrative relationships, and affective events such the former form an articulable inside that seems to be lacking the events essential to it. It affirms the capacity of cinema to construct and think through singular combinations of affects, narrative events, and ellipses. We feel the relations between forces released by the images and the events on screen, but they are not at all securely determined. If we are receptive to the film, we may well experience this connectedness. We may sense the radiance of a world present, yet for the moment beyond the reach of thought, a world immanent to our own, yet not within the sensory-motor horizon established by the film. The intensities of the moods created should not be attributed entirely to any idea of the inherent sadness induced by the temporary nature of all things and the longing for what has been lost. We should also recognise that the melancholic, nostalgic, or romantic moods created move us beyond ourselves, that is, beyond our understanding of why we are moved. They revive the senses and remind us that there is more to life than what we are able to speak of.

Parallel Worlds and the Out-of-field

Wong has himself said that In the Mood for Love was influenced by Hitchcock, though he claims Vertigo (1958) was the film he was constantly thinking of during production. “I wanted to make the film like Hitchcock”, he claims in an interview, because what intrigued me about this story was that it's about the relationship of these two people set against this neighborhood. The neighbors are like spies. The story is governed by the reactions of these two characters under the observations of their neighbors. So I wanted to treat it like a Hitchcock film, where so much happens outside the frame, and the viewer's imagination creates a kind of suspense. Vertigo, especially, is something I always kept returning to in making the film (Tobias).

While the idea of surveillance and the question of the two central characters coming together by the film’s conclusion ties the film as much to Notorious as to Vertigo, there is a deeper bond with the latter, what could be called a shared virtuality, a plenitude of potentialities held in reserve. The suspense In the Mood for Love develops is not only related to whether or not the characters will get together in the end, or whether they actually do consummate their relationship “outside the frame” during the timespan covered onscreen. The most intriguing suspense is related to the relationship between the onscreen and the offscreen; it results
from what is not in the film, but part of the film, the feeling that important aspects are not given to us, thus preserving mutually exclusive possibilities.

Orr notes this connection as well, arguing that In the Mood for Love, like many other films coming relatively near the millennium – such as Code Unknown (2000), The Double Life of Veronique (1991), and, of course, David Lynch’s Lost Highway (1997) and Mulholland Drive (2001) – pursues parallel worlds in a manner that has descended from Vertigo (Hitchcock 174). This shared virtuality can be quickly and clearly illustrated by considering, as Orr does in discussing Vertigo in relation to Lynch, Chris Marker’s essay, “A Free Replay (notes on Vertigo)”. Marker’s argument is simple enough: Vertigo preserves the possibility that the second half of the film is Scottie’s hallucination from the mental hospital into which he has been checked after Madeleine falls from the bell tower of Mission San Juan Batista. “We were tricked into believing that the first part was truth”, writes Marker, “then told it was a lie born of a perverse mind, that the second part contained the truth. But what if the first part really were the truth and the second the product of a sick mind? (126). One does not have to follow Marker in preferring the former reading to allow for the possibility that it could be “true”. Whether we agree with Marker or not, if we allow that the film could be read either way, then what we are saying, in a sense, is that the out-of-field, built up by the film to create suspense, is not exhausted in the end, even if that was not Hitchcock’s intention.

According to Deleuze, a key characteristic of time-image cinema is the development of a camera consciousness that is not defined by the movements it is able to follow or make, but rather by those mental connections that it is able to enter into. This is the legacy of Hitchcock, Deleuze argues, even if Hitchcock himself had not wanted to put the traditional image of cinema into crisis. The camera “subordinates description of a space to the functions of thought. This is not the simple distinction between the subjective and the objective, the real and the imaginary, it is on the contrary their indiscernibility which will endow the camera with a rich array of functions, and entail a new conception of the frame and reframing” (TI 22). In In the Mood for Love we confront indiscernabilities between subjectivity and objectivity, between fantasy, memory, and reality – seeing the characters on screen, we should sometimes wonder if perhaps what we are seeing has been filtered through one of their minds, whether it is a daydream or, to the contrary, we are looking back with one of them from a position in the future. This obviously keeps us from knowing with certainty what information the image offers by way of to its relations to the film’s other
images. In addition, we seem to occupy a subjectivity that eludes ascription to any fixed identity. This indiscernibility creates problems that we imagine could be solved from some point of view outside of those allotted to us by the film. This imagined point exerts a magnetic attraction, drawing us in close, but ultimately remaining inaccessible, yet present.

Thus the out-of-field is a problem that is never exhausted by In the Mood for Love, one which introduces the spiritual, transspatial, or metaphysical. As Deleuze writes early in The Movement-Image, “The out-of-field refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present. This presence is indeed a problem and itself refers to two new conceptions of framing” (17). Drawing on Bazin’s distinction between masking and framing, Deleuze differentiates between two distinct kinds of out-of field, the relative and the absolute. The relative frame masks what is beyond its boundaries, allowing a provisionally closed system, the shot, to refer spatially to a set that is not seen, to the physical world beyond the frame of which it is a part. On the other hand, the absolute aspect of the frame “testifies”, according to Deleuze, “to a more disturbing presence, one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to ‘insist’ or ‘subsist’, a more radical Elsewhere, outside homogeneous space and time” (18). The presence of the Elsewhere haunts In the Mood for Love, and it is all the more disturbing because it is produced through the presentation of an exceedingly simple plotline, set in a specific time and place called forth by scrupulous attention to mise-en-scène.

### An Elsewhere

In In the Mood for Love, the problem of an elsewhere, or an outside – immanent to the film, though not its diegetic events – perhaps appears most clearly with the premature vision we are given of room 2046. Mo-wan rents this hotel room to escape the watchful eyes of his neighbours, and he and Li-zhen meet there with unknown frequency. They write martial arts’s serials (wuxia) together, eat, discuss (and perform as) their adulterous spouses, and become more and more involved in some kind of relationship. The goings on in the room are themselves often imbued with an edge of mystery: the two are glimpsed in mirrors, through screens and curtains with support beams partially obstructing our views of them. “Yumeji’s Theme” plays and the camera moves about in slow motion, as if examining the room and their bodies for something that remains inaccessible to conscious remembrance. Nonetheless, we can tell what is going on in these shots. There is little in them to suggest
that the film is not moving forward in time, toward a moment of decision, or, as it turns out, indecision. The first appearance of the room, on the other hand, is (upon its initial passing) and remains (in its connection to the rest of the film, considered retrospectively) puzzling.

These first images of the couple in room 2046 appear before Chow Mo-Wan has rented the room. They follow closely upon his receiving a letter from his wife postmarked Japan, which is first mistakenly given to Li-zhen because her husband is known to be there on business. We see him angrily crumple the letter and slam his door after reading it, and then there is a cut to a close-up of the clockface in Li-zhen’s office. [Figure 2] The image is shallowly focused on the clock, and as the camera haltingly descends, its minute, stuttering movements reveal that the images have been slowed down. Time is visibly altered, put out of joint. Over the shot of the clock, we hear Li-zhen and Mo-wan talking. It seems to be a phone conversation – her in her office and he, perhaps, in his – both because the clock is in her office and since we can hear the voices and noises of people at work there. But we hear both of their voices too clearly, as if we are listening from both ends of the phone line at once without the slightest bit of distortion or interference. It is an odd sound framing, one that seems to at once couple with and disconnect from the image to which it is attached – an image of linear, homogeneous time embodied and distorted, contaminated with an
alternative temporality by slow motion and the soundtrack.

These images of the clock initiate a break that becomes more pronounced in the brief sequence that follows. The soundtrack during these clock shots gives us the illusion of being two places at once, of occupying a place beyond the limits imposed by chronological time and Euclidean space. The last thing that Li-zhen says before the shot of the clock ends is, “What do you think they’re doing right now?” There is then a cut to a black screen and “Yumeji’s Theme” begins to play on the soundtrack. An image of a place we have not seen before fades in; a corridor is captured in deep focus from a low-angle, red curtains spread out along the length of one of its walls. [Figure 3] The red, we will find, corresponds to the colour that dominates the inside of room 2046, to the walls, the chairs, and the curtains therein. Red dominates all the sequences within the hotel, especially this first one, which merges melancholy and eroticism in mysterious measure.

In the following image, the couple are shown inside the room. The red *cheongsam* tight about Li-zhen’s neck rhymes with the corridor curtain, and she stands nearer the camera, at the left, her face slightly turned toward it, while Mo-wan takes up most of the right half of the frame, his upper-body and face mildly distorted, but distinct from the room behind it. [Figure 4] The shot is in slow motion: Li-zhen turns toward Mo-wan and then walks to the back of the room. When she passes him, the camera racks focus, bringing his face, his downcast eyes and distant expression, into sharp relief. Li-zhen becomes more and more indistinct the further she gets from the camera, becoming a slender crimson smudge against a similarly coloured door as she turns to the left and back toward Mo-wan just before the shot ends. Wong then cuts to a shot of the two in the back of a taxi, in which Li-zhen is still in the same dress and earrings. Mo-wan asks if she is all right and she says that she is. In the following shot, he gets out of the taxi — alone, so that they will not be seen together — as “Yumeji’s Theme” continues to play on the soundtrack.

We are then returned to the film’s real world. “Yumeji’s Theme” is replaced by the sound of torrential rainfall. Mo-wan is caught in the storm, apparently after having exited the taxi, and soon after, so we are led to suppose, he takes ill. Where have we gone between the image of the clock and that of Mo-wan running for shelter on the street? It is possible that Mo-wan and Li-zhen do go to the hotel, and that we are only given a sliver of that missing scene, its mood, concentrated in two shots. It could also, of course, be an image from the future, from a point later in the film, appearing prematurely, an untimely premonition, like
Figure 3

Figure 4
the jungle in *Days of Being Wild* (1990), or Iguazu Falls in *Happy Together* (1997). It could also be a fantasy of Mo-wan or Li-zhen’s, a longing of one for the other, or an answer to the question of what their spouses are up to, with themselves imagined in their roles. Though, why would such a fantasy take place in a hotel that neither has been to before, but which they will indeed spend time in later in the film?

There is another problem with seeing it as a fantasy, dream, or memory: Mo-wan is wearing the same tie in the shot of room 2046 and that of him running through the rain after the taxi ride, suggesting that these shots could actually be, relatively, temporally contiguous. In this sequence, it is indeed, as Deleuze writes in *The Time-Image*, “as if the real and the imaginary were running after each other, as if each was being reflected in the other around a point of indiscernibility” (7). Certainly, “Yumeji’s Theme” seems to hold certain images together as an entity apart from the progression of the story, an effect enhanced by the accompanying slow motion. Once the waltz ceases, and the sound of rain intercedes, the mood shifts, and the film’s reality regains boundaries, however provisional. We return from an elsewhere.

**Emptiness and the Event**

Some sequences, then, seem to belong firmly to the world in which Mo-wan and Li-zhen meet and interact, while others, to varying degree, seem to depart from that reality and become mental. This seems partially related to the anti-naturalism attributed to the film by Orr, since the untimely image of Mo-wan and Li-zhen in room 2046 could be said to express the event of their relationship, which is only given tentative form through the “real” meetings between the two that we witness. More generally, the division between these two worlds can be related to a separation between image and dialogue, such that the development of the loose sensory-motor connections through conversations leaves the image (generally in combination with music) free to create heavy effects of mood. In the chapter on Ozu in *To the Distant Observer*, Noël Burch argues that the director’s early sound films tend to “reduce the narrative incidents to spoken events, and the relative autonomy of the imagery, mostly of people talking, increases greatly…[there is] a division of labour between presentational image and representational voice (175).” This autonomy of the image reaches its apotheosis in Ozu’s still lifes. While Burch classifies still lifes together with shots of empty spaces and landscapes (he does, however, note the great variety of these images),
Deleuze draws a distinction between the fullness of the still-life, and the emptiness of other shots that still seem to be marked by human absence more than their own fullness (TI 16).

In his analysis of the famous still life of the vase in *Late Spring* (*Banshun*, 1949), Deleuze claims that the image presents the form of change through an image of stasis. That is, it “gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced...The still-life is time, for everything that changes is in time, but time does not itself change” (16). What changes during the image of the vase is, however, related to the film’s narrative thread; what changes is the state of Noriko (Setsuko Hara). In the image before it, she smiles to herself, while in the latter she seems to begin to cry. Deleuze’s assertion that this image is full thus depends on his seeing it in relation to the images of Noriko that bookend it. Nevertheless, the image of the vase registers a transformation without itself including any significant movement that would subordinate the duration of the shot, the image of time, the form of change that strangely comes to serve itself as the image of Noriko’s emotional shift. Yet the situation is strange: the image plays a role in relation to the plot, but it can play that role only on the condition that it establishes its autonomy from the other images of the film and expresses change directly.

*In the Mood for Love* also raises the question of the distinction between emptiness and fullness, and events that change the film directly are constituted through those images that seem to present insignificant occurrences. As in Ozu, the sensory-motor links between events tend to be developed through conversations, rather than actions displayed on screen. In addition, the (non)-event of the couple’s relationship is, as Orr argues, displaced to sequences that provide minimal narrative information, but are weighted with melancholy or nostalgia through the deployment of slow motion and music. In those shots that are nearly empty of consequent events, then, combinations of sound and image seem to directly present what is taking place in a form of a sensory knowledge that we cannot interiorise in thought.

Yet *In the Mood for Love* is clearly a far cry from *Late Spring*. It is not simply the case that a rarefied image is made to appear as an image of fullness, as in the still-lifes of Ozu. Rather, while the image seems to be relatively empty of content (Mo-wan and Li-zhen passing on the street, eating noodles, or standing in the hotel room), it is loaded with an excess of affect by way of camera movement, slow motion, and music. Daily banality is charged with an explosion of potential emotion, yet because that potential is hardly
actualised in the sensory-motor schema developed by the film, it constitutes its outside. The outside is in this sense a realm in which forces released by the film that are not made relative to one another, or reflected in narrative events, continue to haunt or adhere to those events. There are genuine interstices constituted by certain montage cuts in the film, which seem to delimit the bounds of the fictional reality, and passages filtered through an unascrivable memory or fantasy life. Ultimately, the essence of whatever it is that takes place in *In the Mood for Love* seems to be expressed by the latter rather than the former, although it is only possible to reach this understanding by referencing these images of fullness to the events recognisable in relation to one another within the film’s sensory-motor horizon.

**Phantom Emotions and the Realities of a False Farewell**

The final time we see Chow Mo-wan and Su Li-zhen together, they are riding in a taxi, just after a sequence in which they enact a false goodbye, a practice farewell to prepare themselves for Mo-wan’s impending departure to Singapore. He has just told Li-zhen that, despite their repeated claims that they will not “be like them”, the unseen spouses having an affair, he has fallen in love with her. This scene plays out on a street corner where the two have met in passing and walked together earlier in the film. A heavy rain falls as they talk, and after Mo-Wan relates his plan to go to Singapore, in an attempt to escape his feelings for her, he asks of her a final favour: that she help him prepare for the difficult parting to come by performing it—practicing it—in advance.

In this long scene, the disorientations – temporal, or with regard to the true and false – occasioned by Su Li-zhen’s cheongsam changes enters into a circuit with another sort of disorientation, that brought about by scenes of Mo-wan and Li-zhen acting as their spouses or their future selves. Such scenes of the two acting recur throughout the film, beginning with their first tentative explorations just after the restaurant scene where their fears about their spouses’ affair are confirmed. When these scenes begin it is not immediately clear that what we are witnessing is not a direct interchange between the characters rather than one filtered through different parts that they play. And while we are gradually made aware of their artifice, these “rehearsals” and experiments in understanding the past have real effects on the characters and their relationship. For instance, when the two pretend for the first time to be their spouses in an attempt to understand how such an affair could begin, Mo-wan, as her husband, makes the first move. This attempt at mimetically understanding
(understanding through imitation) brings about an outburst of anger from Li-zhen, and the repetition of such playacting eventually, inadvertently sets off their feelings for each other. These may be plays but they are unscripted, the results not prefigured by the scenarios entered into.

Here, we can again make an instructional comparison with Vertigo, where the dialogue and Kim Novak’s delivery of it seem to express something different depending on whether one considers her to be speaking for herself or as her version of Madeleine. At least, this is the case if we accept the last section of the film as a continuation of events in the “real” world of the film established before Scottie’s hospitalisation in a mental ward, rather than a fantasy that he has while admitted there. In the chapter on the film in his book on Hitchcock, Robin Wood concisely analyses the way that the line between Judy and the role she is playing is constantly obscured. “It is not difficult to see”, writes Wood, “that the pretence partly became reality. Most obviously, there is the point that Judy was to make Scottie fall in love with her by pretending to fall in love with him, and then she really did fall in love…in fact every moment of the relationship is ambiguous, it is impossible to distinguish pretence from reality” (89). Among the many convincing examples he gives are Judy/Madeleine’s nervousness as they drive to San Juan Bautista the first time – she may be pretending to be an increasingly disturbed Madeleine, or increasingly disturbed herself by what she has to do when they arrive at the mission. Then there is her flustered response – “Please don’t ask me” – when Scottie questions her at the Sequoia grove about her leap into the bay, and what it is inside her that makes her do the things she does. Is her horror that which she gives to the Madeleine she had made herself over as, or her own horror, at what she has allowed herself to agree to do?

In In the Mood for Love, it is only in acting as their spouses or future selves that Mowan and Li-zhen come close to expressing their feelings for one another. Not only are there moments where we are unsure whether a gesture or piece of dialogue is simulation or sincerity, but the pretence of performance also clearly produces real emotional transformations in the characters. Take for instance a scene the two act out while eating noodles in room 2046: Li-zhen – preparing herself for a future encounter – confronts Mowan, who is pretending to be her husband, with his infidelity. She begins to cry, is visibly, physically affected by their performance. He then holds and consoles her, reminding her that what has just happened has only been a “rehearsal”. But in this film rehearsals have real
consequences. The virtual event of the film, never actualised within the images, but real nonetheless, is whatever it is that happens and does not happen between these two people, which is disclosed through displacements such as those created by these rehearsals. Again and again, Li-zhen and Mo-wan’s acting, their pretence, produces real, uncontainable outbursts of emotion.

When Mo-wan and Li-zhen act out their own future goodbye, and she begins weeping uncontrollably, the moment resonates with their previous mimetic explorations. Only now they suffer for their own inability to take action rather than for the actions of their spouses. There is a progression: from each acting like the other’s husband or wife, to Li-zhen acting as herself while Mo-wan plays her husband, and finally, here, to the two of them, as themselves, giving shape to the near future in the present. And only now, displacing themselves imaginatively from the present moment that they share together, are they able to display their feelings for one another, though only negatively, as pain at their incapacity to act so as to establish a new beginning.

Wong cuts from Mo-wan requesting his favour – a practice goodbye – to rainwater that has gathered on the pavement. In the next image, Li-zhen steps into the frame from the audience’s right, glimpsed through the bars of a ground floor flat as the camera tracks to the left. The camera moves with her, the screen going black momentarily as it passes before a windowless wall, picking her up as she walks into a framing with Mo-wan, who stands just outside the window, in profile, smoking. They talk briefly, she telling him her husband is back and that they should not see each other again, he affirming that they will not, then taking her hand in his. We see a close-up of their clasped hands separating, then in slow motion the camera moves up Li-zhen’s body, following her hand as it grips her opposite arm, finally resting in a framing of her face in close-up. Desperation is what we see in this face, the desperation of a person who knows she is in a moment that calls for action, and nevertheless finds herself unable to respond to the situation. As she is drawn deeper into herself, Chow Mo-Wan walks away, merging in the distance with the night. [Figure 5]

This shot gives way to a black screen, the sound of Li-zhen’s crying, and Mo-wan’s voice as he comforts her: “Don't be serious”, he says. “It's only a rehearsal. Don't cry!” This is followed by a slow-motion image of the characters’ midsections and interlocked hands, a shot that seems to belong to the moment just before the hands were released in the previous
images, a moment repeated at a different speed, from a different perspective. Li-zhen’s weeping remains audible as Mo-wan assures her, “This is not real”. But what constitutes the real is no longer clear. Only by creating a fiction of a future to come is what has developed between the two able to emerge into the present time and place that they both inhabit. An imaginary event creates the conditions through which what has thus far remained invisible can appear.

**Another Elsewhere**

After the shot that returns to Mo-wan and Li-zhen’s clasped hands, the screen again goes black. There are then three more shots of the two together on the corner that are linked to the three following images of them in a taxi by “Yumeji’s Theme”. When the music begins the screen is still black, but quickly the camera starts to track right to left, moving out from behind a wall to give us a glimpse through a window of the corner where Li-zhen and Mo-wan have been talking. The camera comes to rest in a framing where, as in other, earlier shots from within this building, our view is partially obstructed by the vertical window bars and the silhouette of a potted plant. Li-zhen and Mo-wan, in focus against a dilapidated wall, embrace tentatively as she cries on his shoulder and he attempts to console her.
In the following shot, we again see, in medium close-up now, her crying convulsively and gripping his shoulder. The left third of the frame is black and Li-zhen's head and Mo-wan's body are at the far right. A reverse shot follows, another medium close-up, from out of the blackness of the previous image. Over half the frame is taken up by the blurred exterior of a building and Mo-wan's face, at the right edge of the frame, is inscrutable: he seems elsewhere, paralysed, unable to conceive of any effective action. The complex meeting of this facial expression and the music occurs in a context (where pretend actions produce real reactions) that obscures it further. No precise translation is possible. The moment dilates with potential responses before swallowing them up and leaving us and Mo-wan at a loss.

The screen then fades to black again, and we are swiftly removed to a vantage from which we see the backs of the characters heads through the rear window of a red taxi. Li-zhen says, “I don’t want to go home tonight”, and places her head on Mo-wan’s shoulder. There is then a shadowy close-up of the couple’s hands, Mo-wan’s upon Li-zhen’s, his wedding ring prominently at the centre of the frame. It is a repetition of a shot from an earlier scene when the pair was in a taxi pretending to be their spouses, timidly trying to discover the origin of that affair. In this first incarnation, Mo-wan places his hand on Li-zhen’s and after a slight hesitation she abruptly pulls hers away. This second time, instead, she accepts this small advance and tightly grasps his hand. This image not only resonates with the earlier taxi image of which it is a repetition, but also with the many shots of hands that appear throughout *In the Mood for Love*, and especially the shot of the two clasping hands in the farewell scene we have just watched, an act itself repeated by the film.

This particular image of hands, however, confronts us with an intractable problem. Are Mo-wan and Li-zhen in this small gesture expressing their feelings for each other, no matter how unable or unwilling they are to follow through on them? Are the two acting as themselves or their spouses? The final shot of this sequence, a medium close-up of Li-zhen and Mo-wan through the rear, passenger-side window complicates things further. She is closest to the camera, her head upon his shoulder, and they face forward, lost in thought, together, touching, but visibly isolated behind twin expressions of contemplation. What makes these taxi images difficult to read is, again, the *cheongsam* which Su Li-zhen wears, and, here, less conspicuously, Mo-wan’s tie. The way the images are bridged by “Yumeji’s Theme” initially gives the impression that this ride is happening just after the “false” farewell. In the first two taxi images we are given no reason to doubt this, but in the final
one we can easily see that Li-zhen is wearing a different dress and Mo-wan a different tie. It is tempting to see this as Mo-wan’s fantasy. His deeply pensive facial expression in the final shot of Li-zhen crying on his shoulder, and the way that this image is faded out suggest the possibility that what follows is his interior vision. The fade out implies movement, but whether that movement takes us backward or forward through time, or from exterior reality to interior fantasy, dream, or memory is left to us to contemplate.

We cannot know with certainty whether these images belong to the film’s established reality. The deployment of images such that what they contain is brought into question rather than clarified crystallizes here, refracting multiple virtualities through these seemingly simple images. Li-zhen’s words – “I don’t want to go home tonight” – only deepen the riddle. It could be a flashback to an earlier meeting that we have not been shown, but is it then an image of her speaking “seriously” to him, or one of their investigations into the behaviour of their spouses? If the former is the case, then the probability is increased that the two spend a night together that we are not shown, somewhere, at some point. The taxi is an interstitial space here, an outside, a nowhere. Not only are we unable to spatially and temporally locate these images, but we cannot even discern whether they take place in the reality the character’s occupy, or in Chow Mo-wan’s, or even Li-zhen’s, memories or fantasies.

**History and Belief in the World at Angkor Wat**

*In the Mood for Love* comes to an end far from the Shanghainese neighbourhood in Hong Kong where the majority of the film is set. First, we travel with Mo-wan to Singapore, where his friend Ping has gotten him a job at a newspaper. The wider world then enters more resolutely through newsreel footage of a moment that belongs to history: Charles De Gaulle’s arrival in Phnom Penh in 1966 for a peace mission on which he called for the United State to withdraw from Vietnam. It is less history, however, than a past in general that appears with the film’s final location, Angkor Wat. Human lives and events lie hushed in an architecture encroached upon by the natural world, worn by time and weather. These ruins become the repository for another secret at the film’s conclusion. Mo-wan whispers something into a hole in the walls of the temple, then secures it inside with grass and mud. The film ends with the telling of a secret, the secret of his love for Li-zhen, with an attempt to leave behind the past in the name of the future.
The attraction of Angkor Wat perhaps lies, like that of *In the Mood for Love*, in the mystery it preserves rather than the truth it reveals or represents. Tim Edensor has claimed that ruins in general “give no clear sign that the meaning of the past is self-evident and easy to decode if you possess the necessary expertise. There is an excess of meaning in the remains” (141). Sifting through an excess of meaning, we may find ourselves seeking out a secret, the sort that would allow us to make sense of the fragments we observe. It is tempting to see *In the Mood for Love* as composed of such fragments, and Mo-wan as the one who recollects, as he will be in 2046, who returns again and again to what has been lost. It is doubtless that in many ways the film does, as Chow argues, transcend the past that it purports to ground itself in. It moves away from history, toward the elaboration of a secret within the past, to the past as the site of innumerable mysteries that remain unresolved.

From one perspective this can be seen as an acknowledgment that there are histories and no history, all of them to some degree fashioned of fantasy, a cobbling together of causes from their effects inspired by an initial force of attraction to a moment or period of the past. History is made retrospectively, and what has come to pass, becomes what was possible, though it was not imagined possible until it came into being. As Bergson writes, “the possible is only the real with the addition of an act of mind which throws its image back into the past, once it has been enacted. But that is what our intellectual habits prevent us from seeing” (*Creative Mind* 81). In some films we find our senses liberated from these habits, and this experience may open onto possibilities of rethinking the classifications of historical events, or more personally, within in our own memories. We may think more generally as well of the forms taken by knowledge and experience in general, and what lies outside them.

Wong Kar-wai, at his best, is a maker of possibilities that could not have been imagined until they were realised in the material of a film, in images and sounds, and their unthinkable but appropriate connections, which nonetheless form a type of thought. Relations that are made and yet remain secretive are a correlative of his style of narration, especially in *In the Mood for Love*. There is an enigma at the heart of this film, which allows another illusion to emerge: a perspective in which all the enigmas of which it is constructed could be fully comprehended. “Cultivating enigmas”, Laura Marks contends, “is a radical strategy of remembering; and of forgetting, which is sometimes the more creative act” (“Information” 98). Marks echoes Nietzsche here, who pits life against history, arguing that we must forget in order to live, in order to reach the capacity for an action or thought that is
not simply a reaction. “When the historical sense reigns without restraint, and all its consequences are realized”, Nietzsche writes, “it uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live” (95). We have to forget what we know from time to time in order to realise that our ways of knowing, of speaking to ourselves about our experience, have themselves been created in time. We can start along this path through the confrontation with that which affects us without our being able to say quite why, without being able to name what we are feeling.

The other side of the film’s melancholy for the past, for a time when the flowers were in bloom and could perhaps have been plucked, is its presentation of the potential for thinking anew the world made available to us by our senses. If we find ourselves moved by the film for reasons we are not fully able to articulate, we may say of it, as of the meeting of Mo-wan and Li-zhen, that, in Bergson’s words, it constitutes an “unforeseeable nothing which changes everything” (Creative Mind 73). The world of In the Mood for Love is laced with the illusion of a metaphysical and omniscient perspective, the phantom of a potential position offscreen from which all we be made clear. This desire for a truly transcendent perspective is, however, overwhelmed by the promise of the immanent. The relation between what we see, hear, and feel, and what we are thereby able to speak of – like our relation to others and the world – is not simply given, and is modified as we learn to relate sense and thought differently, immersed in the world of the film.
A man’s memory is not a summation:
it is a chaos of vague possibilities.

- Jorge Luis Borges, “Shakespeare’s Memory”, 513

Many of the aspects of In the Mood for Love discussed in the previous chapter pertain to issues of recognition. They pertain, that is, to the recognition of problems introduced at particular moments by cuts coupled to movements – simply temporal, or between the real and imaginary – signalled by changes in Maggie Cheung’s cheongsam, as well as to the impossibility of separating out simulation and sincerity in the two main characters’ performances of their spouses and future selves. The problems presented by 2046 (2004), on the other hand, are not rooted in specific moments, but rather in the notions of identity and memory that both ground and unground the film, as well as the strategies of repetition that are central to the film’s narrational style. The problems of identity centre on, but are not limited to, the figure of Chow Mo-wan (Tony Leung Chiu-wai), who both is and is not the same character from In the Mood for Love. What is problematic about repetition is brought out by Mo-wan’s desire to return to the past, to repeat the possibility that he saw flash up during his time with the Su Li-zhen of Mood. It can be expressed by the following quandary, which clearly resonates with Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche’s notion of eternal return. Should the repetition of such a moment be thought of as returning along a cyclical path to an identical point of departure, or as the emergence of a new and unprecedented point that allows an incessantly forking path to once again cut into the unknown?

The problems of memory are multiple and closely related to those of both repetition and identity, and here I would like to touch on a number of the concerns that will be returned to throughout this chapter. The film is presented as a composition of Mo-wan’s memories, and throughout he delivers commentary in voice-over from beyond the film’s diegetic timeframe. A tension develops between the film as a sequence of Mo-wan’s recollections, and as a summation of Wong’s aesthetic, emotional, and philosophical preoccupations. This tension between the film as the memory of a character and as a work
reflecting Wong’s own fixations to date is productive of a free indirect vision in which “the author expresses himself through the intercession of an autonomous, independent character” (Deleuze, TI 177). The overt aestheticisation of the film’s images – through the extensive use of coloured lighting, or of walls and doorways to create frames within the frame, for instance – can therefore be related to either their status as products of Mo-wan’s memory, or to Wong’s own singular aesthetic vision. Rather than choose one or the other, we must keep both of these perspectives in mind.

The film also suggests the falsification involved in retrieving images of the past to better understand the place one occupies in the present. Here we can draw on Bergson’s distinction between recollection-images, which are actual, and a pure past, or past in general, a virtuality into which one must venture in order to actualise such images. “The recollection-image”, according to Deleuze, “does not deliver the past to us, but only represents the former present that the past ‘was’ (TI 52). What 2046 sometimes suggests is that the presents thus represented are the “present that the past was” with a difference. In being retrieved recollection-images may take on meanings and possibilities constituted through the association of certain recollection-images with other such images. Patterns may appear that may have been devised unconsciously, in accordance with a drive that itself remains unstated, or imprecise because contradictory. In 2046, repetition is involved in both this drive and the patterns that it produces, and because it has multiple potential meanings and consequences, the patterns of Mo-wan’s memory and Wong’s film remain open to divergent interpretations, dependent on how we understand the power of repetition: the return of the same, or the re-emergence of difference? The problems of memory and repetition will be returned to shortly, but before turning to them, those related to Chow Mo-wan’s identity need to be addressed.

Chow Mo-wan

There is, at the heart of 2046, a quiet paradox that poses problems to our habits of recognising and thinking through identity and difference. In Parables for the Virtual, Brian Massumi distinguishes the shock that registers the “punctual” escape of affect – the disparity between a sense experience and our ability to interiorise it in thought – from a more continuous perception of such a disparity that underlies a series of events. In either case we have what Massumi calls a “side-perception”, a recognition that we are acted on by forces
that escape capture in our sensory-motor perceptions. A punctual side-perception is located within a single event and is “usually described as a form of shock (the sudden interruption of functions of actual connection)” (36). Such punctual shocks appear in *In the Mood for Love* when Li-zhen’s *cheongsam* alert us to discontinuities and indiscernabilities introduced by what seem at first to be continuity cuts, or when a conversation we believe to be taking place between Mo-wan and Li-zhen is revealed to be role-playing. It is rather a continuous, underlying perception, accompanying all the film’s events, that is problematic in *2046*.

If we are familiar with Wong’s earlier work, in Chow Mo-wan we encounter a figure in whom a breakdown of the duality between identity and difference is registered. Massumi claims that the continuity of affective escape is “nothing less than the perception of one’s own vitality, one’s sense of aliveness, of changeability” (36). Here though it is the changeability of a fictional filmic character that is made evident, and the transformations concomitant with his “aliveness” are raised to such a degree that the association of the man of *2046* with the Mo-wan of *In the Mood for Love* becomes problematic. The two men do not quite correspond to one another, even though we are sometimes given information that seems to suggest beyond doubt that they are in fact the same man. Mo-wan is the centre of *2046*, but a centre that is fractured: he not only is and is not the man from *In the Mood for Love*, but also is and is not the man seen at the end of *Days of Being Wild* (*A Fei zheng zhuan*, 1990). Somewhat strangely, it seems more appropriate to think of *2046* as a sequel to both films, rather than the culmination of a trilogy encompassing all three.

The man at the end of *Days of Being Wild* is, according to the credits, also called Chow Mo-wan. While to some extent he appears to be the same man as in *2046*, it is difficult to imagine him having passed through the Mo-wan in *In the Mood for Love* to become the man of the later film. Or was the sequel to *Days* – which Wong had planned but been unable to make due to that film’s box-office struggles – always meant to elide a number of years and begin with the gambling Mo-wan of Singapore circa 1965 and 1966? It almost seems silly to ask such questions about the reality or truth of fictions, or to consider a film that was never made as a source of missing evidence. Nevertheless, in the intertextual circuits running between films, Wong creates paradoxical relations between identity and difference that should be considered alongside his explorations of fullness and emptiness, and change and stasis. In *2046*, Wong again plays as well on the continuity of discontinuities, but whereas this took place in a reworking of the cut and interstice throughout *In the Mood for Love*, here it
operates at a different, more overtly reflexive level. While indulging his – and many viewers’ – desire to return to the world of *In the Mood for Love*, Wong gives us the same world with a difference, the same man, but another. Like Tak, the protagonist of Chow Mo-wan’s story, “2047”, upon returning to a desired past, we find that it is not the same as it was the first time(s) around. There are, as Mo-wan will finally tell us, no exact repetitions to be found when it comes to love.

The man who appears in the one-shot coda to *Days of Being Wild* is preparing to go out. He files his nails, combs his hair, collects his things and then exits the room, at which point the film concludes. The cigarette dangling rakishly from his lip, and the cards that he sticks in his waistcoat pocket connect him with the Mo-wan of *2046*, as does the way he attentively faces the mirror while combing back his pomaded hair. There are a number of shots of Tony Leung doing just this in *2046*, and the sub-aquatic feel of them, produced by greenish lighting, is similar to that in the shot from *Days*. [Figure 1 and 2] There are certainly many more opportunities for us to connect the man from *In the Mood for Love* to the one from *2046*. These include the presence of Maggie Cheung’s Li-zhen in fantasy or dream images, as well as his confession to another Li-zhen – a mysterious Mandarin-speaking gambler from Phnom Penh, known as Black Spider – that he had once loved a married woman in Hong Kong who shared her name. There is also the presence throughout *2046* of Ah Ping, a friend who works with Mo-wan in Hong Kong in *In the Mood for Love*. In addition, Mo-wan tells Wang Jie-wen, the daughter of the owner of the Oriental Hotel, where he comes to live, that he used to write martial arts stories, *wuxia*, a shared interest that brings them closer together, as in *In the Mood for Love* it served as a motive, or pretext, for Mo-wan and Li-zhen to meet together in room 2046. Yet it is the attachment of a name to a body that is the strongest cause for both certainty and doubt as to the identity of the man in *2046*.

**Then I Needed a Moustache**

The way Tony Leung was asked to play his part in *2046* makes clear that Wong intends for Chow Mo-wan to be both the same character from *In the Mood for Love* and another man. “He asked me to do something very difficult”, says Leung, in an interview with Martha Nochimson. “He asked me to be the same character but in a different way. That character was already inside me – his body language, his kind of tempo, his voice. Now with almost the same background, same costume, and same name, he asked me to play somebody
Figure 1: *Days of Being Wild*

Figure 2: *2046*
else, like a new man”. When asked if he knew why, Leung replied, “No. He just said the day I arrived on the set, ‘You do the same Mr. Chow, but you do it differently’. A mean, dark, Bukowskian kind of man this time. Then I needed a moustache” (16). The actor further relates how he tried at first to be this new man, who was also to be the same man, by walking more quickly, and attests to the difficulty he had in not returning to the body language of the Chow from *In the Mood*. In the body of Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Mo-wan persists from one film to the next, but in the movements of this body an essential difference between the man in the two films is developed. We can generally accept the paradox that identity both changes and remains the same over time, and assert that no matter how much a person changes he or she is still the same person. Yet, we can also readily believe that the same actor is two distinct men in two different films. We receive contrary indications about Mo-wan, inviting us to both see him as the same man transformed by the experiences of *In the Mood for Love* into the man of *2046*, and to see, in the behaviour and bodily carriage of Tony Leung, the same actor in a similar but ultimately different role.

The difference in body language and facial expression is great enough to make one doubt that the Mo-wan of *2046* is the same man as in Wong’s previous film, but not so great as to make their shared identity seem impossible. Amy Taubin captures the problem posed by this difference: “But surely one failed love affair – one rejection – could not have transformed the shy, gentle, considerate Mr. Chow of the first film into the second film’s womaniser with his lounge-lizard smile and voice as affectless as a shrug of the shoulders” (28). This difference from “Mr. Chow” is most conspicuous when thinking about Leung’s scenes with Zhang Ziyi, as Bai Ling, especially if they are compared with the restrained and respectful meetings of Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan in *In the Mood for Love*. [Figure 3] It is with Miss Bai that the Mo-wan of *2046* is most unlikable. He may be more of a foppish charmer than a Bukowski-like boozer and brawler, all flattery and forwardness, but his carelessness with Bai Ling’s emotions is on occasion brutal, such that it brings to mind Yuddy’s (Jackie Cheung) behaviour toward the Su Li-zhen of *Days of Being Wild*.

The change in demeanour is evident, for instance, when Mo-wan forces Bai Ling to take the gift of silk stockings that he presents to her after Ping arrives at her door expecting that Chow has organised a “date” for him. Mo-wan crosses the room and tries to force the elaborate box with the stockings in it into her hand, but she resists. [Figure 4] Throughout the scene he stays in close proximity to her, and while she may be the one who slaps him, his
Figure 3: *In the Mood for Love*

Figure 4: *2046*
demeanour ripples with casual cruelty, and reveals his desire to remain in control, as well as his assuredness that he will get what he wants in the end. Also telling is a later scene in which he has half his moustache shaved off as a result of losing a bet with Ping, who had wagered that Bai Ling would not show up for a dinner with friends Chow had invited her to. The result of the bet, it turns out, was fixed, Ling and Ping having conspired to play a trick on him. When he arrives back at the hotel he bangs on her door, and though the encounter playfully progresses toward sex, his offer to pay her afterward is a measured bit of nastiness, made more off-putting by images of Mo-wan facing the camera, which approximate Bai Ling’s point of view.

These final images of the sequence are filmed across a series of 180-degree cuts, each shot taking on the point of view of one of the characters. There is something sinister in this face, a result of the bare skin where the moustache has been shaved away. This moustache does indeed act as a sort of mask, concealing the identity of the earlier Mo-wan, but when it is partially removed what appears is not that “other man”, but that man’s pain and vulnerability, which must be suppressed to such a degree that this new man is not susceptible to them. [Figure 5] This image of a Mo-wan poised between what he has been and what he has become is the image of a man without identity, who in seeking to escape the past must act as if there is nothing connecting him to the former persona associated with that past.

“Mr. Chow is no more”, writes Taubin, “unless you look in his eyes long enough to catch the moments when cool gives way to confusion, panic, pain, despair, and on a few occasions a tenderness that catches even him by surprise” (28-9). Such tenderness is certainly evident in his later meeting with Bai, when she asks him to help her to get a job at a club in Singapore. He seems taken aback by a change in her, a diminution of her spirit, her vitality, of which surely he understands himself to have been a major cause. And this tenderness is often in evidence in his relationship with Wang Jie-wen, never more so than in the moments he spends looking through the window on Christmas Eve 1968, watching her on the phone with her boyfriend in Japan, finding pleasure in the chance he has given her of grasping a happy ending, despite the fact that in doing so he has voided his own chances with her. Yet, there seems anyway to be a doubt accompanying his feelings for her, a doubt the nature of which is suggested through the development of correspondences between the Li-zhen/Mo-wan and Jie-wen/Tak relationships. The film implies that in beginning with Jie-wen, Mo-wan
may simply be attempting to repeat a moment with Su Li-zhen, seen or unseen, from the time of *In the Mood for Love*, when something could have taken place but did not. Since the film is allegedly made up of Mo-wan’s recollections, the return to moments from disparate relationships that in some sense resemble one another reveals his tendency to see later relationships in light of what took place with Li-zhen. Like the identity of Chow Mo-wan, which remains cultivatedly vague, his desire is itself paradoxical, both a longing to return to a past love by repeating it with a stand-in, and to leave the past behind, a secret buried beneath grass and dirt, in order to start over, as the refrain from *Happy Together* goes. Before further addressing these problems, however, I want to consider the paradoxes of identity presented by *2046* in relation to those developed by some earlier filmmakers.

**I Is Another**

Problems related to identity are central to a number of key mid and late 20th century films from *Vertigo* onward. Yet the prospect of the double, the possibility of being more than one person, has no doubt haunted and fascinated the cinema’s practitioners and spectators for much of its existence. In Vladimir Nabokov’s 1926 novel, *Mary*, for instance, the
protagonist, Ganin, a Russian in exile in Berlin, goes one evening to an unnamed film and sees his doppelganger on the screen, himself projected, for he occasionally had been paid a needed pittance to be an extra. After the film, Nabokov writes, “As he walked he thought how his shade would wander from city to city, from screen to screen, how he would never know what sort of people would see it or how long it would roam round the world” (26). A body outside of my body that is also me: among cinematic treatments of this theme, one could include Buñuel’s That Obscure Object of Desire (Cet Obscure objet du désir, 1977), in which two different women play the part of Conchita, and Kieslowski’s The Double Life of Veronique (La double vie de Véronique, 1991), where a French Véronique and a Polish Weronika, both played by Irène Jacob, live parallel lives and glimpse each other in Kraków’s main square just before Weronika dies. Then, of course, there is Persona (1966), where Bergman explores the transference, vampirism, and annihilation of identity through Alma and Elisabet. In the latter two films, this variance of identity is associated with crisis, which is also the case in Vertigo, which makes a strong point of comparison here as it did in the previous chapter.

Judy’s identity with or difference from Madeleine is the cause of a crisis for both her and Scottie. She may be a fake, but her version of Madeleine was the real thing, the woman he fell in love with. It is more complicated than in Metropolis, for instance, where the double, the bad Maria, is a wicked automaton, wholly other than the woman she is a copy of. In Vertigo the copy offers up as much as the real thing, as Scottie has never known the real Madeleine. The act of falling in love while acting as someone else clearly connects In the Mood for Love with Vertigo, but in Wong’s film the flexibility of identity seems to suggest a potential that could be unlocked by becoming someone else, or by doubling others – the spouses. In Vertigo, although the “plain” Judy realizes some sort of latent potential in becoming the mysterious and enchanting Madeleine, the loss of identity is in the end more threatening than liberating. We can speak of the vertigo of Chow Mo-wan as well, of his desire to merge with an idealised woman and in doing so both escape from life, plunging into a deathlike oblivion, and realise a higher form of life, in escaping the deaths of repetitive everyday drudgery. Yet there is an important difference as well. Vertigo in Hitchcock’s film ultimately, as Wood argues, becomes a metaphysical principle: “The world – human life, relationships, individual identity – becomes a quick sand, unstable, constantly shifting, into which we may sink at any step in any direction, illusion and reality constantly ambiguous, even interchangeable” (91). The loss of identity finally is terrifying, and the longing for an ideal to
carry one to another plane of existence is also the desire to transcend this world, which can only be accomplished in death, and is thus fearful.

This is the case in neither *In the Mood for Love* nor *2046*, where identity seems to lock one into a suffocating circuit of repetitions, and transformation is needed to keep the world from closing in on itself. It is needed in order to make the future more than simply attempts to replay a love that belongs to another time. This, however, brings us to a different but related point of convergence with *Vertigo*. In his essay on the film, Marker claims like Wood that the vertigo dealt with by Hitchcock’s film does not have to do with space and falling, but for Marker the vertigo in the film is temporal rather than a result of the ambiguity or interchangeability of reality and illusion. Scottie “overcomes the most irreparable damage caused by time and resurrects a love that is dead”. The second half of the film is for Marker nothing but Scottie’s “mad, maniacal attempt to deny time, to recreate through trivial yet necessary signs (like the signs of a liturgy: clothes, make-up, hair) the woman whose loss he has never been able to accept” (123). If we remember that Marker claims that the section of the film after Madeleine’s death can be read as Scottie’s hallucination from the mental hospital, we can make an interesting connection to *2046*. Whereas Scottie would be seen to imagine the future as a time in which the past would return and love could be recaptured, Mo-wan shuffles the moments of the past so that they all seem shadows cast by his time with Li-zhen.

For Wong’s film purports to be the memory of a man who recollects a period during which he tried alternately to recreate and escape the memory of a woman the loss of whom he is unable to accept. The film considered as a series of recollections shows that his ambivalence is still in place, since in retrieving moments from the past he is tempted to evoke and order them such that they often resemble the relationship with Li-zhen that preceded them. It is in this sense that Mo-wan engages in two senses in the folly of trying to deny time. Firstly, he imagines the world as a closed set in which all the parts could realign in the perfect positions and allow for the desired repetition. Secondly, he uses memory as an opportunity to give to the encounters he recollects an order predicated on the signs that he associates with his time with Su Li-zhen: rides in taxis, the poignant clasping of hands, eating together, writing *wuxia*, performing a farewell to come. However, in adopting this perspective we assume the persistence of Mo-wan’s identity from film to film. We have to
remember to think as well the difference between the two Mo-wan’s, the impossibility of their correspondence, and the possibility of their being instead versions of one another.

Ozu’s treatment of his characters can contribute to our understanding Mo-wan in this way. Donald Richie describes “the simple and real humanity” of Ozu’s characters as individuality within similarity. The entity of the Ozu character “is never sacrificed to a presumed essence”, argues Richie: “endless variety is found within the single entity” (16-7). Interesting in this regard is the “Kihachi” series – *Passing Fancy* (1933), *Story of Floating Weeds* (1934), *An Innocent Maid* (1935), and *Inn in Tokyo* (1935). In each of these films, Takeshi Sakamoto plays a man named Kihachi who has a son, and who also becomes involved in a friendly or amorous relationship with an older woman played by Choko Iida. Ozu presents four versions of Takeshi, rather than four films detailing the experiences of the same man. We can think as well in this regard of the “Noriko” trilogy of *Late Spring* (1949), *Early Summer* (1951), and *Tokyo Story* (1953). In each of these films, Setsuko Hara plays a woman named Noriko. Again, these are clearly different women, who belong to different families, yet, since each has the same name and is played by Hara, they are constituted as versions of one another. It is worth mentioning as well here *Late Autumn* (1960), wherein Hara plays a version of the role Chishu Ryu had played as her father in *Late Spring*. She is now the widowed mother who pretends to consider being remarried in order to persuade her daughter to marry, rather than the reluctant daughter. In the trilogy, Hara’s demeanour and interactions with others introduce subtle variations: the steadfastness of the daughter who desires to stay with her widowed father is of a species with but different than the steadfastness of the step-daughter, the wife of the son killed in the war, in *Tokyo Story*.

The difference introduced into Mo-wan from one film to the next through the carriage of Tony Leung’s body links up with the difference between Judy and Madeleine presented as different versions of the same body within the same film. Yet, becoming someone else, when we consider him the same man as in *In the Mood for Love*, seems the key to escaping a desire for repetition through which he is caught in an impossible attempt to deny time. This is the case even if his first transformation, from one Mo-wan to another, has left him locked into such a desire in between bouts as a carefree ladies man. On the other hand, in the insistence upon differences that make Mo-wan’s identity problematic, Wong’s play on identity and difference resembles to some degree that in the works of Ozu, in the Japanese master’s strategy of creating distinct versions of a single character, played by the
same actor, in different films. Mo-wan’s own peculiar case of vertigo is thus doubled by that of the spectator, who finds herself in the strange position of desiring to find in the Mo-wan of 2046 the man from In the Mood for Love, whatever narrative, temporal, or spatial discontinuities seem to preclude the assertion of their identity with each other.

**No Substitutes**

Stephen Teo claims in his monograph on Wong that Chow is a tragic figure, and that his tragedy mirrors that of Hong Kong. “In Chow Mo-wan”, Teo writes, “we see that love, permanence, fidelity and security are elusive, and this is the ache that afflicts the heart of the trilogy and also the ache that afflicts the heart of Hong Kong” (142). This does not seem to me to be the “ache that afflicts” In the Mood for Love at all, since it is not the impermanence of love that Mo-wan seems to suffer from, but rather its failure to manifest in the first place. It is simply not the case that he longs for permanence, fidelity, or security. In the Chow Mo-wan of 2046, what I see is a paradox: the impotence of one to change oneself in a world that is nothing but change. Unless we believe that the Chow of In the Mood for Love only wants to seduce Su Li-zhen to get back at their cheating spouses, Mo-wan and Li-zhen’s potential infidelity appears as the chance to make a new start, to enter into something, quite possibly, better. Neither of the characters is capricious: their inability to act, to bring about a change, prevents them from diverging from their current identities. Or, she does not love him, the question that haunts 2046.

In the amorous relationships of Chow Mo-wan, his desire to repeat an earlier love competes with his desire to bury that same love deep beneath an accumulation of one-night stands and temporary sexual liaisons. It is worth recounting the resonances of Su Li-zhen to be found in his relationships with Black Spider and Wang Jie-wen, as well as the entirely different affair that he has with Bai Ling, which Wong links with Su Li-zhen nonetheless through the manner of filming and editing certain scenes, as will be discussed toward the end of the chapter. Some repetitions – the name Su Li-zhen, or the writing of wuxia – seem fortuitous. Others – especially those that appear in similar framings, or methods of editing in the sequences where Mo-wan leaves a woman – seem to be produced by a memory returning to past events and introducing repetition through the similarity of the images called up in their recollection. While the reoccurrence of similarities within relationships develop the film’s thematic preoccupations with repetition, the formal repetitions seem to suggest a
difficulty inherent in separating true repetitions from false repetitions, a failure that may lead
one astray in assessing present prospects, as well as the meaning of events that have become
part of the past.

Deleuze once wrote that the heart is the amorous organ of repetition, whereas the
head is the organ of exchange, though he added that repetition concerns the head as well,
because it is its terror or paradox (Difference 2). The terror of repetition is the thought of
reliving exactly the life one has already lived, the thought that the world has exhausted all the
possibilities of difference, of life itself. This is the negative aspect of Nietzsche’s eternal
return, whereas the positive aspect would be the thought of the repetition of difference, the
appearance of that which keeps the world from being such a closed system of cyclical
returns. The relationship between matters of the heart and repetition in Wong’s work is
clear. In 2046, we are confronted with the idea of a problematic point at which the desire to
repeat a past love meets the desire for the repetition of that unforeseen nothing (a new love)
that will allow the escape from the first desire. “Most of my films”, Wong has said in an
interview, “deal with people who are stuck in certain routines and habits that don’t make
them happy. They want to change, but they need something to push them. I think it’s mostly
love that causes them to break their routines and move on. That’s why we always want to
repeat shots, to show the routines and the changes as they happen” (Tobias). For Wong,
repetition reveals, or develops, change, but for the characters change is motivated by the
emergence of love, understood not as the repetition of an earlier version of love, but
something entirely new, a singular desire that could not have been thought before its
appearance. In 2046 however, Mo-wan never gets beyond the desire to repeat a past love,
and the emergence of an unforeseen love, that of Bai Ling for him, proves ultimately
devastating.

Mo-wan only comes into contact with Wang Jie-wen and Bai Ling after running into,
and then returning to the hotel room of Lulu (Carina Lau), or Mimi, as she has come to be
known. In attempting to convince Lulu/Mimi that they once knew each other in Singapore,
he reminds her that she had said he looked like her boyfriend, a Chinese-Filipino, whom she
referred to as a bird without legs. The story of the bird without legs and the Chinese-Filipino
boyfriend connect Carina Lau’s Mimi with the Lulu of Days of Being Wild, who she also
played. This Lulu was in love with Yuddy, a Chinese-Filipino man who had explained his
disinclination to settle down by way of the story of a legless bird, which would die if it
landed. Among these intertextual notes, which introduce more disorientation than certainty that 2046 and Days share the same cinematic world, we are also presented with the thought that Mo-wan was once himself desired, by Lulu, as a repetition of an earlier love. Her forgetfulness and the changing of her name are weapons against the same sickness with which Mo-wan struggles: the simultaneous longing to return to a lost love, and to leave it behind for good, to get to 2046, the realm of memory in which time can be regained, and to escape this realm and return to the real world.

The episode between Mo-wan and Black Spider reveals most explicitly his longing to repeat the chance for a new beginning he let pass out of his life with Maggie Cheung’s Su Li- zhen. Black Spider is also named Su Li-zhen, and she is the first woman we see in 2046’s real world, rather than in that of Mo-wan’s story “2047”, in which the film begins. She remains unnamed until later in the film, and in this first encounter with her, we witness Mo-wan ask her to return with him from Singapore to Hong Kong. She rejects him by cheating at a game of hi-lo they play to decide whether or not she will accompany him. Already in these fragments one is presented with images and a situation that resonate with In the Mood for Love: a man played by Tony Leung asks a woman to make the reverse journey Mo-wan hesitates to ask Su Li-zhen to make in Wong’s previous film. It is also raining again, as it was during the false farewell in Mood, and in between the conversation in a stairwell and the card game at a restaurant in a railway station, Wong inserts an image of a battered metal streetlamp cover pounded by heavy rainfall, which resonates with a number of similar images of the lamp cover outside the noodle restaurant in In the Mood for Love.

Through the impending departure, the rain, and the lamp coverings, then, the two situations are connected. After Mo-wan loses the card game, we see him walking away to our right, the camera tracking beside him, and Gong Li walking away to the left, her lipstick smeared in a red halo about her mouth. There is then a cut to a close-up, slow-motion tracking shot of her midsection as she walks, the black glove upon her left hand at the centre of the frame. This image of her gloved hand as she walks away clearly constitutes a sort of invented memory, since the film is his recollection, and he is walking away at the moment to which it belongs. It is impossible for him to have seen her from this perspective. We can think of this as a sort of analogue to the image from In the Mood for Love of Li-zhen after the false goodbye, after Mo-wan has released her hand and walked away from the camera into the distance. As he was walking away, he cannot have known what she was doing, and while
the image is not explicitly coded as memory, the repetition of their clasped hands just before he walks away, which comes after, certainly makes it feel like a moment that belongs to memory and can therefore be repeated. But in 2046 the images are all his memories, and the shot of Black Spider walking away will be interpolated into sequences chronologically distant from it on multiple occasions later in the film. The concealed hand later comes to clearly symbolise her past, which she uses another, chronologically earlier game of hi-lo (which appears later in the film) to avoid telling Mo-wan about after he has inquired. At this early point however, while the gloved hand may elicit our curiosity, the more pressing question pertains to why we have just seen the end of a relationship that we know nothing about. And before receiving any answers with regard to this, another type of question will arise, when this image of her walking away is edited into sequences that come before their relationship is further explored. How does this image, once imagined and now a part of memory, relate to the other relationships into which it is embedded?

We return to their relationship toward the end of the film, in recollections sparked by a meeting with Bai Ling, who tells him she had looked for him on Christmas Eve 1969. It turns out he had gone to Singapore to look for Black Spider, but found that no one there knew of her whereabouts. After the beginnings of the relationship are recounted, in sequences punctuated with Mo-wan’s remarks in voiceover, we return to their farewell, and to the savage kiss that had not been shown earlier in the film. After he releases her, in voiceover we hear him say, “One night we split up, I told her…” This thought is completed by the Mo-wan on screen, performed as part of the moment being played out: “Take care. If you can escape your past one day come and look for me”. We then see her standing against the wall, tears running down her cheeks, after he has walked away, which makes this goodbye scene even more reminiscent of the false farewell with Li-zhen in In the Mood, deepening the feeling that it is he, rather than Black Spider, who needs to cut loose the past.

This is made explicit when Wong returns to the shots of the two walking away in opposite directions from earlier in the film. This time they are accompanied by more words from Mo-wan’s future self: “Now it strikes me, that what I said was actually for myself. In love you can’t get a substitute. I was looking for what I’d felt with the other Su Li-zhen. I didn’t realise that myself, but I’m sure she did”. Whether this realisation had pierced the Mo-wan of the late 60s, the one within the film, remains unclear. And the nature of this Su Li-zhen’s relationship with Mo-wan also remains, like her past, a mystery. Are they just friends
after she begins helping him win back his money, or do they have a physical relationship that we have not been shown? Here we have another connection with In the Mood for Love’s non-relationship, key events of which, as in the relationship with this other Li-zhen, seem to haven taken place largely within the offscreen space created by what we do see. It remains possible to think of In the Mood for Love, too, as an edit made by memory, an edit made by a mind prone to repeating patterns of remembrance, and after 2046 we may be more prone to see it as such.

**Happy Endings**

There are two sides to Mo-wan’s relationship with Wang Jing-wen: he both desires her for himself and acts to help her to achieve a happy ending with her Japanese boyfriend, Tak. Wang Jing-wen’s love affair with Tak becomes more and more a sort of a mirror reflecting the Li-zhen/Mo-wan relationship, both because of the way the man wonders years after their first meeting what the woman, who remains silent on the matter, feels for him, and because of the pressure exerted against the union from outside. In In the Mood for Love, this pressure comes from the neighbours who monitor their behaviour, while in 2046 Jing-wen’s father hates the Japanese and so opposes her relationship with Tak. Mo-wan and Jing-wen’s mutual affection for martial arts stories connects them as well to the couple in In the Mood for Love. Feelings for her begin to sneak up on him as the two begin working together on writing projects. Yet, as in In the Mood for Love, he is patient and does not, at least in what we are shown, push to make the relationship sexual. It is particularly interesting that as we learn that Mo-wan is developing romantic feelings for Jing-wen, connections to In the Mood for Love appear in the mise en scène of a few brief shots. Memory seems to amplify small connections, mixing up the images that go with one futile romance with another.

It is worth recounting a few of these appearances of the past. Having helped her get a job as a coat-check girl at a club, one night Mo-wan offers to share a taxi with Jing-wen back to the Oriental Hotel. She refuses, sensing that perhaps this is an invitation to something more. In a Wong Kar-wai film, this seems reasonable enough, considering that the taxi is that strange mobile space in his work where time sometimes slips out of joint and love appears for real when it is being feigned, as in In the Mood for Love; or where a couple can “start over”, as the refrain of Ho Po-wing in Happy Together goes; or where a doomed series of amorous transactions finds its inception, as with Bai Ling and Mo-wan. It is no
coincidence that Wang Jing-wen’s subtle rebuff of Mo-wan is framed by a pair of shots that, to all appearances, are from the same corner conversed upon and crossed by Mo-wan and Li-zhen in *In the Mood for Love*. A brief close-up of rain falling on the metal shade of a street lamp precedes his conversation with her at the cloakroom counter, and following a slow-motion shot accentuating her pensiveness as she sits down after he has gone, there is an image of him smoking a cigarette in the rain, on a street corner in green light. [Figures 6 and 7] The prospect of a new beginning is haunted by the sense that his desire for it is actually a phantom of a more deeply seated drive to return to the past.

In the previous chapter, I argued, following Orr, that in *In the Mood for Love* combinations of slow motion and Umebayashi’s musical piece, “Yumeji’s Theme”, seem to express the event of Mo-wan and Li-zhen’s (non)-relationship, which is not straightforwardly disclosed through the development of the story. The affective overload they present substitutes for the establishing of more precise links between emotions and their causes in the state of things established by the film. In *2046*, on the other hand, we are often confronted by free-floating affective resemblances – many of them again related to music and temporal manipulations – that are untethered to any single relationship. When we see, for instance, Wang Jie-wen, smoking, talking enthusiastically with Mo-wan on the roof beside the hotel sign, we may be reminded that earlier we saw Bai Ling smoking in the same place. In both instances slight fast motion has been employed to make the women’s movements as they smoke seem jerky and unnatural. However, in the first instance, we hear Connie Francis’s version of “Siboney”, which had been earlier associated with Bai, while in the second we hear “Casta Diva”, from Vincenzo Bellini’s opera, *Norma*, sung by Angela Gheorghiu, a piece that has been associated with Jie-wen both within the world of the story *2047*, and the “real” world of the film. While the attachment of a musical theme to each of these women may seem to be individuating, the repetitious effects of temporally disjointed movements suffused in intoxicating music offer us experiences that are nevertheless quite similar. These scenes thus emphasise the serial nature of these relationships, and the connection between a woman and a piece of music recalls the use of “Yumeji’s Theme” in *In the Mood*, ultimately suggesting that the links forged between the force of the music and Mo-wan’s feelings for these women is a product of his desire to recreate the conditions of his time with the Li-zhen of *Mood*.

This line of thought can be further developed through a consideration of “2047”,
Figure 6: *2046*

Figure 6: *In the Mood for Love*
the story Mo-wan claims to have begun because Jie-wen is always asking him if there is anything that does not change. He understands that she is really asking about the feelings between her and the Japanese man, and so offers to write a story to show her what her boyfriend is thinking. Importantly, the shots of him writing the story are followed by another brief intrusion of the past from *In the Mood for Love*. The camera tracks to the right, emerging from behind a wall to reveal, again, the corner from the earlier film, this time vacant, its appearance somewhat transformed by the use of CinemaScope and the greenish hue given to many images in *2046*. This is followed by a time-lapse shot of clouds passing above the sign of the Oriental Hotel, beside which Jie-wen and Mo-wan were seen laughing and talking earlier. Two unrequited relationships are linked through empty spaces, spaces in which he once spent time with women he cared for. We may think here of the end of *Days of Being Wild*, which presents a number of locations emptied of the presence of Su Li-zhen and the policeman, Tide (Andy Lau), who had earlier walked and talked in those places together. Like the end of Antonioni’s *L’Eclisse* (1962), these vacated spaces suggest the failure to materialise of a love that had been made to seem possible.

Over the empty images of *2046*, Mo-wan says, considering “2047”, “Maybe I was getting too involved. I started to feel that it wasn’t about her boyfriend at all. Rather, it was more about me”. This seems to be a variation on Mo-wan and Li-zhen falling in love by acting as each other’s spouse falling in love: writing from the perspective of another man who loves a woman leads to Mo-wan falling in love with that woman as well, yet leads, too, to the understanding that he is also the man in his story. The erotic science-fiction serial, “2046”, was about people trying to return to memories from “the time when flowers were in bloom”, when the potential existed for a new beginning to be made, a beginning that would have prevented one from entering into the interior of a labyrinth. “2047” is about trying to escape that place, that world of memories, and it is from this story that most of the futuristic images in the film derive. One stands a better chance of escaping the past than of returning to it, and perhaps, taken as a symptom, the fact that the film, which is a labyrinth of Mo-wan’s memories, contains more images of the latter story could be taken as a sign that he may one day “recover”, even if he has not done so in the future to which the voiceover belongs. It is in trying to give a happy ending to “2047”, a request made by Jie-wen from Japan, that he falters, recalling instead that he once had a chance for a happy ending himself, but let it slip away. He leaves behind pen and paper to hail a taxi, yet when we then see him
in that taxi, he is with Mood’s Su Li-zhen, sleeping with his head upon her shoulder as she sits poised beside him. The desire for a happy ending is also the desire for a new beginning that never took shape.

**The Labyrinth**

Certainly, 2046 is labyrinthine, both in its complex temporal structuring, and in its treatment of space. However, this labyrinthine nature is not made as explicit as in, for instance, *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961), where the problems presented by non-chronological structuring, and the cryptic movements of dolly shots down corridors overtly signal the difficulties of navigating the film’s narrative and time-space. Nearly all of 2046 takes place indoors, in small hotel rooms, restaurants, stairwells, corridors, and entryways. Even those scenes of the characters in the street give one the sense of being inside, both because they tend to take place at night, and since the sky almost never appears. When the sky does appear it is almost exclusively in shots of the characters on the roof beside the neon sign of The Oriental Hotel. The sky in these images serve as a counterpoint, a reserve of distance and mobility, set against the dislocated collage of stylised interiors bathed in coloured light that doubles the film’s achronological, complex temporal structure. However, although 2046 is constructed as an elaborate labyrinth of leaps back and forth in time, and into the fictional futures of Mo-wan’s stories “2046” and “2047”, we do not suddenly lose our place as in *In the Mood for Love*. There, subtle movements were revealed as indecipherable, while here ostentatious transitions are presented to us such that we can order them.

Nevertheless, doubts always remain as to the truth of the story that we are told in 2046. As Arthur writes, “Despite Wong’s fixation on architectural detail, his lush textures and historically evocative clothing, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that much of what we see is either a mental landscape or at least heavily inflected by Chow’s inner subjectivity” (“Philosophy” 7). The late 60s Hong Kong evoked by meticulous attention to dress and décor, is, as in *In the Mood for Love*, haunted by its own emptiness, but the reasons for this are different here. However much the Mo-wan of the voiceover may truthfully want, broadcasting from a future beyond the chronological coordinates of the images we see, to lay the past bare in the present, he does not have that power. The images of memory are always a step away from dissipation, and Wong captures this: memory fails to take shape without mutation. The images are given the look and feel of memory, much more so than in *In the*
Mood for Love. Rooms are constantly suffused with unnaturally coloured light: blues, greens, yellows. The camera is constantly making slight movements, always finding frames within the frame, rendering visible the obstacles posed within remembrance.

Wong uses the Scope format of 2.35:1 to systematically limit vision, to juxtapose what is seen with a sense of what must be overcome in order for anything to appear at all. As Nathan Lee writes, the film is “shot almost entirely in medium-to-tight shots”, so that, heads fill the frame like marble busts propped on hidden supports. The far ends of his compositions are habitually given over to a shallow-focus volume of wall or curtain, so that Wong often seems to be shooting in 1.66:1 or 4:3, with a luxurious buffer of pure form. 2046 is a voyeuristic narrative we peek at through apertures and spy on around corners. (31)

2046 is also a sea of memories that Mo-wan, to whom they belong, constantly peeks at through apertures and spies on around corners. If not their author, he at least revises and shuffles them, glazes them with colour and extinguishes them in darkness. The image of Gong Li walking away, a memory of what he never saw, returns to the dark recesses within which it was formed, and into which Mo-wan must venture in order to actualise it once again. As in Last Year in Marienbad, the labyrinth is related to memory. But while in Resnais’s film the incompatible memories of the three characters cause problems, in 2046 the labyrinth is a single man’s memory, which constantly introduces new corridors of connection between events, times, and places. The problem is that the present is always unstable, open as it is to the new perspectives on and interpretations of causes and effects opened up by the framing and editing of the images of memory.

In Search of the Present

The images of Mo-wan’s time with Bai Ling are the most problematic with relation to memory. There appears to be nothing in her that reflects what he recalls in Su Li-zhen, and while Wong claims that what Mo-wan sees in her is an opportunity to change, to stop thinking about the past and fantasizing about the future, in favour of the present, the scenes of her and Mo-wan coming together, in a taxi on Christmas Eve 1966, and parting for the last time, just before she is to leave for Singapore, are visually resonant with scenes from both In the Mood for Love and 2046 itself, as well as Happy Together. Is it that memory wins out over the lady of the present? In reference to Mo-wan’s plight, Wong claims, “You can never
compete with something in the past, in memory. Like some people said, we love what we can't have. In this world, the end becomes the beginning. It's very unfair for anyone around him in the present, because they can never compete with his imagination or his memory. We love what we can't have, and we can't have what we love” (Walsh). No longer playing for large stakes, for a love that would last, that would never change and yet make the change that he desires, Mo-wan settles for a lover whose time he can borrow or pay for cheaply. The shadow side to Wong’s platitude about wanting what we cannot have, is wanting back moments that we did have when what we wanted to happen did not happen. So it is that Mo-wan's memory makes over moments with Bai Ling in the shape of those other moments where he lost what he never quite managed to have.

It is while he speaks about his time in Singapore to Bai Ling, on Christmas Eve 1967, that an image of Black Spider walking away appears, cutting into his conversation with her, just as images of the other Su Li-zhen, in the amplified eroticism of a colour-saturated version of Mood’s room 2046, had cut into his conversations with Black Spider after he found our her name was Su Li-zhen. There are other ghosts that haunt the images of Bai and Mo-wan together, and their presence can be felt with particular keenness at the beginning and end of the relationship. His first advances toward Bai Ling recall those he made, acting or otherwise, toward Li-zhen in the taxis of In the Mood for Love. The taxi images in 2046 recall Happy Together as well, both through Wong’s choice to film them in black and white (a section of Happy Together in black and white is broken up by the colour taxi images), and the lying of one character's head upon the shoulder of another.

In the earlier films, it was always Tony Leung whose shoulder a loved one laid his or her head upon, but in 2046, whether in his fantasies (with Mood’s Li-zhen) or his real life, he is the one in need of support. [Figure 7-10] Yet, as in In the Mood, it is he who reaches for a would-be lover’s hand, moving his hand to rest on Bai Ling’s thigh, before she quickly removes it. When he then clasps her hand though, she allows it. But whereas hand-holding seems to take on a deep meaning in the exchanges with Su Li-zhen in the earlier film, here it signifies nothing except Mo-wan’s adeptness at instigating brief sexual relationships. The consequence of gesture built up in In the Mood for Love is largely voided in 2046. As these images form a vague but provocative series with other images outside the film, they also present a pattern of futile actions and expressions within 2046. Whereas rehearsals or
Figure 7: *Happy Together*

Figure 8: *In the Mood for Love*
Figure 9: “First date” with Bai Ling in 2046

Figure 10: Together in dreams: with Su Li-zhen, 2046
playacting could cause love to emerge in *In the Mood*, real actions are inconsequent simulations of love made use of in courting sexual distractions in *2046*.

The last parting depicted by the film is Mo-wan’s with Bai Ling. “Why can’t it be like it was before?” she asks him, before inviting him to stay with her for the night. He refuses, then grasps her hand in both of his, turns and walks down the stairway. The work of memory is clear in this sequence, which brings the film to its conclusion. After Mo-wan begins descending the hotel stairs, an action shown itself in images at different speeds that overlap chronologically, we are returned to the moment just before they parted. A close-up of their mid-sections shows his hands release hers, in slow motion, and then we see him walk away from the camera through the door, and then head down the stairs at the rear of the frame. [Figure 11] In words almost identical to those accompanying the farewell from Black Spider, he tells us in voice-over that as far as he recalls, he never saw Bai Ling again, so this farewell evokes not only the one in *In the Mood for Love*, which also broke the chronological flow to return to the moment of parting in slow motion, captured in a low-angle shot, but that from Black Spider. The image of Ling collapsing against the wall, covering her face with her hands as she cries, recalls the parting tears of both Su Li-zhens. These tears were set flowing by two types of simulation. In the first case, he was pretending
that he was his future self leaving behind the future self of the woman he loves, while in the other he pretends, however unconsciously, that Black Spider shares an identity and not just a name with the woman he continues to be obsessed by. In memory, if not in the life outside it, Bai Ling is associated with the failure of the happy ending with Su Li-zhen to ever begin.

Outside, having left Ling’s, Mo-wan walks, captured in slow motion with his head lowered, as the camera tracks him from his right. Umebayashi’s score plays, a march for the abyss that began with his parting from Ling, whose voice can be heard on the soundtrack: “Why can’t it be like it was before?” He is moved, of course, because this is his question as well, one that attempts at repetitions, replacements, and the forgetting of a past lover have done little to dispel. In dwelling on this moment, in the replaying and stretching out of the movements of this exit, perhaps what we are seeing is Mo-wan revealing a trace of regret, a doubt where there was no doubt at the time, the thought that he may have been able to begin anew with Ling, even though happiness with her would have been so different from the potential happiness he glimpsed with the Li-zhen of Mood. This was almost certainly not the case. Memory, after all, is, as Borges writes, a chaos of possibilities. A relationship that was not desirable when its possibility was presented, for good reason, may well look like a lost opportunity from a future perspective. That is the labyrinthine nature of memory, which makes past events other than they were, as well as returning them to us, offering up a potential beginning in each and every ending made.

**Authors and their Shadows**

At the end of 2046, Mo-wan appears exhausted by his inability to distinguish the desire for future happiness from a desire for a particular moment of the past. “He didn’t turn back”, an intertitle tells us after the tracking shot of Mo-wan walking away from Ling’s. “It was as if he’d boarded a very long train, headed for a drowsy future through the unfathomable night”. A shot of him alone in a taxi, slumped against the door, follows; facing us, his eyes reveal a deep weariness. The voice-over that accompanies this shot is a repetition of one from early in the film: “Everyone goes to 2046 with the same intention. They want to recapture lost memories”. Mo-wan appears here as a mirror of his own fictional creation, Tak of “2047”, a passenger on an endless return journey from a memory that attracts him, but which he knows he must escape.
In an important sense, Mo-wan is for Wong Kar-wai what Tak is for Mo-wan. “Mr. Chow is an artist of sorts”, writes Taubin, “and since his novel bears the same title as the film, it would not be presumptuous to think of him as an alter ego for the film’s director” (27-8). Mo-wan brings together his memories of his various lovers, variations on the woman he once loved, and Wong brings together his past characters in Mo-wan, the characters who seek out love in order to escape the loops prescribed by their habits. This alignment of Wong with Mo-wan is however problematic in ways that the infusion of images from Mo-wan’s fictional creations into his own memories of the time in which he wrote them is not. In the former case, we are given over to images that constitute both the subjective remembrances of a fictional man, and the aesthetic vision of his creator. The one is indiscernible from the other.

The arts of the individual creating himself from memory, which remains open to sense events that went unremarked upon their initial occurrence, and of the maker of artistic narratives and worlds – whether filmmaker, novelist, or otherwise –are brought into proximity, and what emerges is another form of the vertigo of identity. Is this in some sense a reflection of the vertigo of repetition? We have neither access to a perspective from which we could reflect with finality on the nature of repetition put forward by the film – rebirth of the new or return of the same – nor one from which we can separate the memory of Mo-wan from the artistic vision of Wong. Perhaps though, in the infinite potential for memory to recreate the past, we are given an opening onto the infinite potential for thought and the world to be (re)-linked. Without memory, we could not reflect on our own singularity through time, our own identity, but perhaps we are dependent as well on a certain disordering capacity of memory that transforms us, as well as our perspective on the world. Such an operation of memory would recast the events and feelings of the past, and perhaps in doing so open up a desirable route along which we could escape the spectres of repetition haunting the present.
4. The World and Others:  

*Distant*

Andrei Tarkovsky, one of the directors most admired by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, argued that the greatest power of cinema is to put individuals into relation with one another and the world that they inhabit. “Juxtaposing a person with an environment that is boundless”, he wrote, “collating him with a countless number of people passing by close to him and far away, relating a person to the whole world: that is the meaning of cinema” (*Sculpting* 66). Often Tarkovsky’s films seem to make it impossible to draw a distinction between the interior worlds of characters, and apparently objective images of them in, or absent from, the world. Images of the natural world often seem to convey to us a sense of the mental or emotional states of certain characters; it’s not simply that we are aligned with the optical perspectives of such characters, since even when they are present in certain images we seem to both see the world filtered through their perception, and them in the world. This is especially true, for instance, of *Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1975), where everything we see is infused with the subjectivity of the main character, Aleksei, who’s clearly a kind of surrogate for Tarkovsky himself. Both in using his films as a means to work through problems he has himself experienced, and in creating cinematic worlds that make the cities and landscapes in which his characters move reflect their inner states, Ceylan reveals the deep influence Tarkovsky has had upon him.

Ceylan’s is a personal cinema, but one that constantly tries to imagine the small affairs in which people become entangled in relation to a horizon far outside the sphere of human exchange, within which all actions can be coded as coherent reactions to those situations to which they serve as responses. In this chapter, after discussing the nature of Ceylan’s personal and reflexive concerns, I will show how he blurs the line between the world of human interchange, and the world of forces and relations that lie outside its scope. While certainly not as densely woven as in Tarkovsky’s work, inner states and images of the world are nevertheless drawn together in many of Ceylan’s images, and in *Distant* (2002) a number of the strategies that he makes use of toward this end are clearly displayed.

*Reflexivity, Cinema, Life*
First of all, the personal and reflexive nature of Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s films needs to be taken into account. The subject matter of his first three feature-length films – *The Small Town* (*Kasaba*, 1997), *Clouds of May* (*Mayis Sikintisi*, 1999), and *Distant* – has close ties to his own experiences, and friends and family appear as actors in all three films. In addition, the first two are located in the town in which he spent part of his childhood, while the apartment in *Distant* was his home at the time of shooting. The films are connected to one another as well through the stories that they narrate. For instance, *The Small Town* is directly concerned with contemporary life in the village where Ceylan lived as a child, while *Clouds of May* deals with, and critiques, the process of making *The Small Town*. The latter film therefore serves as an unusual type of sequel to, and commentary upon, the former. The setting shifts to Istanbul with *Distant*, but this film is clearly linked to *Clouds of May* through its scrutiny of a character derived from Ceylan himself. Both of these characters are played by Muzaffer Özdemir, and while the filmmaker, Muzaffer, of *Clouds* is an analogue for Ceylan at the time he made *The Small Town*, Mahmut, in *Distant*, is, as Ceylan was before he began making films, a disillusioned commercial photographer in Istanbul.

Ceylan has spoken of his films as ways in which he works out problems, spaces into which he can project and jettison abject attributes. “With cinema”, he says, in an interview with Geoff Andrew, “I was able to create a kind of peace in my soul. It was like therapy; you put all the dark, bad sides of yourself into the films, and so you get rid of them – or at least control them in a better way” (“Beyond”). Certainly with *Three Monkeys* (*Üç maymun*, 2008) and *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (*Bir zamanlar anadolu’da*, 2011), Ceylan has moved away from overtly practicing filmmaking as a means of self-improvement. With *Distant* and *Climates* (*Iklimler*, 2006) however, he is still very much concerned with mercilessly displaying and exorcising his lesser qualities. Perhaps we should actually think of these two films along with *Clouds of May* as a kind of trilogy: all three depend on a strategy that moves between earnest, ruthless self-examination, and visions of the world in which the male protagonists problems in relating to others are linked to the underlying problem of the relation between humans and the world. Before further developing this point, the thematic preoccupations of *The Small Town*, *Clouds of May*, and *Distant* need to be compared and contrasted further.

*The Small Town* is split into two parts: the first documents the trivial and wondrous experiences of an adolescent girl and her younger brother, while the latter shows the children with their parents, their uncle (Ceylan’s cousin, Mehmet Emin Toprak), and their
grandparents (Ceylan’s parents, Emin and Fatma Ceylan). This second part takes place on the evening of a harvest festival, and the family is camped out in a grove of trees. The adults have a long conversation that seems to continue deep into the night. It transforms into an argument when the subject turns to whether it is better to stay in one’s own town – where possibility is limited but one, perhaps, belongs – or to head out into the world to see what one can make of oneself. In a key sequence of Clouds of May, the making of this conversation sequence is depicted, and we witness Muzaffer, the director, cajoling his unwilling parents into acting. There are two important problems introduced by this scene from The Small Town, and the sequence that presents its production in Clouds of May. The first is that of the young man who wishes to leave his village to move to the big city or beyond. In each of Ceylan’s first three films, Toprak plays a character who embodies this problem, and the character of Saffet he plays in Clouds of May is in many respects closely related to Yusuf in Distant. In Clouds of May, Muzaffer, the filmmaker, promises Saffet that he will find him a job in Istanbul after they finish the film. In the end, however, after Saffet has quit a job at the local factory that his family pulled strings to get him, Muzaffer tells him that he should forget about going to Istanbul, since he would not fit in or easily find a job there. The two problems actually come together here: the young man who longs to leave the village is let down by the filmmaker who acts unethically toward those who help him to produce his films.

Clearly, Clouds of May is a direct response to Ceylan’s recognition of his mistreatment of his family members that acted in The Small Town. Andrew makes an instructive comparison between Ceylan’s examination of the ethical problems of filmmaking, and the work of Abbas Kiarostami. “The effect” [of the scene from Clouds of May that dramatises the making of the harvest festival scene from The Small Town], Andrew writes,

is in some respects not unlike that in Kiarostami’s Through the Olive Trees (1994) when we see (a fictional recreation of) the filming of a scene from his earlier And Life Goes On... (1991); also reminiscent of the Iranian’s work (most notably The Wind Will Carry Us [1999]) is Ceylan’s less than flattering (self) portrait of the filmmaker, who quite happily exploits all around him to further his film while barely registering that they too have needs and concerns of their own. (“Beyond”)

However, while it is true that Ceylan’s depiction of the exploitative filmmaker in Clouds of May brings to mind Kiarostami’s work, the subject matter is even more overtly personal in Ceylan’s film. The scene of making The Small Town, like Clouds of May as a whole, reflects the idea of cinema as self-improvement, since by dramatising the ethical and aesthetic problems
faced in making *The Small Town*, Ceylan tries to confront and move beyond his problematic relationships with other people.

In Kiarostami’s films there is a more didactic thrust, a sense of a calcifying and critiquing of the problems of filmmaking in general, especially those problems facing directors who work with amateur actors. The problem could be stated as such: making good films sometimes makes it impossible to live ethically, and vice versa. Taking this up as his own problem, Kiarostami consequently often remains at a somewhat greater remove from his stand-ins than Ceylan. Both directors sometimes treat their material ironically, but the filmmaker Muzaffer in *Clouds of May* is clearly a version of Ceylan at the time of making *The Small Town*, one whose ugly methods of getting what he wants from those around him is laid bare. The journalist pretending to be an engineer (Behzad Dorani) in *The Wind Will Carry Us* is more satirically dealt with, and while there is no doubt that some of his more appalling behaviour is meant to reflect a filmmaker’s manipulations of amateur actors, this could be *any* filmmaker: Kiarostami does not, here at least, implicate himself as entirely as Ceylan tends to do in his early work.

Ceylan and his characters more often encounter problems that can be framed in relation to that conceived of by Nietzsche in the first of his *Untimely Meditations*: “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”. “It requires a great deal of strength”, he writes, “to be able to live and to forget the extent to which to live and to be unjust is one and the same thing” (76). For many of Ceylan’s characters – especially those stand-ins for him played by Özdemir in *Clouds of May* and *Distant*, as well as Isa in *Climates*, who Ceylan plays himself – the problem is to the contrary that in behaving unjustly toward others they only increase the degree of their separation from the lives they would like to be living, and from the world they live in. This is particularly true of Mahmut in *Distant* and Isa in *Climates*, and it is especially evident in their relations with women. Both men appear to be trapped by their own bad habits, and constantly react to difficult situations in accordance with the same habitual responses that we can imagine likely made those situations deteriorate in the first place. These men are constantly catching themselves behaving in ways that they know to be not only unjust, but also detrimental to their aspirations for themselves. So while Muzaffer in *Clouds of May* struggles to make his film without mistreating those who help him to do so, the problem of making films ethically is a variation on the larger theme of living with others justly that is taken up in *Distant* and *Climates*. This preoccupation is clearly evident in Ceylan’s
later films as well, though after _Climates_ he ceases to make his own experiences the heart of the story.

For Nietzsche injustice is an inevitable accompaniment to a forgetfulness that allows one to act in consonance with illusions beneficial to life, whether they lead to the just treatment of others or not. In Ceylan’s work up to and including _Climates_, the maltreatment of others is a cause of one’s failing to live satisfactorily, rather than an inevitable result of striving to take actions that are not simply rational reactions performed in accordance with one’s knowledge at a given moment. In _Distant_, Mahmut acts badly toward pretty much everyone, especially Yusuf, who is himself caught up in the problem of the young man who feels himself neither part of the city nor the village. Both characters experience problems of being distant from others in the film, and this reflects the deeper issue of knowing one’s place in the world. This is then the personal perspective of Ceylan in its most basic form: people treat each other badly but perhaps that is only because they fail to comprehend their connection to the world, which, if understood, would allow them to live as they should. But on the other hand, the social sphere always introduces local issues that constantly turn one away from this problem, such that it has to be dealt with again and again. The two must then be taken up together, and the making of films is the site privileged by Ceylan for this activity.

**The Personal and the Cosmic**

Asuman Suner claims that in both Kiarostami and Ceylan’s films the realism of everyday situations is both heightened and made “skewed and bizarre” by the “interrogation of the nature of cinematic reality” (311). While I agree that the everyday is indeed in some sense heightened and skewed in Ceylan’s films, I do not believe it to be the result of such an interrogation. The peculiarity of _Distant_ is produced by the realities of a particular fictional world – in which the boundaries between inside and outside, subjective and objective, become unstable – rather than any pursuit of how such worlds capture the real, or under what conditions we should speak of the realism of cinema. _Distant_ produces a real fictional world autonomous from our own, but reflective of many concerns and problems we may ourselves have in this world. It establishes a tension, which is real, between the development of the story in images that can be chronologically related to one another, and images and sounds that seem, paradoxically, both detached from and only peripherally concerned with that story world, and reflective of the mental or emotional states of Mahmut and Yusuf.
Again, we can make a helpful comparison with Kiarostami. Jonathan Rosenbaum refers to “creative and unorthodox redefinitions of narrative space” in the films of the Iranian director, arguing that “contrapuntal” use of the soundtrack, and a heightened attention to details in visual images have the effect of making “the world seem like a richer and more complex terrain than any narrative could possibly contain” (21-2). Rosenbaum’s assessment concerns images that overtly exceed the function of presenting story information, such that our attention is drawn to details extraneous to this function, and sound features that do not seem to belong to the images with which they are linked. But if the filmic world seems richer and more complex than a narrative could contain, this is nevertheless the effect of a certain form, a certain strategy, of narration. It is therefore not the case that details in the image and sounds that seem to belong to a different world than the image can be said with certainty to play no role in relation to the development of the story. They belong to the same fictional world, though, as will become clear in further analysis of Distant, images of natural or urban landscapes can serve equally well as reflections of mental states, and/or as the arenas in which people think, feel, and act.

In Ceylan’s films, images of both urban and natural landscapes proliferate, and for the most part they far exceed any function of spatially establishing the location of characters at a given point in time. Weather often plays a particularly important role in these compositions, and in producing an atmospheric impression of the image as “mental”. This strategy is most explicitly deployed in Climates, in which transformations of the seasons and weather conditions in particular locales are juxtaposed with Isa’s transitory feelings toward both the women in his life and his own ambitions. Ceylan has claimed that the attention paid by his camera to the physical world, to seasons and times of day, is his “way of connecting things to a more cosmic state”. “We live in the universe”, he says, “and I think we should be more aware of that reality all the time. At least, that’s my way of making the world more meaningful” (“Beyond”). For Ceylan, then, human life becomes more meaningful if it is put in touch with the world in new ways, and making films allows for the creation of such links. These convictions of Ceylan’s are indeed related to Deleuze’s claim that cinema has the power to “discover or restore belief in the world, before or beyond words” (TI 166).

The need to reestablish a connection with the world is made explicit through the plot at one point in Distant, and the camera is depicted as a tool for establishing such a link. Mahmut and Yusuf travel to the countryside to photograph a mosque. On their way back to
Istanbul, Mahmut pulls over the car having been struck by the grandeur of the landscape and the quality of the light at the moment they are passing through it. He considers getting out of the car, setting up the equipment, and taking some photographs. After he describes the way he would set up the camera, Yusuf urges him to get out of the car and do so, more than happy to help set up the equipment. Mahmut decides against it after a moment’s indecision: “Fuck it, why bother”, he says to himself as much as to his cousin, putting the car in gear and driving off. The framing he describes to Yusuf actually approximates that in which Ceylan’s camera comes to rest after following the progress of Mahmut’s car at the beginning of this scene. [Figure 1] Ceylan is then taking that opportunity that Mahmut lets pass him by, and certainly here Mahmut’s failure to get out of the car and take photographs should be seen as symptomatic of the distance he experiences from the person he would like to be, from the other people in his life, and from the world in which he lives. The opportunity to take a photograph is here the opportunity to make a link with the world, but perhaps also for Mahmut to make a link with his cousin. While the making of such a connection is obviously not as simple as taking a photograph, for Mahmut – a stand-in for a filmmaker who places great value in linking the human sphere and what lies beyond it within a larger cosmological horizon – the failure to get out of the car and respond to a landscape that has moved him is
Ceylan recognises that it is not a simple matter to connect with the natural world. We cannot simply head out to the countryside and restore some alleged originary unity between humanity and the world. In the interview with Andrew, Ceylan speaks of the difficulty he personally experiences in making himself feel at home in the world, whether in the city or outside it. He admits that he is not actually that close to nature, that he gets bored and oppressed after a few days in the country (“it sometimes feels like death”), but claims as well that the city discomfits him in another way. Istanbul, he claims, becomes oppressive due to the “human relations there”. So while there is no pure, savage experience of nature that would bring about the peace that human relations disturb, there is no sense of belonging in the world that these relations can provide without our turning to the world outside of them.

Things glimpsed outside of the perspective of their relationship to human interests – neither as merely the setting for human history, nor things to be made use of for our needs – are revelatory of processes on a different scale, both organic and inorganic, which began long before humans came to exist, and will continue long after they have disappeared from the planet. We are both part and apart from these, but it may well be that we stand to gain something in attending to the world without having a preconceived notion of what in particular we are after in doing so. This is clearly a sentiment both Ceylan and Mahmut, who we see idly staring out across the Bosporus on multiple occasions in Distant, seem to relate to.

Two Horizons

The distinction between a horizon of human relations and a more absolute horizon needs here to be further developed. In cinema, according to Deleuze, this generally corresponds to the distinction between a sensory-motor horizon and an “inaccessible and always receding” cosmological horizon (TI 17). Although the sensory-motor horizon does not necessarily depend on the actions and reactions of human beings, in narrative cinema it is almost always the case that it does so. The most basic requirement for a film’s formation of a sensory-motor schema is that it connects perceptions of causes to resultant actions, which themselves produce new situations (Negotiations 51). With human protagonists, affection-images necessarily intercede, since we must see as well that they perceive the state of a situation. Even if, as in many animation films, animals are the protagonists, they are
anthropomorphised and endowed with human sentience. The assumption of this sentience, of a self-consciousness that allows one to reflect on what has been perceived and to accordingly take appropriate action, is especially important if we consider the fact that the realism of cinema is traditionally behaviourist.

Marrati at one point focuses on the distinction made by Deleuze between the human horizon and the more abstract sensory-motor horizon, while recognising that they tend to correspond to each other in the vast majority of films (52-3). The links between human perceptions and actions are firmly established in the regime of the movement-image, such that a behavioural realism, like that described by Merleau-Ponty in “The Film and the New Psychology”, emerges. As Marrati argues, for Merleau-Ponty in this text, the “fundamental realism” of cinema “is in fact a form of behaviorism: feelings and thoughts no longer spring from a disincarnate spirit but are given in conducts, and there is no consciousness that is not bound to a body and thrown into a world where it coexists with others” (52). From a more abstract perspective, it is not the behaviour of humans, but the linking of perceptions with actions that arise in response to them that constitutes cinematic realism. This is the composition of rational intervals of movement. Certainly this linking is almost always accomplished through the intermediary of human beings, who are able to consider the meaning of what is perceived (even if their thoughts are not granted to us in a voice-over or in conversations), and whose actions then have an impact on a field of forces involving other human beings.

We should think here as well of Deleuze’s claim that it is not the sensory-motor schema, but the distinction between or identity of subjective and objective images that constitutes a cinematic model of truth applicable to fiction films and documentaries alike (TI 142-4). It is by knowing what is seen by someone in the film, and what, on the other hand, belongs solely to the perspective of the filmmaker’s narration that we are able to determine a horizon between the subjective perspective of a character (simply what they see, or an image made to express what they are feeling), and our objective views of that character in the world. When this horizon becomes indiscernible, what would usually serve to situate a story, a character in a landscape, for instance, may also be providing a registration of that character’s feelings or moods.

With regard to Ceylan, all of these points are salient. While behaviour still informs us about characters’ problems, when they cease to act, and look out, for instance, across the
rooftops beneath Mahmut’s balcony, we are given access to a layer of their experience that underlies, but is not revealed in, what they do and say. It is not however generally the case—as in the sequence in which Mahmut stops the car—that the value of an image of a landscape can be read simply in terms of its relationship to a character’s mode of existence. Thinking the relationships between such modes of existence, as well as mental states, and the moods or atmospheres of landscape images is a task that is consistently renewed in Ceylan’s films. We can feel that there is a relation, between inner human experience and an image of the exterior world, but it is not simply that they correspond to each other. Furthermore, at times we cannot detect the horizon that separates an image that would give a subjective reading of a character’s state of mind, or even optical perspective, from an objective image that expresses Ceylan’s desire to put the cosmic in touch with the personal.

An instructive example with regard to these points comes toward the end of the film. On the morning when his ex-wife is leaving for Canada, Mahmut wakes up early after a nightmare and drives his car to a parkway along the shore of the Bosporus. We see him walk up to the edge of the concrete embankment and look out across the water. In the following shot, a boat floats on calm waters that reflect the pink shades of a sky coloured by the rising sun. [Figure 2] This image seems to present us with Mahmut’s point of view, and we have no reason to assume that it does not. In the following image, we again see Mahmut, as in the one that preceded that of the ship, in a medium-shot taken from a position to his right. He initially looks out toward where we assume the ship to be, then turns his head to look off away from the camera, and, finally, turns his head again to gaze toward something beyond the left edge of the frame. [Figure 3] The following image initially seems to again align us with his point of view [Figure 4], but the camera slowly pans to the right and eventually, after travelling more than ninety degrees, Mahmut’s car comes into view and he steps into the frame from the right. [Figure 5] Ceylan here plays on the link between Mahmut’s glance and what is then shown, moving in the space of a single image from a perspective that seems to be that of the character, to one in which we see him get into his car and drive away. We may ask at what point the subjective image becomes objective, but there is no clear answer to this problem.

There is another point worth making in reference to this brief sequence. The slow pan to the right constitutes a movement that certainly seems more like that of a camera than a human perceiver, but this scanning of the surroundings for something seems to accord to
some degree with Mahmut’s state of mind at this moment. Rather than the splendour of the boat on the luminous pink water, we now see traces of a mundane morning: someone walking a dog, a plastic bag blown across the asphalt by the wind, trees (most of them bare), and automobiles commuting. There is something subjective about this image that is not tied to its being linked to Mahmut’s optical point of view. While Mahmut looks the world over for an inspiration that will motivate some form of action, as he does a number of times in the film, Ceylan’s camera traverses a space that takes in what Mahmut sees, an image of the world in which Mahmut is absent, and Mahmut acting in the world, driving off to see his ex-wife leaving the country. The absence of Mahmut, the world without him, links the moment of his vision, that of an outsider looking in on the world, with that of his action, his participation as part of the world. Mahmut fails to speak to his wife once he arrives at the airport, even ducking behind a pillar when she almost spots him just before passing through security. But in this image of a man’s thought passing over into action through the intermediary of the world, Ceylan can be seen to suggest that the potential for change lies in reconceiving one’s relationship to the world. The image is itself thought of a link between
perception, affection, thought, and action. Something from outside the horizon of actions and reactions depicted in the film inspires Mahmut’s action, something that emerges through the link between his gaze toward the Bosporus and the problem that he mulls over as he stands on its shore.

**Distants**

The importance of the relations between the characters and the spaces they inhabit is established in the first two shots of the film. These images gain in meaning as we come to learn more about Yusuf and Mahmut, but they immediately suggest the difficulty of thinking the connections between the men, the camera, and the world. In the first image, we see a man making his way across a field of snow early in the morning. [Figure 6] Behind him, on the slopes of the hills in the background, is a small town. The man comes nearer and nearer to the camera, which does not move except to tilt slightly down as he briefly disappears at the base of a small rise, which he will momentarily ascend to arrive in a position directly before the camera, framed from the middle of the thighs up, a large athletic bag slung over his shoulder. Standing before the camera, he turns 180 degrees to look toward the village, his back to the camera, before again turning, this time to his left and, walking out of the frame. Already we can note that there is an interesting relationship between the man, who we will come to know as Yusuf, and the camera. The slight tilt seems to follow him, as if he is the camera’s concern. Yet, when he exits the frame, it seems indifferent to him, as if its interest lies as much or more in the world in which he walks. He remains absent from the screen for nearly 50 seconds. During this time, slowly panning to the left, the camera leisurely takes in the surroundings, eventually passing over the village in the background altogether, taking in the hills to its left, which we had not seen earlier, and coming to rest in a framing of a road winding up from just below the camera out into the hills. We now realise that it is upon this road that Yusuf had been standing when he stopped before the camera.

When this camera movement has concluded, he is still nowhere to be seen. A few seconds later, a vehicle approaches on the road flashing its lights, and, suddenly, Yusuf then steps forward into the frame and waves his right arm, apparently gesturing for the oncoming vehicle to stop and pick him up. [Figure 7] As it begins to slow and pull to the side of the road, Ceylan cuts to the opening credits. When Yusuf steps into the image it becomes apparent that the framing of the road, in which the camera ends up after the pan, had more
or less aligned us with Yusuf’s point of view. Once again, as in the example of Mahmut on the shores of the Bosporus, Ceylan links an objective view of a character with an image that approximates his subjective perspective in a single shot. This is one of the ways in which Ceylan creates free indirect vision, crossing the lines between objective narration and the depiction of subjective experiences, making their distinction from each other indiscernible.

In the long take that follows the image of Yusuf walking, Ceylan accomplishes this using a different visual tactic.

In this second image, we see a man, Mahmut, in the foreground from the shoulder up, shot from the side, leaning forward into the frame in a plaid shirt. [Figure 8] The image is very dark, dimly but cannily lit, and Mahmut looks in the same direction as the camera, to his left. Beyond his head and shoulders, which are in focus, we see the severely out-of-focus figure of a woman removing first her shoes and socks, and then her red top, which stands out in this dark room in which all other colours feel muted. The image is very shallowly focused, and as the woman finishes pulling the red top from her arm, Mahmut begins to take his shoes off, and she lies back, wiggling a blurred foot at the end of a hazily defined, distorted leg. He gets up, moves to the right of the screen and then crosses the room, quickly reaching the centre of the screen and arriving beside the reclining woman, next to whom he sits down.

Figure 8
Here, as we may reflect retrospectively, once we have come to learn more about him, we are aligned with Mahmut’s experience of himself in the world, despite the fact that he is also in the frame. We see him isolated, relegated to a narrow plane of focus, apart from both the room in which he spends a great deal of his time, and a woman who is his lover. Once again it is appropriate to speak of a form of free indirect vision, since the camera seems to both present us with Mahmut’s subjective experience of his relation to the world and the woman, and provide us with information about the story, however scant, by showing him in the world, responding to the address of this woman as she removes her clothes. Rather than a camera movement that connects us with two positions that we cannot logically occupy within the space of a single shot, here we have an image that does not provide us with a character’s optical point of view, but which nevertheless provides us with a register of that character’s mental state through the use of shallow focus.

These two images both create problems related to our knowledge of what we are seeing, and register the characters’ problematic relation to the world. Obviously these images are designed to do more than simply provide us with story information, but we can no more claim them to be wholly subjective than contend that they are wholly objective. We are shown that Mahmut has a lover, and that she does not seem to fill him with much ardour. But we see as well that he experiences himself as if separated from even those people and places with which he is most proximate. Yusuf leaves behind the village that makes him restless, but only to learn that in growing close to a place that was once at a distance, there is no guarantee that upon arrival – when what was near is far off, what was far off near – proximity will result in knowledge. Nor is at all certain that the distance achieved between what has been left behind will be sufficient to loosen that place’s hold on who one is. Just as we lose sight of him when he nears the camera, becoming aligned with his point of view but unable to learn anything more about him, he will find that once he is inside Istanbul he is unable to establish a distance that will allow him to begin to know it better, or better know how to act in relation to the city’s occupants.

Gönül Dönmez-Colin makes an observation that puts both cousins’ relationships with distance in perspective. She suggests that one of Yusuf’s main problems is that “he does not know how to put distance between himself and other people. He brings the claustrophobic proximity of small-town living with him...to the isolating but at the same time liberating anonymity of urban life that city cousin Mahmut has chosen to live” (197).
Mahmut’s achievement of such a separation from those proximate to him – both those who he is physically near as he navigates the city and those who he is or has been emotionally near, his lover, his wife, his friends – is however an achievement that sets him up for innumerable failures. He has severely isolated himself, and his apartment is the figure of that, something of a tomb in which he acts out a – perhaps temporary – living death, a habitual routine that he cannot escape, no matter how conscious he may be that he has trapped himself in an unpleasant circuit. He is unable to summon up the desire that would actually mobilise him to change. Nevertheless, there is a paradox inherent in shallowly focused images like that in which we first see Mahmut. Whatever appears on the plane that is in focus, in this case Mahmut’s face, is separated from that which is not in focus, but, from another perspective, it is brought in touch with these areas, since it is joined to them on a single depthless surface. Perhaps in this image we can see that there are always new connections for Mahmut to make with his surroundings, even if no such connections appear to him as given.

**The Sounds of a Snowy Afternoon**

Through the use of sound, Ceylan is also able to suggest that there is something in the film’s world that escapes both the vision of the characters and ourselves. As Rosenbaum puts it, the impression is that the world is too complex to be captured in the relationships established in a single narrative. Ceylan’s use of sound can also, like the visual image, break down the boundaries between the experiences of characters and our external views of their behaviour. Sound is not always problematic in this way, but certain sequences in *Distant* make it so by heightening a sense of the distance between the sounds we hear and the image that we see. Sound ceases to be merely “that which is contained or not contained in an image” and the film ceases to be defined as “a place of images, plus sounds” (Chion, *Audio-Vision* 68). Sound does more, that is, than merely add value, to use Chion’s phrase, to the visual image. Both diegetic and non-diegetic sound can be restricted to the function of adding value to what we see. For instance, diegetic ambient sounds often give a sense of extension, contracted or expansive, through the presence of sounds that we can assume belong to areas adjacent to that seen. On the other hand, non-diegetic sound, most commonly music, brings out or gives greater definition to the emotional tenor of what is being seen.
Deleuze claims that sound becomes an image in its own right when it becomes autonomous and its functions cease to be determined by the visual image. “The creation of a sound framing is necessary”, he writes in *The Time-Image*, “so that the cut passes between the two framings, sound and visual...the visual image ceases to extend beyond its own frame, in order to enter into a specific relation with the sound image which is itself framed” (II 267). Such combinations of sound and visual image, according to Deleuze, do not refer to an out-of-field – to spaces contiguous to the world on screen, just beyond the edges of the frame – but instead draw the spectator into the interstice between two autonomous images, the link between which is neither given nor able to be defined with absolute finality. Such sound images may seem to function to convey to us the inner states of characters, but they nevertheless add something to the visual image that is not in it, a force that can never be entirely reduced to the function of directly producing what the character is experiencing at a particular point in a film.

In *Distant*, some of the most problematic sound images occur in connection with visual images that are themselves disorienting. The best example is the use of sound employed during Yusuf’s wander through the city on his first full day in Istanbul. Having set out to find a job on a commercial ship, he eventually makes his way to the shores of the Bosphorus, where he encounters a huge ship lying on its side. The sound image is split off from the visual image subtly in this sequence, rather than through a sharp and obvious break. It is not a matter of sounds that immediately and clearly seem to belong to another time and place, which mark their distance from the image overtly. To the contrary, there is a strong sense that the visual images are deepened and given extension beyond the frame by the use of sound in this sequence, but ultimately sound exceeds this function. Similarly, the strange composition seems to express to some degree Yusuf’s psychological state as he moves through the snowbound city, but it is not reducible to this function.

We have seen Yusuf in a number of locations before he arrives at the ship, among them a small park, a bridge, and an empty lot beside some train tracks. The sound field perceptibly transforms with each shift of locale, not only so that each place is given specificity, but to such a degree as to make each one feel, to varying extent, like a separate world. On the bridge, we hear the blare of a ship’s foghorn as it pulls away from the shore, while the cries of seabirds quickly gives way to the melodies of songbirds. Birdsong is a strange accompaniment to heavy snowfall, and this dissonance is more clearly perceptible in
the shots in the park. These images are accompanied as well by the flowing sound of falling snowflakes, a constant and conspicuous “whooshing” that dominates the soundtrack. While we also hear birdsong when Yusuf is in this park, we see bare, empty trees, and snowy piling up on the ground. To be sure, the incongruity of the audible and the visible goes toward expressing the disorientation of Yusuf, whose attempt to find work in an unfamiliar city is complicated and hampered by the cold and snow. But the wind, even if it changes in volume, seems to add value to the image, to further define the space in which Yusuf moves. The sound framings here are then reducible to neither the function of adding value or directly expressing Yusuf’s state of mind.

This effect of indiscernibility is amplified by a visual image that once again seems to swing between views of Yusuf in or absent from the world, and images that seem to register his optical perspective or mental state. He constantly moves toward and away from the camera, into and out of the frame, giving us the sense that despite all his movement he never arrives anywhere. This tactic passes along to us visually a feeling of spatial confusion that likely corresponds to his own at that moment. In addition, we are again made to move between his optical point of view and an perspective of him within the space of a single image. This occurs when a woman walks toward him in the park; we see him watching her as she nears him from his and our right, but when the camera pans left to follow her as she walks away we assume a perspective very close to his own. [Figures 9 and 10] We then return to a more objective position in the following shot, a close-up of Yusuf looking to his left, apparently continuing to watch the woman move further from him. The camera once more takes on a consciousness that moves fluidly between the subjectivity of Yusuf and a more objective position outside of him. Furthermore, the empty frame before he enters it, or after he exits it, exhibits Ceylan’s interest in capturing urban spaces outside of their function as milieus for human movement and activity. The horizon composed around the causal linking of characters’ perceptions and actions is transgressed, as these empty or emptied spaces posit a more absolute horizon beyond it, while still functioning to some degree to make Yusuf’s experience of Istanbul visible.

The use of sound to disturb the relationship between subjective and objective perspectives crystallises with the image of the ship. It lasts just over a minute, and the transformations of the soundtrack within that minute make for a sound composition as surreal as, if not more so, than the visual image. When the shot begins, something metal is
Figure 9

Figure 10
suspended just before the camera from a thick length of chain. [Figure 11] From behind this, far in the background, Yusuf scurries out into a field of snow, angling to the left of the camera and eventually beyond the edge of the frame. The camera, which had been making small movements to the left already, begins a slow but steady pan in that direction, coming first upon the foredeck of the ship, which faces it, and then upon Yusuf, who has halted to look up at the strange sight. When the camera has panned enough so that he is almost in the centre of the frame, he begins to walk toward the left edge of the frame again, and the camera stays with him, taking in as it does so the wreck of the ship rising up behind him. He passes large metal masts that extend diagonally up beyond the frame, and thick ropes that hang loosely down into the snow, then walks out of the frame to the left as the panning of the camera slows, and then stops, having just about reached the point at which is has turned 180 degrees from its initial position. A moment later, Yusuf re-emerges into the shot, in the distance, running along the stone wall that juts out of the water and cuts in from the left side of the image. [Figure 12] Even without sound, the image is disconcerting, combining the oddity of the derelict ship upon its side with the sullen atmosphere of a glowering afternoon through which the snow continues incessantly to fall. We watch as Yusuf’s initial interest quickly turns to an instinct for flight, as if something in this space has begun to frighten or afflict him.

The soundtrack during this sequence is overloaded: music and ambient noises are fused into a soundscape that is both estranging and engaging. When the shot begins, the birdsong is again conspicuously present and the sound of the snow blowing about in the wind is intense. This intensity is dampened as the camera pans and other sounds appear: the gurgle of flowing water, bell tones like those created by the wind chimes on the balcony at Mahmut’s house, washes of astral synthesizer, and, intermittently, heavy metallic moaning noises, which seem to emanate from the ship like death throes, presumably as its parts shift in the inclement conditions. When the camera ceases to move, a moment of calm presides, but only a moment, as the wind sounds again intensify, snow falls loudly from the frame of the ship, foghorns blare in the distance, and the preternatural birdsong returns. Just after Yusuf runs back into the frame, the heavy swell of a string section leavens the sense of disturbance conveyed by the bleak scene and the noises of the wind and snow, but only for a few seconds before disappearing altogether. When a man speaks to Yusuf in the following shot, breaking up his silent wanderings, the birdsong is finally overcome by the calls of
seabirds that seem to rightly belong to this milieu, and we are thrust firmly back into a scene that develops the story without also seeming to provide direct access to Yusuf’s interiority.

What is most idiosyncratic in this sound design is the odd configuration of music queues, and the way they are cut together with ambient noises that in turn stabilise and disorient the visual image. The chiming would also seem like one of these musical queues if it did not belong to another space in the film: Mahmut’s flat. But the appearance of that sound out of place is less perplexing than the brevity of the musical fragments. Why do the spacey synthesizer tones rise to the fore for just a few seconds? Why do the strings surge for an even briefer amount of time just after? Ceylan’s use of music here accords with Antonioni’s argument that “the only way to accept music in films is for it to disappear as an autonomous expression in order to assume its role as one element in a general sensorial impression” (*Architecture* 146). This is precisely what Ceylan does here. Fragments of music are employed as elements in a collage of ambient noises that is combined with atmospheric images to which it stands in ambiguous relation. The entire sound composition comes to feel like the imposition of another world rather than an audible field that corresponds to the image. It breaks apart what we see and hear, but nevertheless establishes a (non)-relation between them. In this particular case, the combination of the two worlds provides a hallucinatory experience related to, but not reducible to, Yusuf’s experience.

**Dreams Are of This World**

We can certainly speak of the film’s reality being rendered in a dreamlike manner in certain scenes, especially that of the ship, but ultimately it is a consistency between dream and reality that allows such scenes to produce unnerving effects that are difficult to classify. The interpenetration of dream and reality reaches its apex toward the end of the film. On the last night that Yusuf spends in Mahmut’s flat, he has a sort of hypnagogic vision. Voices appear on the soundtrack, a man and a woman whispering conspiratorially, maliciously, during a shot of the dark corner of the room in which Yusuf sleeps. We then see a close up of him lying down, apparently asleep, and a light shines on his face, the source of which lies beyond the frame. His eyes open and the voices continue for a few seconds before disappearing, as a piercing drone increases in volume and intensity. Ceylan cuts back to the angle and camera position of the earlier image of the corner of the room. The position of the camera now seems to approximate Yusuf’s point of view, and we see a circle of light from
which four beams extend outward at right angles to one another. [Figure 13] The metallic drone and the light seem connected, as they increase and decrease in intensity in synch. As both die down we hear sounds that seem to belong to the neighbourhood where the flat is: the barking of dogs, the wind chimes, and the foghorns of ships. The problem with this sequence is that it is not clear what precisely we are seeing. Yusuf appears with his eyes open in the same position during the vision of the light and the appearance of the “real” sounds afterward. Is it the case that we are privy to a dream in which he sees himself seeing and hearing the light? It is impossible to say exactly, and we must simply assert that Ceylan has extended the instability of the boundary between subjective and objective images to that separating images of dreams and those of the film’s waking reality.

We should assume that it is significant that Ceylan stitches together dream, reality, and the borderlands between during this sequence, which is the film’s low-key culmination. When we return to a close-up of Yusuf – from the same position and in the same framing as when he was looking at the light – his eyes are still open, and another piercing sound makes its entrance, the cry of a mouse that has been caught in a trap. Mahmut has been trying to capture this particular mouse since before Yusuf’s arrival. It wakes both men up, and Mahmut orders Yusuf to take the mouse down to the rubbish bins in a plastic bag. Yusuf leaves it there, but noticing a crowd of cats drawn to the bag, in which the mouse continues to cry, he returns and smashes the bag against the wall, mercifully killing it as Mahmut watches through a window of the flat. This is the final straw for Yusuf, who earlier in the same evening had been accused of stealing a watch that Mahmut uses as a prop for his photography work. Though Mahmut eventually finds the watch, quite cruelly he does not say anything to Yusuf. After he has killed the mouse, Yusuf returns to his bed, where he lies with eyes opened, in all likelihood contemplating a return home the following day. We then enter Mahmut’s dream.

Ceylan again makes use of an extremely shallow focus as the dream begins. Only the top of Mahmut’s head is sharply captured as he sits in his chair before a television. The camera slowly changes focus and gradually tilts up, and we see that there is nothing on the television but static. We see as well that a glass in Mahmut’s hand is tilting precariously. Before any liquid spills out, Ceylan cuts to a close-up of Mahmut as he stares ahead with heavy-lidded eyes, in a sort of liminal state as the chimes ring out ominously. In the
following shot, which seems to be from Mahmut’s point of view, we see the static-filled television near the centre of the frame, and very slowly the lamp beside it falls down toward the floor, the camera panning downward with it as it does so. During this image, the sound of Mahmut’s heavy breathing grows louder as the lamp comes closer and closer to crashing down at his feet. [Figure 14] Just before it strikes the ground, there is a cut to Mahmut waking up in the chair, horrified, from a nightmare.

While it is clear at which point Mahmut wakes up, as was not the case with Yusuf, this dream nevertheless seems to carry over into the real world. This is not only because when it begins, there is nothing to alert us to the fact that it is a dream, but also because it is easily readable and Mahmut acts upon it. It seems to tell Mahmut and us the following: something is about to happen, and if nothing is done now, nothing will ever be done. In any case, this seems to be the message Mahmut takes from it, heading out to smoke beside the Bosporus, in the scene described earlier, before hurrying off to the airport where his ex-wife is leaving for Canada with her new husband. A dream of objects, like the world scanned by an eye detuned from particular interests, seem here to restore Mahmut’s ability to link his concerns to his action. In their capacity to serve as causes, then, dreams, like the inaction of staring at a landscape, take on a certain reality as events. This is emphasised as well by Ceylan’s rendering of the nearness between dream and reality.

**Down By the River**

I will bring the arguments of this chapter to a conclusion with a brief reflection on the final sequence of *Distant*. It begins just after Mahmut discovers Yusuf gone after returning home from the airport, at which he has just witnessed the departure of his ex-wife. In the first image, Mahmut sits on a bench looking out across the grey Bosporus, the bright shape of the sun just piercing thick banks of cloud that hang over the strait. [Figure 15] During the 35 seconds the image is on screen, ships and boats of all sizes pass before him, water crashes against the shore, and plastic bags and other rubbish blow across the screen. There are then a few images that match Mahmut’s glances to what he sees as he looks along the walkway beside the shore and out across the water. The last image of the film shows us Mahmut’s face as he looks outward. Eventually, he takes Yusuf’s “sailor” cigarettes out of his pocket and lights one. The film concludes with the camera slowly zooming in on him, the background growing more out-of-focus the closer the zoom brings us to his face.
When offered one of the cheap “sailor” cigarettes earlier in the film, Mahmut had used the occasion to insult his cousin for his lack of discernment in his smoking habits – “How can you smoke that shit?” Ceylan has suggested that the character's smoking of his cousin’s cigarette ends the film on an optimistic note by showing that he can perhaps change (Andrew). But then how are we to understand the spatial transformation carried out by this shot, which seems to once again isolate Mahmut as it bears down upon him? Is the camera insisting that the onus for change is on Mahmut, that only an internal transformation can bring about a new, better situation for him?

It seems to me that we should think the conclusion of Distant by holding both of the images that bookend this sequence in mind. In The Time-Image, Deleuze claims that the truthfulness of a fiction film, a truthfulness indicative with the regime of the movement-image, is dependent on the “story as development of two kinds of images, objective and subjective, their complex relation which can go as far as antagonism, but which ought to find resolution in an identity of the type Ego=Ego” (143). One important aspect of this is that an identity between the character who is seen and who sees is established, but it is just such a simplistic notion of identity that the conclusion of Distant denies. We finish with two
opposed images of Mahmut – in the world and isolated from it – that are not reconciled.
The shot of Mahmut from behind captures him in a composition that also seems to reflect
his inner turmoil, to establish a connection between the state of this man – whose wife is on
her way to begin a life on another continent, and whose cousin has departed due to
Mahmut’s cruelty – and the world that he contemplatively looks out at. Yet Mahmut is part
of the composition of the world in this image, whether he understands his relation to it or
not. The image emphasises Mahmut as an ego, in time, constantly changing along with the
world of which he is part.

The final shot, on the other hand, isolates him from the world, picturing him as a
transcendental I that stands at a remove from the ego, gaining understanding of himself
through constantly relating the past, present, and future to one another. “The I and the Ego
are thus separated by the line of time which relates them to each other, but under the
condition of a fundamental difference” (Deleuze, Kant’s viii). One is in time, while the other
seems to be outside it, processing the images of the world and relating them to memories,
fantasies, and hypothetical futures. This fundamental difference between these two parts of
the self is what Distant leaves us with, a difference that is always problematic, but which
nevertheless opens up a world of possible links with the world, oneself, and others, to be
realised in coming encounters. While Mahmut fails in living out the possibilities offered by
his encounters with others in the film, we are left with the thought that there is still plenty of
room for him to fail better in whatever is to come.
5. The Nothing That Is:

*Climates*

Like *Distant, Climates* (2006) negotiates the relationship between humans and the world, but more overtly, since different climates and types of weather are also the main structural feature of the film. The film begins with the break-up of Isa (played by Ceylan himself) and Bahar (Ebru Ceylan, the director’s wife) on a summer holiday in Kaş, a city on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. We then follow Isa to Istanbul, where he spends a rainy autumn as a bachelor, before journeying into the snowy mountains of the province of Ağrı, not far from the Turkish border with Iran, in pursuit of reconciliation with Bahar. In structuring the film with changes of season, Ceylan runs a risk of descending into clichés and platitudes about the mirroring of the seasons of the earth and soul. However, nature, like other people, appears as a source of both alienation and consolation in the film. Humans and the world may very well be linked in ways both complex and simple, clandestine and obvious, yet neither can be made use of to fully illuminate the other, in cinema as elsewhere. Isa is faced with the task of constantly (re)-making a link with the world and the woman he claims to love, of establishing a connection to that which eludes his ability to think it clearly. While he fails in this task, Ceylan’s film nevertheless suggests the possibility, always renewed, of overcoming the divide that may seem to separate us from both the world in which we live, and the people with whom we share it.

This chapter is not organised around the three locations in which *Climates* takes place, but rather around problems related to the human and the nonhuman, and the true and the false, which the film makes operative. The first section will take up the question of the face and the close-up through an analysis of a lengthy image of Bahar. This meditation on the face as expression draws from both Deleuze’s discussion of the affection-image in *The Movement-Image*, and Béla Balázs’s claims for the transcendence of the close-up, from which Deleuze took inspiration for his own analysis in this vein. In arguing for the importance of the close-ups of Bahar’s face in the early part of the film, I will also turn to Emmanuel Levinas’s concept of the face, or *visage*, in order to tease out the ethical dimension at work when a face is made less human through being stripped of communicative and social functions, while at the same time being endowed with an absolute humanity as that which
expresses a difference that resists apprehension in knowledge. I will then turn to the problem of the true and false as it appears in the break-up scene between Isa and Bahar on the beach. In making the true indiscernible from the false in this sequence, Ceylan destabilises the relationships between space, time, and human activity, leaving us with the sense that the film’s world does not correspond to our own. Finally, in the last section, the question of the conditions under which an image can constitute a “faceification” of the world will be taken up, and the chapter will conclude with an assessment of the end of the film in relation to problems of emptiness and fullness.

**Bahar’s Face**

When *Climates* begins, Isa and Bahar are visiting ruins that he is photographing for his PhD thesis. Before we see anything we hear the sounds of the place, birdsong, insects, and wind. After a few moments, the first visual image appears, a close-up of Bahar, her head leaned against a wall of whitish stone, her face shone upon by the sun as she watches Isa. Ceylan juxtaposes images of her face with what appear to be shots giving us her point of view, but then, as in *Distant*, he complicates things by having her step into what at first seems to be a point-of-view shot. Initially, having entered the frame, she looks away from the

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 1*
camera, but at the sound of a bird taking flight she turns, and we are returned to her face [Figure 1]. Quickly, our position as spectators becomes problematic. We are made to feel that we can inhabit her perspective, and then are shown that we cannot. Assuming a shared point of view, we are confronted instead with a face that seems occupied by weighty thoughts to which we are not given access.

It is also true, however, that through Bahar’s expressions and body language, as well as through Ceylan’s use of shallow focus, we are given the sense that something is not right between Isa and her. When she eventually walks over to him, for instance, they exchange a few inconsequential words, with him obviously more interested in continuing to take pictures than attending to her. Bahar walks off, becoming more blurred and indistinct the further she gets from him. She then ascends a hillside, and, eventually, sits down. While she is seated there, we are confronted by a medium close-up of her that lasts over two minutes. This shot severs her from the world around her, and forces us to face a face that seems to harbour secrets, which reveals a woman thinking, but blocks our access to that which she thinks.

Sitting on the hillside, Bahar watches Isa moving among the colonnades below her. In another point-of-view shot we see him fall down, hastily stand again and dust himself off. He then looks up toward Bahar and gestures with both hands extended outward at waste level, as if to say, “What can you do?” There is a cut back to Bahar in close-up, who smiles without malice at his misstep. However, this smile quickly tightens, and a worried look returns to her eyes. She glances up, off into the distance, and then casts her eyes downward, before finally returning her gaze to where Isa roams below. Her eyes almost appear to be looking out through the screen toward us as she does so, and eventually she begins to cry. [Figure 2] Though her eyes are turned in Isa’s direction, she then seems to retreat deep within herself, to a place from which the wind that blows about her is barred. From the moment her face tightens, after Isa has fallen, she seems to be haunted by a thought that she cannot escape. But at a certain point, this first thought is interrupted or intensified by another thought that intrudes upon it, the arrival of which is registered by another tightening of her features. The face gives us traces of story information, suggesting that Bahar and Isa’s relationship is troubled, but it is also perplexing, shifting as it does between singular states brought on by a thought that possesses her attention, drawing her inward, toward it with more and more intensity until she has ceased to pay any mind to the world surrounding her.
This lengthy close-up of Bahar’s face closes the opening sequence and emphasises her domination of the film’s early moments. The remainder of the film unreels under her gaze, and in the shadow of the intractable problem that draws her within herself on the hillside. That we begin by partially identifying with Bahar and searching her face for answers is important, since for a large section of the film she will be absent, while we follow the activities of Isa. Here, as Bahar’s face moves from consideration of her boyfriend, the landscape, the sun and the ruins, to an apparent immersion in her own interior world, we become well acquainted with her gaze and facial expressions. In the middle of the film, when Isa is in Istanbul and Bahar is nowhere to be seen, it becomes clearer and clearer that he is at a loose end, that he has no particular idea of what he wants from others or himself. It is to her face that we should return, this face that makes nothing transparent aside from its ability to be affected, the presence of a human being, feeling and thinking. Bahar’s face asks us to commune with one who cannot be fully apprehended by vision and knowledge, whose singularity imposes an ethical demand: that we recognise difference and seek to come into relation with it without disfiguring it in order to conceive its identity in relation to preexistent categories. That Isa seems not to recognise this problem, rather than refuse it, hardly mitigates the effects of his failure to attend to the address of Bahar’s face.
The Expressive Silence of the Face

According to Deleuze, there are two sorts of questions we can put to faces. The first pertains to what is being thought about, the second to what is being felt, or what one is being bothered by (MI 91). The first type of question is posed to faces that seem to be fixed on something in particular, that appear to wonder about something, while the second is asked of faces being affected by something. The first face is reflective and expresses a quality, the second intensive, presenting a power of becoming, the transformation from one quality to another. Bahar’s face is at points reflective, and we seem to witness her being overcome by a thought that she seems unable to get her head around. “We are before a reflexive or reflecting face”, Deleuze writes, “as long as the features remain grouped under the domination of a thought which is fixed or terrible, but immutable and without becoming, in a way eternal” (92). Bahar appears to be dominated by such a thought, blocked by a notion that attracts her thought, but resists its advances at a point. The thought – of her and Isa’s troubles, we may assume – is a problem that draws her attention and turns it inward. Yet this thought affects her as well, brings her to tears, and causes modulations between reflection and intensive transformation. Bahar wonders about something, is carried near to it, toward an immobility caused by fixation, but is then moved by this thought, the object of her wondering, from one state to another, from thought of the problem to an affection delivered by it, and then back to the thought itself as a blockage, a problem.

The duration of this image is vital to its effect, to its incitement of our interrogation of it, and perhaps as well our interrogation of our responses to it. The images that come before it enable us to link her reflection and her tears to a problem that exists in her relationship with Isa, but making that connection does little to explain this image’s length by way of either its meaning or its effects. As far as its meaning goes, we are not really in a good position to consider it until after Climates has ended, since the image is echoed in the final image of the film. However, upon its appearance, we may well reflect on the amount of time we are being asked to consider it. Its duration endows it with a value the nature of which is not initially apparent. This face seems to ask us to recognise that we stand in an ethical relation to it, without it having been situated in a context, or state of things, that would allow us to know what exactly is troubling Bahar, and to thereby measure out the appropriate emotional response.
Some further theoretical groundwork is necessary before making further claims with regard to this image of Bahar. We can begin with reference to Balázs, whose influence is clear in Deleuze’s commentary on the face. In *Theory of the Film*, Balázs remarks on the essential openness of the face and the transformation occasioned by the cinematic close-up. “Facial expression”, he writes, “is the most subjective manifestation of man…the play of features...is a manifestation not governed by objective canons, even though it is largely a matter of imitation” (60). This indeterminacy of faces is magnified by the work of the close-up: enlargement and isolation. Balázs acknowledges that the spectator confronted by a close-up – which removes some object or portion of an object from its surroundings – continues to perceive that object as existing in space. He argues, however, that the close-up nevertheless removes the human face to a dimension beyond space. “Facing an isolated face takes us out of space, our consciousness of space is cut out and we find ourselves in another dimension: that of physiognomy” (61). Unlike the hand, which Balázs argues needs to be given some connection to a human being to become meaningful, the face alone is already complete, which leads him to assert that we do not need to conceive of it as existing in space and time. What physiognomy gives us – feelings, emotions, moods, intentions, and thoughts – are things that do not necessarily pertain to space, even if they are made visible by faces that do. Unlike Balázs, Deleuze believes that the hand, and almost anything else, can be faceified by a cinematic image. Here though, what is important is their agreement on the change of dimension affected by close-ups.

Deleuze also argues that the primary function of the close-up is to remove what it captures from its surroundings and its spatio-temporal context. He goes further by claiming that a face rendered in close-up is also severed from its everyday roles: the individuation of a person, the manifestation of that person’s social role, and the ensuring of communication between two people, as well as the internal agreement between a person’s character and his role. While generally these aspects are presented by the face in cinema as elsewhere, in the case of the close-up, Deleuze argues, all three functions are interrupted (*MI* 101). This claim initially seems to go against our common sense. Surely, the face is what endears us to characters and individualises them. To understand what Deleuze means, we should think of the Kuleshov effect, of the fact that the same close-up can be given a completely different content by the images that precede and follow it. Hitchcock gives a good example of this when he shows how in one sequence, in which a women is observed playing with her baby,
the face of the man who watches and then smiles reveals that he is a kindly, sympathetic man. On the other hand, if the shot of the mother and child is replaced by one of a young girl in a bikini, he seems to be a dirty old man (Pure).\textsuperscript{2} This points to the fragility of the face captured in close-up, the way it is open to a chaos of identities that can only be foreclosed by other images that situate it in a state of things, which socialise and individuate it while ensuring that it is communicative.

Thus, the close-up of the face, in all its diversity, is the prototypical affection-image. It “retains the power to tear the image away from spatio-temporal co-ordinates in order to call forth the pure affect as the expressed” (MI 99). Such an affect is virtual, since its numerous potential becomings will remain unactualised so long as it is not cut into a sequence that purges the majority of them. In an important passage, Deleuze explains the relationship between the state of things and the affection-image: “A state of things includes a determinate space-time, spatio-temporal co-ordinates, objects and people, real connections between all these givens...The face becomes the character or mask of the person” (100). The close-up of the face, unactualised, may be seen to approach the nonhuman, since the face thus serves none of its usual, humanising functions. Inversely, the nonhuman moves toward the human the less it functions as part of a state of things, an arena of human action, in order to take on the capacity for expression. With this nexus of the human and nonhuman in mind, we can now return to the shot of Bahar.

The affects expressed by Bahar’s face, the qualities it displays, as well as the powers presented in the movement from one quality to another, are never translated in a state of things. It is for this reason we can speak of the face’s being stripped of its functions, or at least the intense slackening of the threads that bind it to the state of things that the film establishes. The longer the image lasts, the further it takes us from the ill-defined situation that preceded it, the further it carries us toward an encounter with an other that we are unable to fully know. In his review of Climates, Peter Bradshaw claims that because Bahar’s “face is closed and difficult to read” she is hardly more sympathetic than Isa, who he considers a “nasty piece of work”. This judgment rests on the conviction that the face that does not communicate the emotions and nature of the person to whom it belongs becomes somehow inhuman. Yet it is perhaps the face stripped of these functions that confronts us most forcefully with the essential difference of each human, the resistance of each individual to being reduced to a uniform human nature. Bahar’s face is certainly not effaced here, but
the longer the close-up lasts, the less likely it becomes that what it expresses will be actualised in a state of things. The longer this face remains on screen, the greater the sense of its resistance to our impulse to abstract, simplify, and take possession of it, the aims toward which, as Nietzsche tells us, the apparatus of knowledge always functions (Will 274).

The Transcendence of the Face

The encounter with a face that resists the processes of knowledge while issuing an ethical edict is central to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. While care should be taken in making use of his concept of the face [visage] in relation to cinema, its formulation resonates strongly with Balázs and Deleuze’s assertions about the close-up’s capacity for transcendence. Caution is necessary because for Levinas alterity is reduced and controlled by visual apprehension. “Inasmuch as the access to beings concerns vision”, he writes, “it dominates those beings, exercises a power over them. A thing is given, offers itself to me. In gaining access to it I maintain myself within the same” (Totality 194). Through vision the other is dominated, taken possession of in its reduction to my perception of it. It is assimilated into knowledge, and whatever exceeds capture in the processes of knowledge is implicitly judged as without value. But the face, for Levinas, becomes present through its refusal to be contained; although it is expressed within the sensible, it rends the sensible. It opens onto another dimension, and therein lies its transcendence. It is that which cannot be thought in relation to what is already known upon encountering it.

For Levinas, the ethical injunction expressed by the face precedes essence, which is to say, translated into Deleuze’s terms, its presence as an affection-image comes before it is given an identity by being plotted within a state of things. Everything begins with an encounter that dislocates, not a form that is subsequently corrupted, or a unity that will be lost and longed for. For Levinas, the face both incites us to murder, and issues the edict that one must not kill. “To kill is not to dominate”, he writes, “but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely. Murder exercises a power over what escapes power” (198). Bradshaw undertakes such a symbolic annihilation when he renounces comprehension of Bahar because her face escapes his power of knowing. Her face cannot be reduced to what it expresses (read in relation to the film’s other images), but in its very power of expression posits the otherness of a particular human being, and the otherness of each human being. Such an Other, according to Levinas, “opposes to me not a greater force, an energy
assessable and consequently presenting itself as though it were part of a whole, but the very
transcendence of his being by relation to that whole; not some superlative of power, but
precisely the infinity of his transcendence” (199). There is something in each human being
that transcends the spatio-temporal framework in which we confer identity upon people and
things, something that we cannot know, assess, and judge. For Levinas the encounter with
this transcendence is the essential ethical human experience.

Levinas only writes with regard to cinema on one occasion, and importantly in that
brief paragraph it is the close-up to which he directs his attention. Close-ups are not only
interesting because they focus on details, he argues, but because “they stop the action in
which a particular is bound up with a whole, and let it exist apart. They let it manifest its
particular and absurd nature…laying bare what the visible universe and the play of its normal
proportions tone down and conceal (Existence 55). Levinas recognises, like Balázs and
Deleuze, a transcendence of the close-up, a change of dimension that it occasions, a rupture
of the spatial and temporal order of a state of things. Therefore, the close-up of the face
gives us, potentially, a face that resists being apprehended by those who look upon it.
Bahar’s face, for instance, possesses the kind of transcendence that Levinas describes. It is a
face that cannot be understood, but which is also wholly bared. It becomes vulnerable to
annihilation at the same time that it imposes an otherness that opens the film onto an ethical
dimension, onto a direct encounter with alterity. This encounter is related to the relations
between Isa and Bahar presented through the development of the film’s story, but it is not
given through them.

Following Levinas, perhaps it can be said that such a face demands that we somehow
see it without trying to possess it, without trying to exert power over it by reducing it to our
apprehension of what it does or does not communicate. We must somehow enter into
discourse with it. The face introduces infinity through an encounter in the finite world, the
infinity of an endless negotiation. “The epiphany of infinity,” he writes,

is expression and discourse. The primordial essence of expression and discourse does
not reside in the information they would supply concerning an interior and hidden
world. In expression a being presents itself; the being that manifests itself attends its
manifestation and consequently appeals to me. This attendance is not the neutrality [le
neutre] of an image, but a solicitation that concerns me by its destitution and its
Height. (Totality 200)
It is Bahar’s face that presides above the remainder of *Climates*, at a height, as the close-up: that image that presents a singularity that can only become actualised in a state of things by being disfigured. This reading runs counter to Dönmez-Colin’s interpretation of the sexual politics at work in the film. She argues, “Although the thrust of the film is the disintegration of a relationship, the structure of the narrative sides with the male character. The point of view of the female partner, her feelings and her dilemmas, are felt through her silences (the traditional attribute of women in society and in cinema)” (166-7). In contrast to Dönmez-Colin, I see Ceylan’s failure to subject Bahar to further character development as an admission of the difficulty of relating to an Other, rather than the reproduction of a misogynistic perspective. The silence of Bahar is not equivalent to that passive silence of women invoked by Dönmez-Colin, which is merely the negative of the active/verbal powers exercised by men. Her silence, the silence especially of her face, does not give us her feelings and dilemmas, but her feeling and her being in a dilemma, her fixation on a thought that unfixes her in the world.

*Climates* presents a woman as Other, but this is not through her objectification, through her being reduced to a to-be-looked-at-ness, her being made into a spectacle. Her otherness is the radical silence of the human when the face grows proximate to the nonhuman. Paradoxically, one is most forcefully individuated in when the face’s function of identification is restricted. Bahar’s silence demands something rather than being representative of her submission to Isa. For the remainder of the film, Isa’s actions – and our spectatorial responses to them, and the world of the film as a whole – are to be read in the shadow of Bahar’s gaze. The film is, from this perspective, an admission of an incapacity faced in the presence of the insurmountable difference of another human being, whether that is what Ceylan means for it to be or not. The film acknowledges a man’s failure to establish a relationship predicated on difference, and, while the film follows Isa in between his break-up and renewed pursuit of Bahar, it begins and ends with the force of her silence. It is from her face that we depart, and to it that we return, and nearly everything that Isa does in between marks his failure to attend to the ethical dimension opened up by it.

**On the Beach**

If the human is most radically other to the nonhuman at the point at which it grows nearest to it, the divide at this point nevertheless seems most absolute. The incitement to
both annihilation and the invention of a relation with the other, which are issued through the naked face, are very different than the incitements of the world that has become a face, of the natural world made to express for itself, rather than to act as part of a state of things in which human actions and emotions are actualised. These faces of nature are the subject of the final section of this chapter, but here a different concern, which is something of an intermediary problem between the face of the human and the nonhuman as face, presents itself with regard to *Climates*. It has to do with the derealisation of the state of things, both through spatial and temporal transgressions, and establishing a permeability between dream and reality. This derealisation plays out with most intensity during the long sequence on the beach in Kas, which culminates with the break-up of Isa and Bahar.

In this beach sequence, we first encounter problems pertaining to the border between dream and reality. This sequence begins with a shot of the sun shining palely at the centre of a greyish-blue sky. A fly enters the frame and crosses the screen. We hear it buzzing, and hear as well the gentle sound of the waves, and a faint, high-pitched metallic droning that appears intermittently. In the following shot, Bahar is lying on the beach with her eyes shut, apparently asleep, framed from the top of her chest upward with her head quite close to the camera. Her forehead and chest are beaded with sweat and her face is in sharp focus while everything beyond it gets progressively more and more out-of-focus.

*Climates* was shot in HD, and this sequence makes by far the most striking use of the medium in the film, creating an extremely shallow, but very sharp, plane of focus, and rendering the background as abstract sheets of colour. Most strikingly, Isa is made to appear as a distorted shadow figure, looming in the background, deformed and dehumanised, throughout the sequence.

As the shot of Bahar begins, the screen is broken up into blurry bands of colour above her body, which connect along smudged boundary lines: the beige sand of the beach, a thin greenish blue line of sea, the pale grey sky. Her breathing is audible. Slowly, a figure approaches from the distant reaches of the right side of the frame, his hands on his hips, which appear improbably narrow. The body projects a larger, shadow body, which clings to it, as if radiating out from the skin. [Figure 3] While me may rightly assume that this figure nearing her is Isa, this recognition hardly diminishes the startling nature of the impressionistic effects generated by the image. These effects establish a mood that the following shots will build off, doubling a disorienting perspective with the depiction of a
startling event, the violence of which is only slightly mitigated by the subsequent revelation that it has taken place in a dream.

Bahar, sleeping on the beach, dreams that she is sleeping on the beach. Isa walks up to her from out of the background, and when he stops beside her he bends down to pick up a towel, which he dries himself with. He walks out of frame to the left, above Bahar’s head, then steps back into the frame, at which point Bahar’s eyes open. Isa then walks out of the frame in the other direction, passing below her feet, and coming all the way around her body to re-enter the frame, with just his head, on the same plane as Bahar. He bends down to kiss her, sea water dripping from his head onto her face and chest as he does so. [Figure 4] “I love you,” says Isa, his voice giving way to the steady hum of the sea, and the sound of water drops landing on Bahar’s skin. In the next image, we see Bahar’s lower half buried beneath a pile of sand, and Isa, on the other side of her legs, is shoving sand over her feet. Bahar can be heard laughing, obviously enjoying this little game, and then there is a cut to the same framing as in the lengthy image from earlier: her head is again near the camera and her chest is now covered in sand. She is laughing, smiling broadly, as Isa shovels sand up onto the mound already gathered on her chest and neck. Thus far, the sequence has been dominated by a sense of tranquillity and pleasure, the sun, sand, and sea, Bahar’s smile and laughter, a shared affection between her and Isa. Yet, a darkness has hovered on the horizon in the shadowy rendering of Isa, and this slight malice is amplified, suddenly, in an act that shatters the sense of peace established by the dream.

Isa is again captured as a shadow figure in the image following that in which he pushes sand onto Bahar’s chest. He backs away from the camera, balancing himself briefly on all fours, before rising up, framed in a medium shot from the waste upward, a featureless body hovering against a grey sky. [Figure 5] Now we hear his laughter, playful and amused, in the same key as Bahar’s. He sits down toward the right of the frame and turns his head away from the camera at the sound of a bird in the distance. There is then a moment of stasis: the warm hazy light on the beach, the sound of the sea and the birdcall trailing off merge in one final instant of tranquillity. Isa then starts to crouch down, at which point there is a cut back to the framing in which Bahar’s head is in close-up in the foreground. Her eyes are shut and an expression of calm is visible in her features as Isa, in the background, shovels sand over her face. [Figure 6] She cries out and desperately brings her face up out of the sand. In the next image, there is a match on the movement of her upper body away from the
ground, but her face is no longer caked in sand, and Isa lies on his stomach just beyond her, reading. It is evident that she has woken from a dream.

Obviously, this dream is related to the state of Isa and Bahar’s relationship, and there is nothing particularly profound about the idea – she is in some sense being suffocated by Isa – that it presents. It is the violence of its presentation, rather than of the nature of the act itself, that strikes the spectator, who has been lulled by the serenity of the seaside and of Bahar’s face – which has become easily readable in her dream –, as well as by the intimation of love between she and Isa. Spectators, like Bahar, are blindsided by this wave of sand. There is a dreamlike quality to the shadowy presentation of Isa, and retrospectively, with the shovelling of the sand over Bahar’s face, the sequence seems to have been alive with menace from the start. This tactic of presenting Isa does not, however, code the image as dream, even though the use of shallow focus here lacks any immediately identifiable narrative motivation.

We could, in fact, see this shallow focus as a spatial registration of the divide between the two characters, a sign of what Ackbar Abbas calls, with regard to Wong Kar-wai’s work, “proximity without reciprocity” (Culture 43). This shallow depth is, as we have seen, used as well at the beginning of Distant in order to separate Mahmut and his lover onto different planes. It is also used to startling effect later in Climates, during Isa and Bahar’s brief reconciliation in an Ağrı hotel room. In the way Ceylan and Wong make use of shallow focus to this purpose, they both perhaps owe a debt to Antonioni, to Red Desert in particular, in which long lenses are used again and again to isolate the hysterical Giuliana (Monica Vitti), who feels herself estranged from modern life in Ravenna. Shallow focus in Ceylan’s work is used to create visions of both the state of relationships, dividing lovers from one another, and humans separated from the world.

Yet, in this sequence from Climates, what we see is finally revealed as a dream, so it is Bahar herself who sees Isa as someone or something that remains troublingly undefined. We can better understand her feelings and emotions through being made privy to a vision of Isa within her dream, through entering into her subjectivity. This is especially important because there is a heightened dissonance between the idea of being suffocated in a relationship (a cliché) and the actual image of it given by Ceylan. Its violence – the violence of a face being annihilated – is too real, has been experienced too directly by us, for it to be bracketed off tidily within the realm of the unreal. This scene’s effect is created by Ceylan lulling viewers
Figure 5

Figure 6
into believing that they know what they are seeing, only to swiftly and firmly displace them from the spectatorial position that thus far had been established for them. Chris Fujiwara argues that Ceylan’s cutting carries a specific uncertainty because the director moves so freely between the two character’s viewpoints. “[E]ach cut”, he writes, referencing Bahar’s dream explicitly, “might mean merely a continuation from one moment to the next, but it’s at least as likely to mean a disruption” (“Mood”). We are set up to believe that continuity is established rationally between images, only to subsequently learn that a straight cut can just as easily introduce a move from reality to dream. The cut as force of disruption introduces a shock greater than that induced by the image of suffocation itself. The violence arises out of the recasting of the status of the cut and interstice, complementing, but surpassing, that of the represented.⁶

The Rehearsal is the Real Thing

When Bahar’s dream ends, the same logic of fictive reality is not reinstated. Ceylan instead, through another surprising edit, puts the irrational into play in a more problematic way, such that the sense of doubt surrounding the status of what we are seeing (reality or dream) is magnified. The problem now pertains to the impossibility of recognising images as true or false. The “unreal” dream images have already had a real effect on the spectator, an effect that persists even though one knows the sequence to belong to dream at the same moment it delivers its shock of disorientation. The effects of the dream are not distinguishable from those of the film’s reality until Bahar wakes up, and up until that point the sequence draws in our attention more concertedly than the other, real scenes that we have thus far seen. This is a result of the manipulations of space through the use of shallow focus, and, finally, of the violence of Isa’s action, which is linked to the cinematic violence of revealing what was taken as reality to be dream. What is actually revealed with this latter violence, with its shock, is that each film has the capacity to determine what seems realistic along its own designs. In fact, the tactics used in the dream reappear in the rendering of a real scene – Bahar’s visit to Isa’s hotel room – later in the film. A heightened aestheticisation of the image, and the soundtrack, may or may not reveal the image to be a dream, fantasy, or the registration of a mental state.

With these thoughts in mind, I want to turn to the second shock delivered by the beach sequence. After Bahar wakes up, and Isa paternally tells her she shouldn’t fall asleep in
the sun, she gets up and walks toward the sea. In deep focus, we see Isa lying on his towel in the foreground, his head turned toward the sea, and Bahar, who sits down on a small rise of sand just above the shoreline. In the distance, a sailboat crosses the frame, near the horizon. Sunlight glistens upon the surface of the sea, reflecting in pools and patches of shimmering white. Isa goes back to looking at his hands, before bowing his head down to rest upon them. [Figure 7] He then turns over and sits up, facing the sea. Distance, dissatisfaction, the banality and wonder of a beautiful day at the beach: all of these are present here, and the belated appearance of the sea, in focus, stretching as far as the eye can see, finally matches up with the sound of it, which has permeated the entire sequence. The only disturbance in this sedate setting resides within and between Bahar and Isa, and their bodies are so arranged as to communicate their disquiet. After so many close-ups of their faces and bodies, we now see from a distance at which we can appraise the situation. This distance is, however, quickly obliterated, and proves to have been another set-up for a drastic shift in narrative space.

We next see an extreme close-up of Isa’s face, in which he appears to look off toward where we know Bahar to be sitting. And, in the long shot that follows, she can indeed be seen walking out into the water. There is then a close-up of Isa in which he appears to try to work something out in his head; he eventually begins to speak, apparently rehearsing a break-up speech. After a medium-long shot of Bahar walking in the waves,
there is a quick cut back to Isa in close-up. “Maybe we should go our own ways for a bit”, he says. “What do you think?” He then looks down again, as if disgusted by the words as soon as they have left his mouth. It seems clear at this point that he is indeed practicing what he wishes to say to Bahar when she returns. Ceylan then cuts back to an image approximating Isa’s point of view, and we see Bahar swimming in the distance. There is then a close-up of Isa in profile. [Figure 8] He seems to be straining still, looking for the words that will allow him to express himself. “We’d still be good friends”, he finally says, “It wouldn’t change things a lot.” He continues to talk a bit, giving assurance that they will still go to the movies and out to eat together, then turns to the right and leans back. The camera turns slightly to the right as well, and suddenly reveals Bahar, who had been sitting to his right, blocked by his body. [Figure 9]

When this image begins, the spectator in all likelihood feels assured that Isa is continuing to rehearse what he wants to say to Bahar, and that she is still swimming in the sea. The sound of her paddling, which accompanied her movement through the water, even carries over, briefly, from the previous shot, so that as Isa is framed in profile, the audio track lends a temporal continuity that will be contradicted by the revelation that Bahar has been sitting beside him. Though this is merely a small distortion of the spatio-temporal envelope that the film has thus far been establishing, it puts this envelope into question and produces a relationship between time and space that does not accord to any that we can reference upon encountering it. The cut from the image of Bahar in the sea back to Isa, continuing his speech, seems to give us temporal continuity, but if that is the case, then how is it possible that Bahar could suddenly be at Isa’s side? There is something within this shot that evades our understanding, an indiscernible relationship between space and time. We could reason that a period of time passes in the cut between her swimming, and the shot of Isa in profile speaking, yet the soundtrack tells us otherwise, and Isa seems to continue practicing his speech from the point at which he left off. Again, a violence enters into the image, but this time it is the revelation of a relationship within the image that cannot be thought.

In 1961, answering a question after addressing an audience at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, Antonioni made use of a quote from Lucretius: “Nothing appears as it should in a world where nothing is certain. The only thing certain is the existence of a secret violence that makes everything uncertain” (Architecture 39-40). This
Figure 8

Figure 9
image in *Climates* seems to confront us with such a secret violence, which could not have been foreseen, and cannot be explained by way of its causes. We are forced to think the difference of the world offered by this image. Antonioni argued that the violence described by Lucretius was still a disturbing reality in the present in which he spoke, and indeed it remains, and will remain a reality. This violence is the presence of chaos, from which all order arises, and to which all order will at some point return. We can say that Ceylan here creates “a composition of chaos” that yields “a sensation that defies every opinion and cliche” (Deleuze, *What* 204). A gust of chaos is caught in the conflation of the rehearsal and the real thing, a conflation that resonates with the farewell sequence in *In the Mood for Love*. However, whereas there Wong explores the power of the simulacrum to induce real emotional responses, to become the event of expression that has to that point remained repressed, in *Climates* chronological time is transgressed such that the event and its rehearsal become literally indistinguishable, rather than indistinguishable with respect to their effects, their capacity to make a difference.

The conversation must be considered part of the film’s reality – since the two do split up, and information true within the film’s fiction is given in the conversation, notably Bahar’s allusion to Isa’s having slept with someone named Serap – yet it introduces an irrationality into this reality that transgresses both cinematic conventions of realism, which Ceylan had seemed to be adhering to, and spatio-temporal boundaries. More problematically, in ceasing to try to convince us that the world on screen is a reflection of reality, by producing a seemingly impossible time-space, Ceylan’s fiction strays outside a model of truth dependent on time and space as fixed categories, the conditions of which all movements must adhere to. In this sequence of *Climates*, time is rather an aberrant movement that contradicts these conditions. Ceylan “imposes a power of the false as adequate to time, in contrast to any form of the true which would control time” (*TI* 128).

Nietzsche writes that the will to truth is bound always to the will to create, to shape the world, the reason being that we can only comprehend a world that we ourselves have made (*Will* 272). We make the world ourselves, he contends, by making everything equal, such that it can be judged (273-4). Chronological time and Euclidean space are infinitely divisible into equal segments, but the aberrant time produced by Ceylan in the beach sequence is indivisible and without measure – it does not adhere to a prior form of the true, but forces us to encounter an event the conditions of which are unthinkable. It is time that
controls the true by way of its own variation, and the true that is reinvented such that it is subject to the version of time imposed by the image. Time acts on us directly through the secret organisation of the image, as a force or thought of an unthinkable relation, rather than being rendered indirectly through the rationally linked movements of human agents.

**Singularity and Emptiness**

In the previous chapter, the problem that dominated my discussion was the relationship between humans and the world. This problem pertains, among other things, to the presence of landscapes that seem to exceed their function as part of a state of things in which a human story takes place, and to express the mental or emotional states of characters. It is not that we can say with certainty that landscapes do express the subjective moods of Mahmut and Yusuf, but that they seem to. This may be due to manipulations of point-of-view structure that make certain images appear to be both subjective and objective, to the absence of characters from the frame, or to a use of sound that at times also seems to convey the disorientation or unease of characters directly. While the same sorts of strategies can be seen at work in *Climates*, here I want to argue that in this film some images not only register the mental or emotional states of characters, but also can be said to “give a face” to the world. Asuman Suner argues that, “The climates in the film symbolize the different moods in the couple’s relationship” (*New* 81), but there seems to me no such strict correspondence. The landscape at times displays rather the lack of connection between the world and the plight of Isa and Bahar, its indifference. Yet, it is also “faceified” cinematically. In “Is Ontology Fundamental?”, an essay from 1951, Levinas asks rhetorically, “Can things take on a face?”, and answers with another question: “Is not art an activity that lends faces to things?” (10). It is the idea of cinema as an art that makes things without faces take them on that I will here consider in relation to the final section of *Climates*.

The faceification of the world is related to the concept of *haecceity*, as employed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They describe the term – which was coined by the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus, and can be translated as “thisness” – in a manner that resonates with the expressiveness of weather and landscape in *Climates*. For instance, they write:
There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceity* for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. (288)

Haecceities are marked by their singularity, by the specificity of a combination of elements at a particular moment. In cinema, such a singularity is approached through rarefaction or saturation, through the reduction of character movement, or its absence, and the presence of multiple movements the relation of which remains unthought and unthinkable. These are again images in which subjective elements cannot be distinguished from objective ones, but here I am particularly interested in compositions in which the world seems to become expressive outside its relation to the inner states of the characters. In Climates, the images that are of interest as such haecceities are generally those in which a character is present within the frame, but seems to be enfolded into an image of the world, whether because she is motionless, or due to the fact that her movement appears insignificant at the scale in which it is captured.

The world is faceified, according to Deleuze, when it is cinematically rendered as an any-space-whatever. In The Movement-Image, Deleuze famously defines the any-space-whatever as “a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts” (113). The elements in such an image, human and nonhuman, combine to form a singular aesthetic image relatively autonomous from those images with which it is linked. There are, according to Deleuze, two types of any-space-whatever, the disconnected and the empty (123). It is the latter that we are concerned with here, and what is specific to the emptiness of Ceylan’s images is that it is sometimes attained, or at least approached, while the character is present. But as we saw when the question of emptiness arose in relation to In the Mood for Love, in some images we are confronted, as in Ozu’s still lifes, with a paradox of emptiness and fullness. We can think emptiness as the absence of humans from the image, or the absence of a perception, action, or affection that plays a role in the sensory-motor schema developed by a film. Yet these are also the conditions under which the image can take on an autonomy of its own and becomes expressive as an aesthetic singularity, thus attaining a type of fullness.
A good example of the body of a character becoming part of a face of the world is the image of Mahmut sitting contemplatively on a bench looking out at the Bosporus at the end of *Distant*. There is a moment in *Climates* where Ceylan again, as at the end of *Distant*, moves between an image in which a character seems to occupy a place within the world, and a close-up that isolates the character from the world. This comes after Isa, having arrived in Ağri, has spoken to Bahar in a teahouse, and she has hurried off to work, leaving behind pictures from their holiday in Kaş, and a cheap music box that Isa had just given her. Ceylan cuts from Isa in the teahouse, reflecting on what has just taken place, to a shot of him standing at a railing on the pavement of a road. His back is turned to the camera, and he appears as a small figure at the centre of the frame looking out at a barren landscape. [Figure 10] A horse pulling a man on a cart enters and the exits the frame, and then Ceylan cuts to a shallowly focused close-up of Isa’s face as he looks out. [Figure 11]

We can say of both images that they mix up subjectivity and objectivity. The use of bell sounds – some of which seem as if they could belong to a church, while others seem synthetic and warped - induces a discomfiture that may also be seen to reflect Isa’s psychological state. As I argued with regard to the concluding sequence of *Distant*, we could therefore think of these images as reflective of Isa’s two images of himself in relation to the world: he experiences himself as a presence in the world, but also as at a distance from it, unable to think his relation to it with finality. On the other hand, the first image adds another layer: it seems to engulf him as an inert element in a haecceity, a singular moment of the world at which he happens to be a part. This is the world faceified, and Isa is merely one aspect among many. What the image offers, from this perspective, is not sense information that affects how we think of Isa, but an expressive image of the world, an image of the world’s difference from itself: it is made up of elements (and moments in time) that are not homogeneous, but which may stand out as remarkable and irreducible.

Another striking example from this last section of the film appears when Isa takes a trip to the ruined palace Ishak Pasha. We see Isa, framed from behind in medium close-up, as he pauses, and raises his camera to take a photograph. [Figure 12] We have again been set up for a shock, but one very different to those produced during the sequence on the beach. After taking the picture, Isa walks forward, beginning a descent down a ridge, and as he does so the camera zooms out slightly and the palace, which had been entirely hidden behind his body, is suddenly revealed. [Figure 13] Eventually, Isa exits the frame altogether, leaving us
alone, just for a moment, facing a landscape that seems in turn to face us. In a single shot, Ceylan juxtaposes a body that dominates our perception of a landscape, with the same landscape once that body has disappeared. The image of the palace presents a haecceity, despite this human presence. In Ceylan’s work we rarely see a world in which the traces of humanity are absent. There is always a boat upon the Bosporus, some houses scattered upon the landscape, or a ruined palace upon a mountain. The faceified world in his work is not the illusion of the world as it would be outside of human perception, but a perception that has left behind the consistent forms of space and time of a state of things in which a human story unfolds. If images of the world are to become expressive outside of their relation to the romantic troubles of Bahar and Isa, we must see human elements not absent, but overwhelmed by the natural world, in images that seems to express something both vital and ungraspable. We must feel, as well, the force of time, under which palaces become ruined, lives pass into oblivion, and moments unlike any other dissolve one into the next.

**The Disappearance of the Face**

These thoughts about emptiness and fullness can be extended, and brought back to the human face, through a consideration of the final scenes of *Climates*. Although Bahar decides – the very evening of the day on which he finds her – to visit Isa’s hotel room in an attempt at reconciliation, the following morning it is clear that the ardour that brought him to Ağrı has dissipated entirely. The potential in their coming back together seems in doubt even during the sequence that shows the night they spend together, an elliptically edited series of extreme close-ups, and shots where nearly everything in the frame is out-of-focus. Often the two protagonists are absent or apparently absent from the image altogether. This emptiness is interrupted by movements in the planes just in front of the camera, thus revealing the minimal content of a shot that at first, since everything is literally a blur, is impossible to make out.

In one shot, for instance, Bahar’s hair and shoulder merge with the room itself to form a flattened, planar image in which nothing is in focus until Isa lifts a cigarette across the frame and down to his lips. [Figure 14] Though Bahar’s visit and her embraces with Isa suggest the possibility of their reuniting, Ceylan’s filming of the sequence, and his use of a disorienting soundtrack of buzzes and bell tones, does not communicate what takes place between the characters so much as it expresses something disconcerting related to their
Figure 14

Figure 15
reunion. This scene presents the culminating event of the film (the final resituating of Isa’s feelings toward Bahar), we will learn retrospectively, but that event is rendered in images where it is often unclear what we are seeing, unclear, even, whether or not we are even looking at the bodies of the characters or not.

The next morning, things come to a real end between them, and the transformation is registered, fittingly, through a shift in Bahar’s facial expression. When she wakes up, Isa is sitting at a table that stands beside the window, and she joins him there. She then tells him about a dream that she had in which she was flying, a joyful dream in which her mother was still alive. She smiles broadly as she speaks, her face and words filled with a lightness and wonder absent from them earlier in the film. [Figure 15] In a single image, captured from behind Isa’s left shoulder, she relates the dream, and, though he does laugh mirthlessly, when she has finished, he shatters the spell she is under when he responds, without commenting upon the dream, by asking her when she has to be at work. The import of his words is registered by her face, which shifts in an instant after he speaks, closing and tightening as her glance suddenly fixes on him. Caught off guard by his callousness, the hope and enthusiasm that emanated from her moments before disappear in the transformation registered in the shift of her features. Isa looks away from her, toward the windowsill, and seems overcome by having found himself still at sea upon landing on what he thought was
the shore to which desire drew him.

It is not only the case that the final change in Bahar and Isa’s relationship is registered through relatively “empty” images, but also that the film concludes with disappearance: Bahar’s face dissolves into a snowy landscape. She goes to work, and while a scene of a weeping woman in a graveyard is being shot for her television show, she wanders away from her colleagues, looking up at the sky as a plane, on which Isa is likely a passenger, begins its ascent. Although she then sheds a few tears, our last glimpses of her seem not to convey this emotional response, but her fixation on a more perplexing problem, like that which seemed to grip her upon the hillside early in the film. We then see her body dissolve, leaving nothing onscreen but the falling snow, and some blurry trees and buildings beyond the narrow plane of focus employed by Ceylan [Figure 16].

I wrote earlier that Bahar’s face, captured as she sits above the ruins in Kaş, presides over the remainder of the film, yet here it fades away and finally disappears altogether. Her vanishing is gently undertaken though; the dissolve is slow, and it actually seems as if she disappears into the landscape rather than from it. In any case, we are left facing the emptied frame for over thirty seconds. However, to this silent expression of the snowy world, Ceylan adds the sounds of dogs barking, birds singing, ducks quacking, and snowflakes sounding as they gather upon the ground. The world emptied of human stories and bodies seems here to slowly regain a fullness. In this final image, we may well find that we behold – as Wallace Stevens put it in his poem, “The Snow Man” – “the nothing that is not there and the nothing that is” (54).
6. Being Just So:

In Vanda’s Room

The films that make up the Fontainhas trilogy of Pedro Costa – Bones (Ossos, 1997), In Vanda’s Room (No quarto da Vanda, 2000), and Colossal Youth (Juventude em marcha, 2006) – bring together the lives of the residents of the Lisbon neighbourhood of Fontainhas, and Costa’s unique vision of the world in which they live. With In Vanda’s Room, Costa moved away from the more conventional narrative structure employed in Bones, and allowed the non-actors with whom he worked, especially Vanda (Vanda Duarte), to speak for themselves, and collaborate with him in a new manner. In this chapter, I first want to establish the elements that Costa works with in order to render the situation in Fontainhas. There are distinct types of sequences in this film. Some develop pseudo-stories around the lives of Vanda, her family, and her friend Nhurro. In others, Costa captures images of the neighbourhood that do not establish the domain in which such stories take place, but make a vision operative outside of them. I will claim that such liberated vision is combined with the speech of characters such that the film forms a figure of Fontainhas. While the film captures certain realities of the neighbourhood, it does so in a form that seems to retain a mystery. In Vanda’s Room is a work of what Deleuze calls minor cinema, since it is political by inventing new connections between images, sounds, and the people that inhabit them, rather than trying to adequately represent a situation from a revolutionary perspective. The film is very simple in some ways, content to attend to and present what Jacques Rancière calls the sensible wealth of the world, and to allow the residents to invent themselves through their own telling of their stories. Nevertheless, in the combination of these elements, Costa fashions an original mode of thinking in images and sounds.

Something Is Not Right

Costa has claimed that the primary function of cinema “is to make us feel that something isn’t right”, and this, he says, is true for both documentary and fiction films (“Closed”). The three Fontainhas films clearly reflect this conviction. Although they do not make us, and do not attempt to make us, conscious of the causes of this something that is wrong, they do make us feel strongly that the people on screen suffer unjustly. Yet our
acknowledgment that something is not right is not the same as knowledge about why things are not right. Costa presents the world of Fontainhas – the spaces where the film was shot and the lives of the people on the screen – in fragments. This fragmentation transforms this world, binding what is legible in it to something that it hides, something that pertains to it, yet which is not made apparent in the arrangement of images and sounds. This something is in fact the relationship between certain sequences of images, between the conversations of the characters and static images of the destruction of Fontainhas, or the interiors of the buildings to be destroyed. The world of the neighbourhood is itself merely a fragment of a larger world that is invisible in the film, since In Vanda’s Room does not show us Fontainhas and its residents in the larger context of Lisbon. The neighbourhood and its residents are enclosed by the filmmaker, cut off from the outside world. They are also often split off from one another, since the geographical relation between the different rooms that Nhurro (António “Pango” Semedo) inhabits, and the relation of those rooms to Vanda and Zita’s (Zita Duarte) house is wholly incomprehensible. The external shots, in which we see, among other things, sheltered passages, courtyards, and nameless spaces between buildings, tend to magnify the labyrinthine quality of Fontainhas rather than enable us to orient ourselves to it.

For the majority of the film, the conversations and drug use in Vanda’s room seem to run parallel to the travails of Nhurro (also known as Pango and Yuran), who moves between abandoned “ghost houses” as more and more of the neighbourhood is razed. Late in the film, Nhurro shows up at Vanda’s and we learn that she and her family have helped him before and are willing to help him again, but the coming together of these two worlds does not retrospectively confer a sense of chronological directionality on what has come before it. The drug use and the conversations could for the most part be rearranged without affecting what we come to know about the characters during the film, and this is especially true with regard to Vanda. Furthermore, time is not only disjointed as a result of the paucity of cues informing us that we are moving forward temporally, but also because we are given over again and again to the seemingly directionless conversations of people using drugs. Such conversations are often captured in single long takes, and are accompanied by the sounds of people outside, or the violent noises of demolition. We are given time and space to let our attention wander between the different elements, for instance, from the conversation, to the noises beyond the room, to the murky colours of the walls. These long
Figure 1

takes and the soundtracks appended to them can sometimes make *In Vanda's Room* feel less like reality mediated for us by an artist, than the direct experience of a physical and social reality to which we are made disconcertingly proximate.

In an essay discussing the relationship between politics and Costa’s films, which accompanied the 2008 retrospective of the filmmaker’s work at the Tate Modern, Ranciére argues that Costa’s work necessitates a rethinking of what makes art political. He argues that it has heretofore generally been thought that “neither a social situation nor a visible display of sympathy for the exploited and the neglected are enough to make art political. We usually expect there to be a mode of representation which renders the situation of exploitation intelligible as the effect of specific causes, and, further, which shows the situation to be the source of forms of consciousness and affects that modify it” (“Politics” 8). The Fontainhas trilogy is not political in this sense because Costa does not show us the relationship between the residents of Fontainhas and those who exploit them, does not, in fact, even emphasise the notion that they are exploited. Their suffering does indeed seem intolerable, but they are
neither presented as wholly unknowing nor manipulated. Costa seems to have little interest here in making transparent the accountability of a system or individuals for the state of life in the neighbourhood, and the “forms of consciousness” of the residents themselves are diverse. We can think, for instance, of the question of the addict’s responsibility for his or her own lot, which is raised in the conversation between Nhurro and Vanda that comes toward the end of the film. Nhurro claims it is a life they are forced to live, while Vanda argues that it is the life they choose to live. The situation is complex, the reasons for addiction numerous, but this addiction is the only thing in the film, aside from one another, that the residents are presented as victims of. We simply come closer to a group of people the lives of whom most spectators know nothing about, and in doing so we may sympathise with them because of the misery that they live amidst, respect them for their willingness to help their friends with what little they have to offer, or, perhaps, even condemn them for living in a cycle of destructive drug abuse.

In Vanda’s Room is a film about people using drugs that is utterly without sensationalism. The people we are introduced to are not symbols of the dangers of drug abuse or the dark realities of poverty, nor are they ignorant of the risks they run in pursuing their habits. The drugs are a part of their world, haphazardly (dis)-organising everyday life in a realm where hope of escape or upward mobility is all but occluded. Yet, the neighbourhood is being destroyed, meaning they will all soon be relocated, and the loss of the neighbourhood is saddening to some degree for Vanda and Zita. They wax nostalgic about childhood mishaps, and a time when the drugs were hidden, even if they were not altogether absent from the life of Fontainhas. But when Vanda disparages the area where people are being relocated to, their mother, Lena (Lena Duarte), reminds her that all neighbourhoods are not like theirs, suggesting that moving could be an opportunity for things to be improved. Nevertheless, the demolition bears down on the characters, carrying with it an uncertain, threatening future.

It is difficult to overstate the audible violence of the demolition, which Costa seems to have purposefully magnified to a harrowing degree, such that it not only invades the private spaces of the characters, but the spectator’s space as well. The sounds of Fontainhas bleed into our world and may well discomfort us; we have to adjust ourselves to them, and we, like the people in the neighbourhood, if only for a few hours, have no control over the impositions caused by the noise beyond the frame. The people on screen only express their
discomfort a few times, but we can easily imagine the difficulty of habituating ourselves to such a reality. But many of the sounds do not actually belong to the neighbourhood. Costa worked carefully to create each cacophonic soundscape, layering multiple tracks to endow them with sufficient violence. A good deal of artifice went into making the sensations of the world of Fontainhas pass into our own. For instance, in the commentary included on the Criterion DVD, Costa relates that some of the sounds were recorded at a construction site in Egypt where buildings were being erected rather than torn down. Nevertheless, wherever they may have been culled from, such sounds are the only direct expression of the violence afflicting the lives of the people of Fontainhas.

In this regard, we can think of one of the most striking series of shots in the film, in which Nhurro and his friends enclose themselves in the abandoned house they are occupying for one more fix before they have to move out. The destruction has arrived at their doorstep, and by candlelight they shoot up as light illuminates the edges of the windows and doors of a wall, beyond which we hear workers incessantly battering stone with sledgehammers. [Figure 2] These men, who are already outsiders, are on the verge of being

Figure 2
condemned to a new kind of exile, and Costa finds in it a sort of quasi-religious beauty. But the noise of the demolition fleshes out the violence latent in the image, the drug use, which otherwise would almost disappear in the meditative composition in which Costa embeds it. It is the sound that reminds us that something is wrong, and that at times this something may remain invisible though we are looking it square in the face.

The violence of the soundtrack is not limited to Costa’s treatment of the noises accompanying the demolition of Fontainhas. The film begins with Vanda’s cough, and though it sounds unpleasant on first hearing, the intensity of her attacks throughout the film truly becomes something to be withstood. Her cough, the product of constantly smoking heroin and cigarettes, is more disturbing than the most explicit images of drug use in the film. Its visceral harshness serves to remind us that the world of serial dope-use sessions that we are witnessing began long before Costa began making the film, and that, while Costa weaves fiction out of the lives of the people on screen, we are constantly witnessing a group of people actually doing what they seem to be doing: smoking and injecting heroin.

Numerous stories pass in and out of the film through the characters’ meandering conversations, which take place mostly when they are using, have just used, or are preparing to use drugs. These conversations almost always take place within the close quarters of the homes in which they live or are temporarily squatting. While the tone and subject matter of these stories, which are most often of their own travails and misfortunes, are generally imbued with a sense of dejection and solemnity, the characters do not usually blame anyone in particular for their own miseries, not even themselves. While Vanda may claim it’s the life they want, she nevertheless does not seem to feel particularly guilty in this regard. It is not necessarily the wrong way to live given the circumstances, even if it’s clearly no one’s ideal. Vanda spends most of her time at home, in her room, on her bed, constantly smoking, drugs or cigarettes, constantly coughing. She does, however, also sell vegetables from door to door to help her mother scrape out a living. And she talks, and talks, and talks, mainly to Zita, but also memorably to her friend Paulo (Paulo Nunes), a recovering addict who sells plastic flowers, and, finally, Nhumro. Vanda talks and at first we listen because we are in her room, with the camera, with Costa; we listen or perhaps, at some point, we stop listening, grow bored or are distracted. We may be drawn toward the atmosphere of her room, and uneasily accustom ourselves in its sub-aquatic atmosphere, its pale green walls and darkness. In Lisbon, a city of light and vistas, our field of perception is contracted for long stretches to
this one decrepit room and its fraught inhabitants, to the stories they recall and the sounds that pour in from outside the frame.

**Beauty, Misery, and Useful Images of the World**

*In Vanda's Room* does more than tell us that something is not right though. Costa presents us with “beautiful” images of this neighbourhood where one may well imagine such beauty to be neglected in the daily routines of doing what it takes to survive or get high. He does not employ any camera movement, and the fixity of the frame seems to call for us to reflect upon our aesthetic responses to the formal properties of certain images. Responding to criticism of the way these images shape aesthetic experiences out of sites of impoverished existence, Thom Andersen rhetorically asks if *In Vanda's Room* aestheticizes poverty. His answer is that it does, but that this is the film’s greatest virtue. “The world is beautiful”, writes Andersen, “and a useful image of the world must register this beauty. The rich and poor live under the same sky, and the sky (glimpsed only rarely in this film) is more beautiful than the most beautiful landscape or cityscape” (“Painting” 59). However, it is not the beauty of the sky that is under question here, but rather the beauty composed by Costa from destruction and destitution, the beauty in images of Fontainhas being erased with sledgehammers and bulldozers [Figure 3], of rubble strewn about and buildings half-demolished, of junkies fixing by candlelight, or still lifes of spaces emptied of people and filled with everyday objects or accumulations of ephemeral detritus [Figure 4].

Doorways appear again and again, as in the two images just referenced, or that of the boys shooting up in the darkness. When Vanda makes her rounds selling vegetables, we quite often view her poking her head through someone’s front door and calling to the person who lives there. These shots are generally taken from within the houses of the people she is addressing, people whom we are never introduced to, yet whose homes become sites in which Costa meticulously crafts frames within the frame. In addition, the filmmaker often uses darkness in a similar way, to create an additional frame: light will then emanate from a particular section of the image, sometimes radiantly luminous, casting spells in still lifes stolen from a crumbling world. Such images seem to stand apart as additions that either exceed the function of showing us what the characters are up to, or operate wholly outside any clear reference to them. In either case, we are prompted to engage with images that do not seem to ask us to recognise what is in them for us to understand with reference to the
film’s other images. We are rather put in the position of gazing at images of the world the function of which is unclear, but which seem to demand of us a more meditative mode of vision.

Rancière draws one of his most important conclusions about Costa’s politics from the consideration of one of the film’s still lifes. With reference to a shot of some plastic bottles and other objects on a wooden table in the house that Nhurro and his friends are about to leave [Figure 5], Rancière writes, “Pedro Costa does not film the ‘misery of the world’. He films its wealth, the wealth that anyone at all can become master of: that of catching the splendor of a reflection of light, but also that of being able to speak in a way that is commensurate with one’s fate” (“Politics” 31-2). We all, he seems to be saying, can learn (or forget well enough) to be able to see the beauty of light on objects at a certain hour of the day. We can take pleasure in this ability not only because it allows us to be pleased by the beautiful, but also because it attests to our own vitality, that we are alive here, right now, capable of having an experience that affects us. It is in this sense perhaps that Rancière sees a kinship between the ability to appreciate the light, over which we have no control, and our control over the ability to speak of our own lives in a manner of which only we, knowing our past, are capable. Able to see and speak for ourselves, we are able to attain both knowledge and pleasure.

For Rancière, it is important that the film makes the two forms of wealth he describes available to those who reside in Fontainhas. Outsiders watching the film may well have their level of attention to everyday splendour retuned as well, but the film’s images are, according to Rancière, of particular use to those who live in the neighbourhood in which the film was made. For the people of Fontainhas, he argues, these “sensory riches” recorded by the filmmaker are “like a song they can enjoy, like a love letter whose words and sentences they can borrow for their own lives” (“Politics” 32). Nevertheless, he goes on to argue that it is not enough for cinema to provide images that spectators, even those from Fontainhas, may find uses for in their own lives.

Ultimately, for Rancière, a modern political cinema must do more than make the beauty of the world available, and allow people to speak in a manner commensurate with their fate. “Cinema cannot be the equivalent of the love letter or the music of the poor”, he writes. “It can no longer be the art which gives the poor the sensible wealth of their world. It must split itself off, it must agree to be the surface upon which the experience of people
relegated to the margins of economic circulations and social trajectories try to be ciphered in new figures” (“Politics” 39). Still though, the presentation of the sensible wealth of the world, and the speech of the residents of Fontainhas are the two key elements ciphered into such a figure through Costa’s editing decisions. It’s simply that relationships must be established between these elements that impose themselves on us without our being able to think their nature when we encounter them. We can better understand what Rancière means when he claims that film can cipher experience into figures, by considering his perspective on the power of art. “The images of art”, he writes, “do not supply weapons for battles. They help sketch out new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible. But they do so on the condition that their meaning or effect is not anticipated” (Emancipated 103). Art extends our capacities to see, think, and speak when it changes the conditions under which we exercise these faculties. Yet, to take the example of sight, what we are able to see and what we come to know through sight – such that we can translate it clearly into speech – do not always correspond. The images of art are useful when they open up a new landscape of possibility,
yet this means that they present us with new paths toward knowledge, while making us aware of our incapacity to think our way down them at the moment they are glimpsed. This play between seeing and knowing is one of the most serious games available to filmmakers.

**Learning to See in Fontainhas**

This final point brings us close to some of Deleuze’s arguments regarding both Foucault and the separation and re-linking of visual and sound images in cinema. We can approach Deleuze’s claims in this regard through Nietzsche’s assertions about what it means to see. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he writes that learning to see is “habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgement, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects” (76). According to Nietzsche, we learn to see by not acting upon every stimulus, but by ceasing to isolate that which can serve a particular purpose in relation to our needs or desires. This is very close to what Deleuze says, in the language of Bergson, about sight once it is released from the role it plays in organising a sensory-motor schema. In pure optical situations, the sense of sight is emancipated, and the link between the image and what it tells us, what it allows us to know, becomes unstable.² A filmmaker can therefore make us see without our thereby being able to judge what is seen, that is, without our being able to concretely understand with certainty the part an image plays in relation to the other images of the film. In this way, a film can perhaps habituate the eyes of some spectators to the repose valorised by Nietzsche.

We can make these points more concrete with reference to *In Vanda’s Room*. I claimed above that the key elements that Costa uses to cipher a figure of “Fontainhas” are images that register the sensible wealth of the world, and the speech of the neighbourhood’s residents. Costa captures and organises these elements such that there is a composition of both features that he controls and others that arise through the relatively free performances of his collaborators. The people onscreen in the film present themselves more than they are represented by Costa. According to the director’s commentary on the Criterion DVD, scenes often began simply with an idea of what would be spoken of, but even in the scenes that were more organised, as those with Nhurro and the boys were, the (non)-actors play characters that are both themselves, and themselves for the screen. But if Costa allows many of the shots in which the characters converse to take form without interfering very much,
simply cutting when the topic has run its course, he reasserts himself through the selection of the images to be included in the film, as well as in the design of the soundtrack.

This brings us back to the images of the world. In *In Vanda's Room*, thought becomes a movement between characters speech, and images that seem to have their own autonomy in relation to the conversations. This is the type of thought that Deleuze aligns with the formation of a line of the outside, an assemblage that links “up random events in a mixture of chance and dependency”. It is a thought that invents “the series that moves us from the neighbourhood of one particular feature to the next” (Foucault 96). Those images of Costa’s that attain a high level of autonomy from the sequences in which the characters speak are a particular type of feature in the film. Sometimes these images form sequences that show people in courtyards cooking, chatting, and lazing about, or that present us with the interiors of empty or lively bars, and the corridors between ramshackle buildings. Sometimes they isolate people to whom we are never introduced, and often they capture the demolition underway. These are not establishing shots that ground the action, but decentrings, brief flights of thought outside the already loose causality tying together the film’s many conversations. They give us a moment to catch our breath outside the claustrophobic salon of Vanda’s room, away from the shadow of misery clinging to Nhurro.

There are also, as mentioned, many images that we can call still lifes, as well as numerous shots that begin before a character has entered a space, and/or end moments after he or she has left the frame. These leave us to contemplate or be stirred by spaces empty of human protagonists, yet the objects of which often give to the image a distinctive fullness. Filmmakers have long found beauty in, or created it from, places and things that seem bereft of aesthetic interest in daily life. The concept of *photogénie*, for example, arises from the observation that the cinema makes beautiful or fills with fascination things that would not regularly be thought picturesque, or beautiful. As Edgar Morin puts it, “The Picturesque is in the things of life. The distinctive feature of *photogénie* is to awaken the “picturesque” in things that are not picturesque” (15).³ The cinematograph transforms the world as well as duplicating it, transforms it such that our ideas of beauty may be extended, deformed, erased and rewritten. Beauty is not only that which is harmonious, but that which invites us to meditate upon our relation to the images on the screen, which can hold our attention while restricting knowledge about both what in the image does the holding, and what it is exactly that is being looking at. In *Vanda*, the beauty of Costa’s still lifes is a result of light and
shadow, and their relationships among plastic bottles, scavenged furniture, decrepit rooms, and buildings in the process of being destroyed. They present us with sensible wealth at the same time as they show us the artefacts of lives that, as we learn more and more about them, assure us that something is terribly wrong in Fontainhas.

Images of the faces of the residents of Fontainhas are also important in this regard. As Andersen notes, Costa captures them in close-ups with an amount of care usually reserved for Hollywood stars (“Paintings” 57). Sometimes the light itself seems to emanate from these faces, as in an image of Vanda sleeping, and another of Nthurro silently contemplating his life. The face in these images seems to be the only source of light amidst an otherwise absolute darkness. [Figures 6 and 7] How are we to evaluate such close-ups, which do not register the thoughts and emotions of the characters in between actions, or in response to a topic of conversation? They seem to have their own autonomy, again calling for a contemplative mode of vision from the spectator, a moment of silent communion with these isolated faces. These images offer a form of connection to Nthurro, his friend “Blondie”, Vanda, and Zita, but they present as well – like Bahar’s face in *Climates* – the singularity of each individual, the unassimilable aspect of each human being. These close-ups, like the transition passages and still lifes not only break the flow of the more narrative sequences, but constitute a kind of visual thinking that continues outside the bounds of the kind of knowledge that we can reproduce in speech. Just as Costa does not try to pronounce judgment on those to blame for the predicament of these people, to tell us how things are, these often lengthy images of faces affirm the value of these individuals directly rather than through establishing their relationship to something outside themselves. Costa literally shows us these faces as sources of light in a dark world, but they remain incomprehensible to some degree however long we are left to meditate upon their features, however much we come to know about them.

Nevertheless, that “something that’s wrong” established by Costa’s figure of Fontainhas is undoubtedly the result of a social, societal violence. It is not simply a darkness that is an innate feature of the world. Costa himself differentiates between two kinds of violence. “There’s a form of violence that exists in the world, that comes from the beginning of the world, from fire. The other, social violence must be resisted as strongly as possible, and by the cinema too” (“Closed”). The presence of this social violence is an aspect of what
Deleuze calls the intolerable: “a powerful organization of poverty and oppression” that “we see, and we more or less experience”, which is come into contact with daily in innumerable different ways by people around the globe (TI 19). How can a film resist such an organisation? How can it keep from producing images that will become clichés of marginalised existences, such that we do not even have to turn away in order to remain unaffected by them?

Inarguably, In Vanda’s Room gives some of the people of Fontainhas an opportunity to become more than statistics or generalities through allowing them some power over the presentation of their lives. But the film is also, still, organised by a single author, even more so than most films. This is the case because Costa for the most part worked by himself with a small, unobtrusive digital camera, because he himself grew closer to the people he collaborated with, and the neighbourhood they lived in, while producing the film. However, if Vanda, Zita, and Nhurro’s presentations of themselves are successful such that what we learn about them is neither easily filed away nor forgotten, it is not only because they are remarkably comfortable with him and his camera, but also because Costa, in the end, organises the fragments of their lives and his own impressions of the physical world in which they live into a film that stands up on its own, without any caveats about its having been made with cheap equipment, or contentions that its content is significant enough to justify images and a structure that are not engaging in their own right. In Vanda’s Room retains the integrity of that which is not reducible to a simple description, a moral content, a political sympathy or agenda. The people on screen are not merely sketches or silhouettes to illustrate something that is not right, but part of a reality, a reality that is rendered in a particular figure (one among many possible others) by Costa.

In Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, Deleuze describes how painters go beyond figuration to reach the Figure. With regard to Bacon’s work, he discusses the importance of isolation in the extraction of the figural from figuration. “If the painter keeps to the Figure”, writes Deleuze, “it will be to oppose the “figural” to the figurative. Isolating the figure will be the primary requirement...Isolation...is the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure: to stick to the fact” (6). Cinema is of course very different than painting, but isolation can be just as effective a tactic in constructing a figure, as is the case with In Vanda’s Room. And if we are to find cinematic figures that in some way oppose, if not figuration, than
the subjugation of the image to what it allows us to think clearly in words and concepts that we have at the ready, it is through strategies that realise new possibilities for thinking between elements, or features, that maintain a distance from one another. However, in the case of Vanda, the tactic of isolation is evident in the narrative information provided by the film as well, in the absence of anything within the film that would link its world to broader political or social landscapes. In addition to this, then, the power of the image to present directly the sensible wealth of the world is isolated, as is that of the character to create herself during filming. The world of the film as a whole becomes a sort of island, unmoored from the rest of Lisbon and the world beyond.

Deleuze argues that Bacon’s painting is a refusal of both abstract and figurative painting, and that it instead runs along a middle path through Figures. He compares the situation of Bacon to that of Proust, who, according to Deleuze, “did not want an abstract literature any more than he wanted a figurative, illustrative, or narrative literature that merely told a story. What he was striving for, what he wanted to bring to light, was a kind of figure, torn away from figuration and stripped of every figurative function: a Figure-in-itself, for example the Figure-in-itself of Combray...” (Francis 57). The Figure of Fontainhas is of course very different from that of Combray. But in inventing a line of thought between the narration of plot elements, which becomes a series of loosely bound together conversations and non-events, and the composition and assemblage of relatively autonomous images, Costa forges his own in-between passage.

**Isolation and Islands**

We can further explore the relationship between figures, isolation, and a middle path between figuration and abstraction through consideration of films representing two moments of neo-realist cinema. It should be noted however that the distinction between figuration and abstraction, which can clearly be aligned with representational and non-representational painting, should be modified in considering narrative cinema. While there are obviously abstract films – many films by Stan Brakhage, to give only one among innumerable possible examples – it would be a mistake to refer to the still lifes of Costa as abstract. The important distinction seems rather to be, as Deleuze argues, that between sensory-motor, and optical or sound images. The sensory-motor image “effectively retains from the thing only what interests us, or what extends into the reaction of a character”,
while pure optical images “bring the thing each time to an essential singularity, and describe the inexhaustible, endlessly referring to other descriptions” (43). The narration presented by a particular film can include passages between these types of image, but in the regime of the time-image the latter comes to dominate: what is seen and heard cannot be readily translated into the type of information of which we are able to speak. Images and sounds exceed whatever role they may play as signs in a sensory-motor schema.

Deleuze acknowledges that there have always been extra-actions and infra-actions that belong to films – such that they could not be removed without making it another film – but do not go toward the creation of a stable state of things, or play a specified role in the development of sensory-motor relations (MI 209-10). Yet with Italian neorealism, he contends, like Bazin, a new kind of film arrived. Deleuze does not however follow Bazin in arguing that, through the composition and montage of “fact-images”, the real is no longer represented or reproduced, but rather “aimed at”. For Deleuze the power of this new “realism” is not that it gives us a more adequate representation of reality, but rather, finally, that it presents a new “mentality” once seeing (and hearing) are uncoupled from a sensory-motor schema. There is then a split in the film, and thought is constituted as the movement between these distinct forms of knowledge – the visible, and the articulable, the optical or sound image, and the image or sound as a sign occupying a position in a sensory-motor interval. The transformation lies for him at the level of the mental, and not that of the real, in an upheaval of the way thought is produced through the organisation of images and sounds (TI 1).

The worlds arising from time-image, or crystal, narration do not for Deleuze, as for Bazin, reflect the ambiguousness of our own world. These films rather compose singular figures that may allow us to reflect on what escapes inclusion within our usual conceptions of reality. Here I want to consider this capacity of the cinematic figure to allow us to perform such reflection in relation to films that are figures of a particular location that is isolated. Those figures to be taken up are the island of Stromboli, in the 1950 film of the same name by Rossellini, and the Watts neighbourhood of Charles Burnett’s Killer of Sheep (1979).

In Stromboli, the filmic island is actually an island. It is at first a site of refuge from imprisonment for Karin (Ingrid Bergman), but soon after her arrival, after she has married a native of the island to escape a prisoner of war camp, it becomes oppressive and terrifying to
her. Deleuze remarks on the film a number of times in *The Time-Image*, contending that Karin is unable to react to the violence she witnesses on the island, the tuna fishing and the eruption of the volcano (2), to images that are both too powerful and too beautiful for her to process (17). “There are no longer sensory-motor links with their extensions”, he argues, “but much more complex circular links between pure optical and sound images on the one hand, and on the other hand images from time and thought, on planes which all coexist by right, constituting the soul and body of the island” (45). Again, it is not the approach to realism that Deleuze finds most important – the actuality of the unforgettable scene of tuna fishing, the real reactions to the volcano’s eruption by the villagers, who are non-professional actors who enact versions of their own lives – but the constitution of a soul and body of the island, a figure of the island, through circuits linking optical sound images to time and thought.

How are we to understand such circuits, and what role do they play in the formation of the figural soul and body of the island? The lines Karin speaks at the end of the film, having climbed up the volcano with thoughts of suicide, play a decisive role in Deleuze’s argument. “I am finished”, she says, then “I am afraid”, and after she has woken up the next morning, still on the volcano, she whispers, “What mystery. What beauty”, before crying out to God for mercy, both for herself and her unborn child. This, Deleuze contends, is the whispering of her spirit, shattered by an excessive tension that has built up as the descriptions of the island, the optical sound images, like those of the fishing, the storm, and the eruption, have become deeper. The spirit shatters, he argues, when description is engulfed in depth, when the pure optical and sound images form a circuit with thinking images (noosigns), and directly temporal images (chronosigns). The thinness of the optical sound image, its operations as a singular surface that does not give way to a sign, is transformed into depth through being so linked.

These arguments of Deleuze are not, it must be said, particularly easy to follow. Which images in particular are noosigns, and which chronosigns? How does the spirit of a character open onto the body and soul of the island? It does, however, seem evident to me that a circuit is indeed formed between Karin’s interior life and pure optical and sound images of the island. Deleuze appears to be saying that certain images seem to become inhabited by her consciousness, to present directly to us her thought; it becomes impossible to say, from this perspective, whether certain images offer an objective view of the island, or
a vision of it filtered through her heightened mental state, without their simply being aligned with her optical point of view. There is indeed an unstable relationship between the images of and from the volcano, and her point of view as she ascends and rests atop it. Sometimes her glances are indeed the intermediary between our vision of her seeing and of what she sees, but there are also a number of images that are not linked to her glances. For instance we see the same image of stars in the sky three times after she collapses near the top of the volcano, twice after we see her looking up, and once after she has covered her eyes. Is the third to be read as the vision of them that remains in her head after she ceases to look upon them? There are also a number of images from which she is absent that are intercut into the passages that show her ascending through smoke. These are clearly not point-of-view shots, and also do not serve the function of establishing anything of clear importance about the arena in which she moves.

My point is that images like those of the sun just visible above a bank of clouds, of the stars in the sky, or those in which the smoke dominates the frame, seem to both register something both external and internal to Karin. Without being made to identify with her to a high degree, we nevertheless take on visions in which her internal states, and views of the island merge. Costa has argued that our not being able to project ourselves into the place of the protagonist is the prerequisite for actually seeing a film. “When [the spectator] begins, rarely, to see a film, it’s when the film doesn’t let him enter, when there’s a door that says to him: ‘Don’t come in’. That’s when he can enter. The spectator can see a film if something on the screen resists him. If he can recognise everything, he’s going to project himself on the screen, he’s not going to see things” (“Closed”). What resists us in Stromboli is the nature of the link between what we see and what Karin sees, between images that show us the island, and images of the island that show us something related to her subjective experience. The figure of the island is established because there is no clear line demarcating subjective and objective images, because it is impossible to say for certain whether particular images belong to the thought of Rossellini, or of the fictitious Karin.

**Minor Figures**

One does not need an actual island to forge a figure through isolation though. A type of island can be made of a city, a neighbourhood, or even a single building or apartment. Burnett’s Killer of Sheep, like In Vanda’s Room, is isolated in a peripheral urban space, apart
from the visible commerce and architecture usually associated with the space of the city. Burnett’s film, his MFA thesis for the School of Film at UCLA in 1977, was shot in the Los Angeles neighbourhood of Watts in 1975. Using amateur actors, *Killer of Sheep* shows us something that is not right by presenting without comment the world of Stan (Henry Gayle Sanders) – a man employed in a sheep abattoir – and his family and friends. The film was shot in black and white, and shows a clear debt to Italian neo-realism, a point Andersen makes, drawing on Deleuze, in the final section of his compilation film, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003). In Andersen’s film, *Killer of Sheep*, Haile Gerima’s *Bush Mama* (1979), and Billy Woodberry’s *Bless their Little Hearts* (1984) – three films, inspired by neo-realism and made in Los Angeles by black filmmakers – all play a pivotal role as examples of independent films that present the city differently than both the productions of Hollywood, and those, like Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point* (1970), made by able outsiders.

In a passage that explicitly brings together Deleuze’s work on cinema and these directors, Andersen describes, through his narrator, Enke King, the central character of *Bush Mama*, Dorothy (Barbara O. Jones), as a new sort of protagonist, “a seer, not an actor”, confronted by “a crack in the world of appearances”, “defenceless before a vision of everyday reality that is unbearable”. Everything in *Bush Mama*, he tells us, is filtered through Dorothy’s consciousness, and the film presents us with a different sense of time, “a spatialized, non-chronological time of meditation and memory”. We can therefore recognise a similarity with Karin, whose visions we enter into, whose thought forms a circuit with the objective, documentary-like images of the film. But *Killer of Sheep* is different, and what makes it so connects it with some of the strategies employed by Costa in *In Vanda’s Room*.

Most importantly, we move in *Killer of Sheep* between loosely arranged conversations and non-events, in which the characters talk or interact, and detached visions of the neighbourhood. A result of this structure, as Andersen says, is that the film feels suspended outside of time, its various sequences floating among one another, rather than stitched into a steadily progressing narrative. Through a series of situations and conversations we see something of the characters struggles, particularly those facing Stan and his wife (Kaycee Moore), which are in large part the result of his job, which pays the bills, but at heavy emotional and physical cost. The only other option seems to be to turn to crime, but Stan rejects it, though a number of his acquaintances try to entice him into doing otherwise. As in *In Vanda’s Room*, we are not shown how this neighbourhood is related to the city as whole.
We are not told who to blame or what could be done to alleviate the slow violence consuming the inhabitants of this world. Two images in the film are particularly haunting, and seem to give us a sort of direct image of the intolerability of this existence. One shows us the equipment and tools of the unpeopled abattoir, situated among swaying, shorn carcasses. The other registers the toll the job has taken on Stan’s relationship with his wife: in a lengthy take, she draws him close as they slow dance in the bedroom to Dinah Washington’s “This Bitter Earth”. Eventually, he pulls away, agitated, unable to bear even the caresses of the woman he loves. The life he finds himself living seems to have alienated him from everyone, even his wife and children, for whom the film clearly shows us he cares deeply.

Burnett’s film resists a form of social violence by letting the weight of life in Watts bear on the spectator, by getting close enough to it so that the people and the places are not merely pieces used to make a point or tell a story, but form an elliptical, complex world of fragments that constitute a figure of thought about the situation in Watts. Yet, while the perspectives it gives us tell us something is wrong, something is intolerable, there is no pretence of rendering a system of exploitation clear, nor of suggesting how it could be transformed. Deleuze claims that films like Killer of Sheep and Bush Mama multiply types and characters rather than attempting to replace a negative black image with a positive one. This is in line with his claims about what constitutes “modern” political cinema, which he calls minor cinema. In the case of these films of Burnett and Gerima, according to Deleuze, struggle bears on the medium itself, abandoning the action-image propaganda of “black-powerism” for a mode of filmmaking in which only a small part of the image of the ghetto is re-created, which does not correspond “to a linkage of actions, but to shattered states of emotions or drives” (TI 212). This is in fact the third characteristic of minor cinema: a single unifying movement is rejected in favour of a fragmentation in which each individual – each filmmaker, each film, each type within each film – presents an image that resists being reduced to a cliché that could be co-opted by any movement greater than itself.

“It is as if”, Deleuze writes, “modern political cinema were no longer constituted on the basis of a possibility of evolution and revolution, like the classical cinema, but on impossibilities, in the style of Kafka: the intolerable” (211). The intolerable position of Kafka, a Czech Jew whose first language was German, was constituted by three impossibilities: the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in the dominant language (German),
and the impossibility of writing differently (in either Czech or Yiddish). According to Deleuze, the minor author or filmmaker has to pass through this state of crisis in order to resolve it (209). In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari directly link the impossible position of Kafka to the way English is used by some black Americans, and this comparison can be extended as well to the Creole spoken by many residents in Fontainhas (17). Yet, with filmmakers it is not only the language that they speak that is at issue. It was impossible for Burnett, Gerima, and Woodbury, among others, to adopt the regime of the movement-image in order to simply impose an opposing version of the truth about all blacks, as it was impossible not to make films, or to move to a place where they could be said to belong more. There had to be a regime change in the manner of thinking in images and sounds, such that actual individuations emerge, not only those of the people in the film, but also of singular ways of linking the descriptions of the world and (non)-events and conversations. Burnett himself gives a remarkable answer, which resonates with both Deleuze and Rancière, to the question of how film can “work its magic” in order to aid in a process of redemption within areas like Watts and Fontainhas, and it is with his words that I will conclude this section.

It seems that old question of why we are here, and not getting a satisfactory answer, makes man’s fate intolerable. I think that it is the little personal things that begin to give a hint of the larger picture. The story has the effect of allowing us to comprehend things we cannot see, namely feelings and relationships. It may not give you answers but it will allow you to appreciate life and maybe that is the issue, the ability to find life wonderful and mysterious. If the story is such, film can be a form of experience, and what is essential is to understand that one has to work on how to be good, compassionate. One has to approach it like a job. Until there is a sharing of experiences, every man is an island and the inner city will always be a wasteland.

(226)

**Old Age, Shared Experience, and Wonder**

In *Stromboli*, we encounter images that may or may not directly register the emotional states of Karin, while in *Killer of Sheep* we move between images that develop the story of Stan, and others that seem to observe people and places in the neighbourhood independently of any role they may play in situating or providing information related to the story. In the first case, the figure of *Stromboli* is formed through the interpenetration of a character’s subjectivity into objective images of the world that clearly do not provide us with
her point of view. In the second case, the figure of Watts is assembled along a fissure running between those sequences that provide story information, and those that do not, but rather provide instances of vision and hearing liberated from the task of producing a sensory-motor sign or horizon. Clearly, In Vanda’s Room is more similar to the latter film, but there is an important difference to be taken into consideration. Vanda is characterised by movements between speech and image, “a toing and froing”, that constantly recasts their relationship to one another. As with Killer of Sheep, a distinction can be made between story sequences and passages of images and sounds only tangentially related to them. But because the characters are playing themselves, their speech itself constitutes a form of becoming, the fabulation of a role in the moment, constantly modifying the version of his or herself that a character is playing.

Andersen has stated that In Vanda’s Room was for him revelatory of the type of minor cinema, described by Deleuze in The Time-Image, in which there is a double becoming, a becoming of both the filmmaker and his or her intercessors, who play themselves. As Andersen writes, “The people in the stories discover themselves by creating stories, dialogues, narratives, and the filmmaker reinvents himself or herself through this encounter. The motto of this cinema is Rimbaud’s slogan je est un autre’ (“I is an other”)” (58). Before seeing the film, Andersen had been sceptical of the existence of such films, not assured that those of directors like Pierre Perrault or Jean Rouch actually did what Deleuze said they did. The key point here is that the people on screen produce speech-acts that constitute instances of what Deleuze calls fabulation, which in the English version of The Time-Image is translated as story-telling. “Story-telling is not an impersonal myth, but neither is it a personal fiction: it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from politics, and which itself produces collective utterances” (TI 214). In Colossal Youth, the collective and political nature of a character’s speech, the speech of Ventura, becomes more explicit, and I will consider the importance of speech-acts at greater length in the following chapter that deals with the film.

Here, I simply want to conclude by considering briefly the importance of collaboration for Costa’s practice. According to Deleuze, minor cinema multiplies singularities and invents connections between them, thereby (re)-inventing a mode of thinking in images and sounds with each new instance of connection. It does not promote revolutionary ideas through the regime of the movement-image, the language, so to speak, of
the oppressors, which would produce an image of “a cardboard people and paper revolutionaries” (TI 211). Yet for all the political implications of a cinema like Costa’s, there is something very simple about it. The filmmaker catches the spirit of this simplicity in his response to something that Deleuze says in L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze. “The philosopher Gilles Deleuze has written a bit about cinema”, Costa begins, “and he says a very beautiful thing with regard to old age. He says that an old man is somebody who doesn’t need anything other than himself” (“Closed”). Costa goes on to interpret this notion in his own way: “When we arrive at what is called old age, we’re just old. That’s all. In a certain way, though, we’re more attentive to the world, because we’re just old. We don’t need to seduce, we don’t need to use effects. Being just so, not playing with seduction, making films full of effects, full of clever allusions”. An “old” person, from this perspective, has an increased capacity for being attentive to aspects of the world that are sufficient to make up the material of a film, as they are, without any dressing up.

Becoming old is for Costa, in one sense, resisting the desire to seduce the audience. The link made between the film and the audience is like the connection between the speech-acts of Vanda and Zita, and the still lifes of Costa, which both conjoins and divides. However near we may come to the world of Fontainhas, the figure of the film holds us at a remove that cannot be entirely overcome. By filming the world just so, as he finds it, Costa also resists the temptation to sculpt the world into something more comprehensible than it actually is. Yet, as I have argued, while the film captures something of the reality of the neighbourhood, the ambiguity of the relations between the characters speech and some of Costa’s images should not be said to reflect the fact that reality is itself, in a Bazinian sense, ambiguous. We could say this, but there are more important things that can be said, since it is not only an ambiguity between images or sequences of images, between image and speech, which is revealed, by an intuitive mode of connectivity. It is perhaps necessary to be old, or fabricate oneself as older than one actually is, in order to stop attempting to force things into a transparent order that can be reduced to ideas – political, moral, or otherwise – rather than add one more arrangement of the world, which suggests some sort of vital secret, like the wonder or mystery Burnett alludes to, which may be all the more captivating for the bareness with which it is presented.

The “old” filmmaker who allows his or her characters to become the fabricators of their own lives, to be just so in inventing themselves, also becomes another, becomes the
bodies of people that come to exist in the space made by the camera, and takes on the stories that are told there. The filmmaker, according to Deleuze, “becomes another, in so far as he takes real characters as intercessors and replaces his fictions by their own story-telling, but conversely, gives these story-tellings the shape of legends, carrying out their ‘making into legend’” (TI 147). This tendency toward making legends becomes much more pronounced in Colossal Youth, but already in Vanda we can see stories of life in Fontainhas transforming into the chronicle of a place that is under demolition, that will soon be gone. The legends of Fontainhas are simple, sorrowful, and in the end evocative of something intolerable. “Good and evil don’t exist in heaven and hell”, says Costa, “they exist between people. The cinema exists for showing that, too. It exists so we can see what’s not working, where the evil lies between you and I, between me and somebody else, so we can see the evil in society and, so we can search for the good” (“Closed”). The cinema can make evil sensible so that we may resist it, the good and beautiful sensible so we may better attend to their appearance in the streets. Neither of these things is easily done, but confronting and living with In Vanda’s Room we can begin attending to such difficult tasks all over again.
7. Domination of Black:

Colossal Youth

In a 2008 interview, Costa relates that during the shooting of Colossal Youth, Ventura – the film’s central character - repeatedly reminded him that there were limitations to what his camera could do. “This is a film”, says Ventura in Costa’s retelling, “but do not for one second think that you can understand me, that you can know what I am, that you can even get inside of me”. Rather than see this inability of the filmmaker to capture the essence of the other as a failure, Costa recognises it as a point of departure. The difference between two people creates a space to live in, a space of possibility, which is also a provocation toward imaginative ways of thinking and filming what cannot be wholly known. “I think it's better to think that there is a space”, Costa continues, “that there is a difference, a distance between two human beings. And this is good. This is what creates possibilities. It's possible for us to live together because there is a space here. And this space thinks and works. It's the space that makes you think, that makes you work” (“Trembling”). It is the space between people that instigates thought and work, but such spaces can also themselves constitute a type of thought. In this chapter, I will argue that Costa multiplies such interstitial spaces in Colossal Youth, producing them between sequences of images and between images and speech-acts, but also within individuals, speech-acts, and particular images. Thought is here constituted in the manifest but unarticulable relationships between two features, or multiple aspects of a single feature, and as such it creates new problems rather than offering up perspectives on already recognised issues of debate.

The Loss of Fontainhas

Colossal Youth is in part a meditation on people’s relationships with the spaces in which they live, and on the relationships between memory, history, built space, and modes of existence. In the present depicted by the film, the residents and former residents of Fontainhas negotiate a change of setting. The destruction of the neighbourhood is all but complete, and most of its inhabitants have been moved to clean and affordable, but sterile and isolating, tower blocks called Casal da Boba. Vanda lives in one of these flats, and Ventura visits her there a number of times. She has kicked her habit, married, and had a
child, although, now on methadone, she still suffers from debilitating asthma as a result of her drug use, and questions whether or not she will be able to physically endure the demands of motherhood.

In *Colossal Youth*, Vanda is also one of Ventura’s “children”. In fact, most of the people he visits are referred to as his children, and although it is never made clear whether they are actually his biological children or his children in a more symbolic sense, the suggestion of familial ties intimates the collective nature of Ventura’s role in the film. Some of his children are white, some black, and he speaks Creole with some and Portuguese with others. Sometimes he tells them about the occurrence that opens the film and initiates his wanderings, tells them, that is, that their mother, Clotilde (Isabel Cardoso), has thrown him out of the house. Not everyone has left Fontainhas, and Ventura visits one child, Bete, there, and apparently also lives there himself with a young man named Lento (Alberto “Lento” Barros). Lento almost seems like a younger Ventura, since he has come from Cape Verde to Lisbon to work, and left behind a wife in doing so. In many of the scenes of the two men, Ventura wears a bandage around his head, a bandage that belongs to a different present than the one in which the majority of the film is anchored, to the period of his recuperation from a fall taken in the 1970s.

This connection of past and present belongs to Fontainhas rather than Casal da Boba. In some sense, the new housing cuts the neighbourhood's many residents with Cape Verdean blood off from the history that brought them to Portugal, as well as the struggles they faced upon arriving. It is then not only Ventura, whose wife has kicked him out, who is adrift in territory that is not his own. “In Fontainhas”, according to Costa,

> the public space and private space was undetermined...a room could be a square, and a street could be very mysterious, as well as a house, a corridor, so the old space was very interesting, like a village. It's exactly like the old system of an old African village, maybe an old Japanese village, from the way the space was built. And now they have other problems, they have city problems where they still can't identify. They are lost. (“Trembling”)

While the housing in Fontainhas was often squalid and lacked in modern comforts, the immigrants who inhabited it had built it for their own use. So, while the flats of Casal da Boba are cleaner, more functional, and more practical, their bareness speaks to an effacement of history carried through by the transplantation of the residents of Fontainhas.
In certain images, through his framing of Ventura in relation to both the exteriors and interiors of Casal da Boba, Costa captures the disjunction between the physical space of the tower blocks and their new inhabitants. For instance, in a shot outside the towers from early in the film, Ventura shouts Vanda’s name in an attempt to locate her, at a loss in a space he has not yet learned to navigate. [Figure 1] He stands tall, made over as a tower himself through the low-angle framing chosen by Costa, which serves to emphasise the mythic role that he takes on in traveling beyond those quarters within which he is intimately oriented. Ventura seems equally at odds with the empty flat he is assigned, the starkness and whiteness of which seems both opposed to the shadowy rooms of Fontainhas, and, even if in only a purely visual sense, the darkness of his skin. [Figure 2] One of Ventura’s problems in the film is this: how is he to go about making these nearly identical flats into a home for his children? How are these lifeless white rooms, one sealed from the next by silent doors that shut on their own, to become part of the lives of the residents, rather than simply spaces in which they move, but from which they feel an unbridgeable distance? Colossal Youth thus tells the story of a transition between two extremely different kinds of dwelling, and at times we receive a visual registration of the problems associated with this move in images like these of Ventura.

The film is therefore also partially about loss, the loss of a space that a group of people have learned to live, which carried within itself the seeds of memory, and was thus valued by those people despite the material and psychic hardships they suffered there. We can recall Vanda and Zita’s nostalgia for their childhood there, as well as their mother’s rejoinder that in escaping the neighbourhood the quality of their lives could in fact improve. Despite this possibility, however, all the conveniences of these clean rooms cannot conceal the feeling that something important has been lost, that in the effacement of spaces of poverty some of the resources of those who had lived their lives in them disappear with the buildings. Costa believes that the people who underwent this relocation realise that they have lost something irreplaceable. “The space they had built was gone forever, and they will not have the chance of building anything again. That's a very complex idea but I think they understood that. We are becoming a part of society. Really marginal part, we are still poor, we are still down and under, but we are inside society now” (“Trembling”). Becoming a part of the larger society threatens the fragile sense of community that persisted despite the strain of violence, poverty, and drugs in Fontainhas. While, to a minimal extent, Ventura is still
able to move between these two worlds – in visiting Bebe, for instance – this possibility of returning to a space infused with the neighbourhood’s past will soon be eradicated altogether, as the destruction of Fontainhas is nearly complete during the present depicted by the film.

**Ventura as Fabulator and Chronicler**

Another important problem raised by *Colossal Youth* centres around Ventura’s identity as both himself and a stand-in for the people of Fontainhas, especially those who had similar experiences as workers who immigrated to Portugal from Cape Verde. This larger history of immigrants is materialised in and through him such that it may not disappear along with the buildings of the neighbourhood. He carries in his bearing, that is, the histories of the Cape Verdean immigrants who settled in Lisbon, who made homes to live in where none were provided, as well as, to a lesser degree, those disenfranchised whites, like the anguished Paulo (Paulo Nunes), who came to inhabit the neighbourhood when there were few other options available to them. The film functions in part as the speech of a population generally without a voice. Costa has commented upon the collective nature of Ventura’s role, claiming, “Ventura is not standing alone by himself. He’s standing in for a lot of people. He's there for his friends, for every Ventura who has been a Ventura” (“Trembling”).

Ventura’s speech is, then, always collective, although he never ceases to speak for himself. And because he constitutes various versions of himself as he speaks, his speech is a process of invention, even when it is also an act of revealing his own past. Speech-acts, fabulation, are a form of becoming. The speech of Ventura often does not establish a present in which something happens, but rather establishes a present that dilates with the extension of his speech, which is an act of becoming that – so long as it continues, until a cut or silence intervenes – keeps the present from detaching into a before and after arranged around the disclosure of the speech-acts relationship to the films other images and conversations.¹ From this perspective, Ventura is constantly becoming other both through speech acts that alter his own identity, and through taking on a collective role in the film.

There is also another, more fundamental split within Ventura, which is related to the fall he suffered in the 70s while taking part in the construction of the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, in Lisbon. He carries around a past Ventura, the Ventura with the bandaged
head, a double, a ghost. In this doubling of Ventura, the presence of a Ventura who speaks and tells us about his life in the present, and another Ventura whose relationship to the Ventura of the present remains uncertain, we are confronted by a certain kind of tension. This is the tension between experiences that can be transmitted through language, and elements of those experiences that cannot be shared in the same way. We will return to this problem and the bandaged Ventura later, but here I would like to further discuss the conditions under which he first speaks of his past.

It is at the Gulbenkian visiting Nhurro – who has left Fontainhas and has a wife and child – that Ventura talks at greatest length about his early days in Portugal, and about his accident. Nhurro works as a security guard at the museum, and the sequence in which Ventura visits him begins with a painting, Peter Paul Rubens’s *Flight to Egypt*, which is illuminated at the centre of the frame and surrounded by a deep darkness. For those familiar with *In Vanda’s Room*, this may recall Costa’s illumination of the faces of Vanda, Zita, and the others, such that they seem to light the frame from its centre. In the shot that follows that of the Rubens, Ventura leans against a wall between another Rubens, *Hélène Fourment*, and Anthony Van Dyck’s *Portrait of Man*. [Figure 3] He looks up toward the wall across from him and snorts a pinch of snuff, and then Nhurro enters the frame from the left and approaches him. He whispers something in Ventura’s ear that causes him to leave the frame in the same direction Nhurro had entered it.

Nhurro then bends down and cleans the ground where Ventura had stood, whether because he dropped some snuff, or tracked in dirt on his shoes, we cannot say. Clearly, Nhurro is uncomfortable having Ventura there, since he knows that it is not for the likes of him that the paintings are displayed. But in this shot, like the others inside the Gulbenkian, the museum is silent, as if no one else is there, and filled with darkness, far more darkness than one would expect to find in a museum during its opening hours. Silence and darkness: the house of art feels almost like a site of mourning, or a sanctuary set aside for the contemplation of mortality, the finality of death’s darkness. But darkness, as we will see, proliferates in *Colossal Youth*, and its meaning is unstable, its effects forceful yet difficult to clearly formulate.

We soon accompany Nhurro and Ventura as they make their way outside into the gardens surrounding the museum, and there we hear from Ventura an account of his arrival
and early experiences in Portugal. This is when we discover that he helped to both build the museum and clear the land where it now stands. As Ventura speaks, Costa cuts from a low-angle framing of him to a shot of a canopy of branches overhead. The camera then pans to the left, slowly tilting downward as it does so, creating a kind of corkscrew motion as it takes in the roots of a tree, fallen leaves and the dirt they rest on, before arriving at Ventura’s feet and lower legs. While the camera undertakes this movement, Ventura continues to speak. He talks about his arrival, and about beginning to work the next day at the Borges Brothers bank in the Praça do Comércio. He talks about how much he earned, about later jobs, and about being sent to the Gulbenkian to work; then he stops for a moment, breaking off just before his legs enter the shot.

The camera then tilts upward, eventually framing Ventura as he sits down on a stone bench. Costa frames him statically, from the waste up, seated, as he resumes his story. He begins to talk about the work he put into the construction of the museum. “I earned 7500 escudos, plus overtime”, he begins:
I made 16,000 plus the Christmas bonus. This was all brushwood here. Me and Correia the mason cleared it all away with the eucalyptus. Me and Correia the mason laid down sewage pipes. Me and António the tiler laid the stone and tiles. There were clouds of frogs here. Thousands of them. Once, we set up the statues of Mr. Gulbenkian and the penguin. At their feet, the ground was muddy. We planted grass to pretty it up. We watered it.

There seems to be a clear political sense to Costa’s choice to have Ventura tell of these events in the gardens of the art museum: the labourer is not welcome in the building that his labour went toward constructing. Yet, as Rancière persuasively argues, the implications of this scene, like the politics of Costa’s filmic strategies in general, are more complex than they may at first seem.

There are many aspects of this sequence that, according to Rancière, far exceed the function of making the injustice of the worker’s relation to the product of his labour apparent (“Politics” 21). For instance, there is the silence and darkness of the museum, which is contrasted to the birdsong, light and splendour of the garden outside, where Ventura finally and abruptly recalls his fall. “I took a spill over there. Slipped and fell off the scaffold”, he tells Nhurro, pointing offscreen, concluding the conversation and the sequence. The gist of Rancière’s argument is that the sequence does more than show us that a worker is not given the right to appreciate the fruits of his labour, not that it does not show this. “Ventura here”, he writes,

is something completely different from the immigrant worker who represents the condition of the immigrant workers. The greenery of the scene, the way Ventura towers over the guard, the solemn tone of his voice as he seems to recite a text that inhabits him – all of this is very far from every narrative of misery. Ventura in this scene is a chronicler of his own life, an actor who renders visible the singular grandeur of that life, the grandeur of a collective adventure for which the museum seems incapable of supplying an equivalent. (21)

According to Rancière, the chronicler is distinct from the mythic man who stands in for his people. The former is always creating new histories in speaking about the past, multiplying both his own identities and potential versions of the past, whereas the latter would only give shape and meaning to a history that would otherwise remain untold, providing a single perspective to line up against history written from the perspective of the economically and politically powerful.
The distinction lines up more or less with some of Deleuze’s claims about the
difference between modern and classical political cinema. The chronicler multiplies types,
rather than simply revising the unified image of a particular group. There is more to this
chronicler, however, since he or she makes secrets even while making the stories of a hidden
past known. In the case of Ventura though, it is not that he is not the immigrant worker who
represents the condition of immigrant workers, as Rancière claims. It is that he is not only
this. Ventura indeed does transmit knowledge and mythologise some of the histories of a
marginalised people. However, it is also true that his mythmaking faculty is still live, and
links up what is transmissible with elements of experience – what has been seen or felt but
cannot be spoken off sufficiently – that cannot be transmitted intact.

Rancière’s chronicler, like the Deleuzian fabulator, or storyteller, affirms fiction as a
power rather than a model; real himself, he is able to create fictions through which he
becomes another and becomes collective, rendering visible, as Rancière writes, the grandeur
of a collective adventure. Here we can reiterate the distinction between fiction as a model
and as a power. Deleuze claims that the truth of both classical documentary and fiction films
derived from a notion of truth that depends on the externalisation of a whole in images that
are simultaneously integrated into that whole (TI 265), and the establishment of clear
distinctions between subjective and objective images (143). The image establishes a space-
time in which events take place, rather than the image or speech becoming an event in itself,
causing the relationship between character and filmmaker, as well as that between fragments
of the world, to become problematic.

In what Deleuze calls the classical cinema of the movement-image, through
accordance with a particular model of truth everything becomes part of the same internal
monologue, in which antagonisms between subjective and objective images are reconciled in
a single whole. He argues that, “What is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth
which is always that of the masters or colonizers; it is the story-telling function of the poor,
in so far as it gives the false the power which makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster”
(TI 145). The political speech-act therefore does not fasten down the identities of characters,
whether they are real or fictional, but makes the identities of real characters multiple as they
begin to make fiction and make up legends. Fiction becomes an immanent, problematic
power, a process, rather than a transcendent formal structure that gives things and people,
whether real or fictional, apparently truthful identities.
In *The Order of Things*, Foucault makes a claim for modern thought that resonates with Deleuze’s conception of making fiction in modern cinema, and Rancière’s notion of Ventura as a chronicler.4 “What is essential”, Foucault writes, “is that thought, both for itself and in the density of its workings, should be both knowledge and a modification of what it knows, reflection and a transformation of the mode of being of that on which it reflects” (327). The fictions made by Ventura present many facts from his own life and the life of a community, they provide knowledge, but at the same time they modify the conditions under which knowledge is transmissible, since we cannot say with finality which Ventura is speaking. That is, we cannot separate out the collective aspect of his speech from the personal aspect, and are constantly being made to ask who he is through his speech, rather than being able to understand the speech with reference to what type of man is speaking. Making fiction in *Colossal Youth* is both an internalising reflection and an externalising becoming, constituting a transformation and multiplication of the potential images of the personal and communal lives reflected upon. It therefore makes a difference, however slight, constituting an additional way of presenting knowledge through sound and vision that both expands what we know about a person and a people, and presents aspects of individuals and groups that cannot be integrated in totalising notions of identity.

**The Secret of the Other**

An aspect of Rancière’s argument that has not yet been dealt with here is the relationship between the grandeur of artworks and the grandeur of a life, or a collective adventure. It does not seem to me enough to simply say that a comparison is being made by Costa between the wealth of a life, the collective adventure of Ventura(s), and the paintings on the walls of the museum. When Ventura is framed between the two Flemish portraits, is there not a line of connection between these works and Costa’s own portrait of Ventura being drawn? The image provides us with something that the speech of Ventura, however problematic in its own right, does not offer. There is a line of (dis)-connection running, as in Ventura, between many of Costa’s images and the speech-acts of his collaborators. This strategy was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to *In Vanda’s Room*, but with *Colossal Youth*, the relationships between images and fabulation are somewhat different. The fundamental point nevertheless remains the same: through linking relatively autonomous (relative to the loose sensory-motor linkages between sequences) images with the fabulation,
or storytelling of intercessors, Costa creates a free-indirect discourse that functions through the interpenetration of multiple voices, which combines his images with voices along a non-localisable interstice – a membrane – that both combines and divides image and sound.⁵

For Rancière, the politics in Costa’s work as a whole “is about thinking the proximity between art and all those other forms which can convey the affirmation of a sharing [partage] or shareable [partageable] capacity” (“Politics” 31). But speech, like that of Ventura, is not only a way of sharing knowledge, of making available a life’s adventures and connecting up with a past. As we have seen, it is also a method of keeping identity in development, without arriving at a point of final, focused clarity. In conjunction with Costa’s images, such speech-acts form a particular will to art, which here is partially a will to compose a film that cannot be reduced to a content, political or otherwise. What it gives us cannot entirely enter into circulation through language, though we may well find ourselves affected by the thought constituted in and between image and sound, a fractured thought that leaves us in possession of something that is not a knowledge that could be shared. As Costa himself declares, “An image, a sound, the gaze of an actor, or the shock between two shots in sequence – these cannot be like some currency, like an act of commerce, like when we go to a café, where we give one thing and we receive another. If that’s cinema, well, excuse me, that’s a trifle, that’s mediocre” (“Closed”). The creation and combination of images and sounds cannot be like an act of commerce, a simple act of exchange, but something has to come out of them that could not have been prefigured, something that is not linguistically communicable knowledge about what has been seen and heard.

There is a paradox of proximity and distance at work here. As Rancière astutely diagnoses, the split within the character of Ventura himself, the crack in him, makes it so that even as he brings his life nearer to the spectator, rendering it as something shareable in speech-acts, it is also constituted as a secret that can never be uncovered, a secret which holds us at a distance. “The patience”, writes Rancière, “of the camera which every day mechanically films the words, gestures, and footsteps of the characters”, is not a strategy for making films, but of “approximating the secret of the other”. (“Politics” 38) In the same essay, he also asserts that “[Costa] placed himself in these spaces to observe their inhabitants living their lives, to hear what they say, capture their secret” (13). Both “capture” and “approximate” are ambiguous terms here, and whether or not Rancière’s French could have been translated otherwise, these particular words offer an opening onto what is both
problematic and haunting in Costa’s films, onto the paradox of proximity at work in them. To capture a secret could mean to take it into possession, or to objectify it, that is, to make an image of it such that it grows all the more secretive and silent. To approximate a secret is much the same: because it is constructed as a visible and audible reality, manifested between what is said and seen, it alerts us to its presence at the same time it recedes from the reach of thought. It exists as the line linking up and dividing the inside and outside, the voices of the people of Fontainhas and still lifes or other “passage” images that lead from one conversation to the next, or from the present into the past-saturated territory constituted in Ventura’s visits with Lento.

The existence of a secret, or secrets, within Colossal Youth is what makes it more than simply a film about poverty or about the poor themselves, or, even, about their representations of themselves. But of what does this secret consist? To a large degree the secret is Ventura’s secret, but it is also a secret of still lifes and empty spaces, of the filmmaker’s relationship to the world that he films, a secret of light and shadow. In the case of Ventura, we should return to Ranciére’s description of him as a man run through with a crack and his insistence that Ventura is more than merely a figure for all the Cape Verdean workers (or workers, full stop) who came to Portugal (or to any colonial nation) and built things that they were not then allowed to enjoy. “The point with Ventura”, he writes, “is not to gather the evidence of a hard life, even if it is in order to figure out who cinema can share [partager] this life with, and to whom it can give it back as his or her life. The point is rather to confront what cannot be shared [l’impartageable], the cracks that have separated a person from himself” (“Politics” 37). Ranciére concludes that Ventura is not a variation on the noble but poor man worthy of respect and the fruits of his labour, but a “sort of sublime” drifter, a character from tragedy, someone who interrupts communication and exchange on his own” (37). The more proximate the Otherness of Ventura becomes, the more unbridgeable seems the distance separating us from the secret it seems to conceal.

The character of Ventura, as he is rendered in his encounter with Costa and his camera, both communicates something of his life and, in the end, makes of that life something beyond communication, in excess of words and images. Like all humans, there is something in him that arouses thoughts of community, and something else – wholly other but equally human – which imparts a distance. “The crack splits experience into those that can be shared, and those which cannot” (39), writes Ranciére, and so it is that a film, and
those on screen, can both offer us that which can extend or make firmer knowledge that we can communicate in speech, while at the same time constituting an Otherness that we are unable to interpret definitively, yet which nonetheless constitutes a different sort of knowledge. And, as I have argued, there is not only the crack in Ventura to take into account – his being both himself and representative of other immigrants, as well as haunted by another Ventura. There is also the difference established between the speech-act and the visual images that make up the film, which unites Costa and his intercessors along a line of division, forming a collective form of free indirect discourse. Furthermore, there is another form of collective expression fashioned along lines that both separate and conjoin, which further complicates the lines of connection and disjunction that multiply in \textit{Colossal Youth} to a far greater degree than in \textit{In Vanda’s Room}. It is to this element of the film that I will now turn.

\textbf{The Letter}

Throughout \textit{Colossal Youth} a letter is dictated in varying states of completeness by Ventura to his friend Lento, and this letter is yet another example of a complex form of collective expression that cannot be attributed to any single individual. In the first scene in which we see them together, Lento requests that Ventura compose the letter so that he can send it to his wife on Cape Verde, since he himself cannot read and write. The two men stay together in a shack, and the first scene that takes place there seems to be part of the present in which Ventura has been cast out by his wife and visits his children. However, this is not the case when we return to the shack, just after Ventura has described to Nhurro the fall that he took while working on the construction of the Gulbenkian. In this sequence, Ventura appears for the first time with the bandage wrapped around his head, and the atmosphere is mournful within the little wooden shack where the two men bow their heads in the darkness as they enter together. [Figure 4] Ventura seems consumed with anger as he again recites the love letter while the two men play a game of cards, a game that he forcefully insists upon against Lento’s protests that he is hungry and wants to make food.

Once they have begun to play, Ventura throws the cards violently down on the table and eventually commands Lento: “Get this into your head!” He then begins to recite the love letter, continuing to slam the cards down, sometimes as furious punctuation, while doing so. The letter is repeated again and again in the film, but here its romantic sentiments
are given an inflection of violence and frustration. It is, after all, a letter from a man to a woman from whom he is separated, a woman who he loves, misses, and does not know when he will see again. In this scene it is as if longing is overrun by anger at the situation that brought about its existence, anger which is also fuelled by the injury Ventura suffered from his fall. The bandage makes present a past of misfortune and suffering, the aftermath of a moment that fractured Ventura’s life. But the letter itself, like Ventura and the film as a whole, is full of voices, a complexity belied by the simple and moving expressions of love in it.

This letter first appeared in *Casa de Lava* (1994), and was adapted by Costa from “Letter to Youki”, an epistolary poem written by the surrealist poet, Robert Desnos, to his wife, Youki, while he was at Camp Flöha in Saxony, a transit stop on the way to Terezín. Desnos died of typhus there as a political prisoner of the Nazis in 1945, just weeks after the liberation of the camp. Costa mixed “Letter to Youki” with letters written by immigrants working in Portugal to wives and girlfriends still in Cape Verde. The lives of these men are in this way woven into Ventura’s speech. It begins,
Nha cretcheu [Creole for “My dear”, or “My love”], my love, being together again will brighten our lives for at least thirty years. I’ll come back to you strong and loving. I wish I could offer you a hundred thousand cigarettes, a dozen fancy dresses, a car, that little lava house you always dreamed of, a three-penny bouquet. But most of all, drink a bottle of good wine and think of me. Here it’s nothing but work. There are hundreds of us now.

During the card-playing scene, the letter ends with the lines, “I can only send you one letter a month. Still nothing from you. Some other time”. This is not, however, the letter’s true ending, which can be translated as, “I think I will end up forgetting about myself” (Bénard da Costa 43). These more introspective, darker final passages of the letter have not been drawn from Desnos. The expression of the fear of forgetting oneself – a dissolution of identity in a foreign land, separated from a loved one who does not respond, or whose responses do not arrive – is formidable on its own account. However, if one recognises it from Costa’s earlier film, a number of problematic evocations of another order are raised.

The letter certainly adds a degree of intertextuality, calling back, as it does, on Casa de Lava. But the meaning of the letter in that film alone is difficult to pin down, and the identity of its writer is, in the end, a mystery. It’s found in the papers of Edith (Edith Scob), a white woman who came to Cape Verde after her husband, a political dissident, was imprisoned at the Tarrafal concentration camp by the authoritarian Estado Novo regime of António de Oliveira Salazar. Damaged by the whole experience, she remains there, an adoptee of the islanders whose pension goes toward the living expenses of the community. The letter is found among Edith’s things by Mariana (Inês de Medeiros), a nurse who has come from Lisbon to look after Leão (Isaach De Bankolé), a worker who had fallen and gone into a coma in Portugal, and then been removed from the country back to Cape Verde. This letter seems at first to have been written by the political prisoner to his wife, as was the letter of Desnos. However, when it is passed to Leão’s sister, Tina (Sandra do Canto Brandão) – since it is written in Creole, which Mariana cannot read – it becomes something else. As Rancière explains, “Tina appropriates the letter, which becomes for the viewer not a letter sent from the death camp by the deported man, but by Leão from a construction site in Portugal. But when Mariana asks Leão about it, as he finally emerges from his coma, his answer is peremptory: how could he have written the love letter, if he doesn’t know how to write?” (“Politics” 28). The letter here gains autonomy from all authors, but it can also be viewed as the product of multiple writers, numerous voices.
The polyphony of the letter does on a small scale something like what Costa’s films do on a larger one. It makes connections that exist without their nature being made explicit. The plight of Lento, who wants to write a letter to his wife in Cape Verde, but cannot write, is connected clandestinely to that of Leão, who cannot have written a letter he is suspected to have written because he, too, is illiterate. But then Leão is also connected by way of the fall he took working in Lisbon to Ventura, who in Colossal Youth is nevertheless presented as the author of the letter. What binds these men together is both apparent and difficult to grasp with finality. There is something verging on identity between Lento and Ventura at times, their difference from one another put in question in moments such as that in which Lento is seen lying on the ground beside an electricity post, having apparently fallen while trying to divert electricity into their shack to power a space heater. He too is among the fallen, as will be more forcefully, and less symbolically, expressed when he relates the story of a fire that he started out of hopelessness, which forced him and his family to jump from the windows of their burning house. Of course, it is unclear here whether it is his own story that he tells, or whether he has embodied a tale of misery that had circulated about the neighbourhood, like that of the mother who gassed herself and her baby, told in In Vanda’s Room, which recalls the actions of the young mother in Bones, Tina, who fails in suicide attempts carried out in a similar manner. The sorrows of one person, bereft of hope, become the sorrow of others in the community, who could so easily themselves be overcome by similar demons and author horrific acts of desperation.

The letter, of course, also retains the words of the poet and political prisoner, Desnos, as well as Edith’s husband, whose presence beyond the edges of the frame in Casa de Lava gives him an anonymity of sorts, one deported prisoner among many, forced to die far from his own country, separated from his loved ones. There is no equality between the experience of the immigrant and the experience of the political prisoner, but there are numerous lines of connection established between them in the letter. Like the space between the images captured by Costa and the stylised monologues and conversations of the actors, the space at the heart of the letter, between its possible and impossible authors, is both a void and locus of connections, a strange product of voices that become one, a unity welded together out of problematic instances of difference. Though the voices of the letter are brought together within it, they, like the images, conversations, and recitations that compose
the voice of the film as a whole, nevertheless remain separated, bound together along architectural fissures that paradoxically link and divide them from one another.

**Darkness**

Some of Costa’s images confront us with visibilities that resist any attempt to wholly render them into language, and such images will be the concern of the remainder of this chapter. I will discuss, first, the relationship between visibility and darkness in *Colossal Youth*, and, secondly, the way that Costa’s still lifes instil the film with what he calls, with reference to Ozu, “the beautiful strangeness”. The meaning and effects of darkness in *Colossal Youth*, the heavy presence of which can hardly go unnoticed, are difficult to articulate with finality. It is an element within Costa’s images that becomes problematic in itself. There are a number of ways that this darkness can be interpreted. The darkness of Fontainhas interiors, in Bete’s house or Lento’s shack, is a darkness that, as we will see, is a part of everyday life that is not without revelation. At other times, however, darkness appears as that which encroaches from the outside, especially in the abrasively white flats of Casal da Boba, or as a powerfully expressive force, as in the museum sequence. Darkness does not serve any consistent symbolic function, but retains a potential to threaten and obscure, as well as to enliven the imagination and provide everyday pleasure.

These two faces of darkness appear in writing on *Colossal Youth*, though not often within the same pieces. João Bénard da Costa makes a number of assertions that align darkness with malevolence. Noting that the hard drugs from In Vanda’s Room are gone in *Colossal Youth*, having been replaced by Vanda’s methadone treatments, he claims, “in spite of an apparent clarity, the black is even blacker than it was before” (41). Bénard da Costa then goes on to assert that, whether Costa knows it or not, “black is the colour that surrounds us in these new deserts made of lost rooms and where the young get settled” (43). In the darkness of the film, then, he sees a presentiment of what is to come, traces of which have already become manifest and inhabited by human beings.

Bénard da Costa also makes an assertion about Ventura and the letter that is pertinent to this line of thought. He writes:

“I think I will end up forgetting about myself” is the last line in Ventura’s letter. He didn’t forget, in the misleading appearance of memory. But he forgot about that dark corridor. What was still black in *O Sangue* (Blood, 1989) has turned into the absence of
all light. To survive is to keep repeating endlessly a love letter, or as Vanda does, to keep repeating endlessly the story of the day when she brought her daughter into the darkness. (43)

In this melancholy formulation, it is not forgetting that threatens Ventura, not an effacement of self, but the long black corridor, the secret of which, according to Bénard da Costa, Costa has said *Colossal Youth* is a story of. It is not the vagaries and erasure of memory that lead a man astray, from this point of view, but a darkness already in the world. As this darkness expands it threatens to engulf us, and already some people, like Vanda’s daughter, are being born into it. We may think here of William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence”, in which he reflects that each day and every night, some people are born into “endless night”, while others arrive to “sweet delight” (71). Bénard da Costa seems to recognise in *Colossal Youth* the presence of just such an endless night, a long black corridor, which is a desert of darkness into which more and more people are being born in our time.

Yet, what does it mean for the presence of black to become the absence of all light? The first case suggests a sort of balance, in which light and dark, black and white form some sort of harmony. If the amount of darkness grows to excess, the existence of a reserve of light, which will eventually return to expel the darkness, can be depended upon. In the latter instance, an absence of all light, there seems to be nothing to hope for, no other material to combat darkness with, save for, perhaps, a darkness that is not simply the absence of light, in which the memory of light somehow persists. Darkness is a type of problem in *Colossal Youth*, suggesting a number of lines of inquiry. Where there is no light, where no sun shines, what can be done to dispel the shadows in order to reveal the enemies and phantoms hidden within them? Can darkness be engaged as a power of vision that produces a knowledge outside of our capacity to internalise it in a linguistically grounded train of thought?

Leaving such problems for the moment, I would like to consider Rancière’s response to darkness in *Colossal Youth*. He emphasises that a world of possibilities are arrayed in the shadow forms upon the walls of the houses in Fontaínhas, a world opposed to the clear lines, clean walls, and well-lit rooms of the flats in Casal da Boba. “The problem with the white walls that welcome the worker to the housing project”, he writes, “is the same as the problem of the dark walls of the museum which reject him: they keep at bay the chance figures in which the imagination of the worker who crossed the seas, chased frogs from the city center, and slipped and fell from the scaffolding can be on a par with that of the artist”
(“Politics” 24-5). The presence of darkness in this – perhaps somewhat overly – optimistic formulation serves to guarantee the vitality of the worker’s imagination, the figures of which are better served by the chiaroscuro interiors of the Fontainhas houses. Rancière’s notion of this power of darkness is primarily dependent on a single scene, in “Bete’s place, where ‘father’ and ‘daughter’ amuse themselves seeing, as good disciples of Leonardo da Vinci, the formation of all sorts of fantastic figures” (24). The pleasure of these two poor people is not one of consumption, but of creation, a musing of the imagination that calls on what haunts them within as well as their attunement to the phantom forms that take shape on the edges of visibility.

It is here worth recalling this scene in some detail. Bete sits up on a bed with her back to the wall while Ventura rests his head upon her lap, his left knee drawn up and his right ankle lain across it. Both of them are enveloped in shadow. [Figure 5] First Bete claims to see two turtles and a hen, neither of which Ventura is able to see. However, when she then says she sees a uniformed cop in a cap with rows of houses behind him, Ventura is able to recognise her vision on the wall, as well as, beneath the cop, a lion baring his teeth, and,
somewhere above the lion, a woman, and a man with a tail. They agree that if the man has a tail, he must be a devil. But while there may be devils in the shadows, they both prefer them to the invisible devils in the dwellings that await them. “When they give us those white rooms”, says Bete, “we’ll stop seeing these things”. It is as if a resource of fertile images resides within the darkness, has darkness as its prerequisite, and these images replenish the ability of people to have a stake in making their own world by telling stories about it, by constituting fictions through which the adventures and sufferings of their own lives are given new forms.

But we also see Bete and Ventura themselves as figures among the shadows. During the scene when they talk about what they can see, which we cannot see, they are blanketed in a darkness that both restricts what we are able to see clearly, and is what we are able to see clearly. Costa shoots them from a high-angle, and above them the shadows give way to pale green walls scrawled with an obscure calligraphy of markings. Is this image meant to reflect the shadow images of animals and devils perceived by Ventura and Bete? Is it a darkness the obscurity of which presents opportunities restricted by clarity and light?

In The Infinite Conversation, Blanchot reflects on darkness and vision with reference to the writings of his friend, Lévinas. “To speak”, Blanchot writes, “is not the same as to see. Speaking frees thought from the optical imperative that for thousands of years in the Western tradition has subjugated our approach to beings and induced us to think only under the guarantee of light or under the threat of its absence” (57). This other form of vision, which Rancière recognises in Colossal Youth, is a kind of thought that is possible only, to the contrary, on the guarantee of darkness. This is a different kind of optical imperative, and images that accord to it, possess, like the speech advocated here by Blanchot, a literalness that obstructs the extraction of a speakable content from a visual image. Darkness makes images obscure to the degree that it makes them offer something that, as Blanchot writes, “is always disclosed without having had to disclose itself, and [which] has always in advance reduced all movement of concealing or self-concealing to a mode of the manifest” (Infinite 46) The presence of darkness in many images of Colossal Youth, like this one of Ventura and Bete, introduces a discrepancy into seeing, a play on the essence of darkness, which makes seeing vision of both what can and cannot be translated into language, a registration of what cannot be taken into knowledge through sight, as well as what can.
We can recognise in the darkness of *Colossal Youth* a part of the world of the people on screen, and thus through our experience of that darkness feel a greater proximity to that world by way of the film. We can see in it a kind of beauty very different to that offered up in the paintings of a museum, or a garden filled with sunlight, an obscurity that alternately resists our attempts to capture it in thought, and provides opportunities to invent, like Bete and Ventura, the relationship between what one is able to see and to speak of. This act of thought, between what is seen and spoken of, realises a life of the imagination related to the invention of oneself and one’s community through speech acts. We can, however, see as well in such darkness a threat, a falling of night that would obliterate the histories of people existing on and beyond the margins of mainstream society. There is also in *Colossal Youth* a relationship between darkness and difference, the darkness of the Other, which maintains its mystery in plain sight before those who would decipher it.

Darkness in *Colossal Youth*, like the Other as conceived by Lévinas, is the presence of something the essence of which cannot be known, yet which suggests a problem of ethical relation that precedes all ontology. The darkness of the film, not only within its images, but running through its cracks and abscesses, speaks to the experience of the face, or visage, in Lévinas’ terminology, which Blanchot explicitly connects to his own notion of the Outside. “What to my mind remains decisive”, he writes, “is that the manner by which *autrui* presents himself in the experience of the visage, this presence of the outside itself (of exteriority, says Lévinas), is not the presence of a form appearing in light or its simple retreat in the absence of light; neither veiled nor unveiled” (*Infinite* 55). Considered as a tactic of face-making, the darkness of *Colossal Youth* can be thought as not only a strategy of revealing a world through shadows that neither conceal nor assert the presence of a secret, a world that develops and preserves a separation of spectator and screen, a separation that is nevertheless an ethical relation. The face transcends space and time, is constructed in the non-localizable relations between readable images and speech-acts of becoming, but also enters into vision itself in the form of an obscurity that demands to be read and resists all definitive readings.

In his polemical 1948 essay on art, “Reality and its Shadow”, Lévinas opposes the idea that art is a useful source of truth and knowledge, as well as the idea that in producing works of art the artist is engaged in an ethical or political act (Craig 138). At one point during the essay, he contends that, “Art does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow”
(Reality 3). Now, in both Rancière and Deleuze’s notions of political cinema, the construction of relationships and connections that are neither veiled nor unveiled – within and between images (and sounds) – is of crucial importance. This does not seem to be the type of obscurity – since it is an obscurity like that in the revelation of the face – which Levinas is criticising in Reality and Its Shadow. Nor is it political in the sense in which Levinas seems to take the term in the essay. Furthermore, in concluding “Reality and its Shadow”, he makes it known that the relation of the Other has not been taken into account in his arguments, an interesting point considering that a few years later he would contend, as we saw in the chapter on Climates, that art is an activity that “lends faces to things” (Is 10). We can distinguish between different types of obscurity, between that which does not allow for knowledge, and another that simply prevents us from believing that the knowledge of the senses corresponds to an articulable knowledge.

The composition of a degree of obscurity within and between images and sequences suggests a very basic strategy, with political ramifications, of (re)-presenting real people on screen and exploring the situation of those people in relation to the spaces that they live in. So while the political aims of In Vanda’s Room and Colossal Youth may seem somewhat unclear, or problematic, the problematic relationship between what is revealed and what is concealed is political insofar as it produces a singular figure out of the complex realities of a particular place at a particular time. There is a sense in which these films test our capacity for being in the presence of alterity, among relations and humans the natures of which are neither hidden nor disclosed, but which incorporate darkness such that what we know about them never allows us to encircle them and fix their identities with finality.

**Ozu and the Beautiful Strangeness**

The still lifes of Costa are even more provocative in relation to the notion that visible images present a kind of knowledge that can neither be thought as revelation nor concealment. I will conclude this chapter with a consideration of two of them, which will be related to the still lifes of Ozu, and Deleuze’s conjectures regarding them. Costa’s still lifes impose a power of the outside, since they manifest a duration that is independent of any movement that would subordinate them to the development of sensory-motor signs. In this, they are like those of Ozu, which, according to Deleuze, suggest the presence of a cosmic horizon beyond the sensory-motor horizon formed around the characters by the linking of
actions, perceptions, and affections (TI 16-7). Deleuze argues that in this way Ozu’s still-lifes present the form of a single time – “the unchanging form in which change is produced” – that links the everyday in what Paul Schrader had called, in Transcendental Style in Film, “something unified and permanent”. There is a decentring of the human world through an image that provides thought of the world outside of its relations to the characters (if not its relation to the filmmaker).

There are two still lifes from Colossal Youth that are especially striking in this regard. One is a shot of the flowers in Vanda’s flat in Casal de Boba, and the other captures some bottles collected in a corner in the shack shared by Ventura and Lento. [Figures 6 and 7] The first passes into another sort of image when Ventura enters the frame, while in the second stillness reigns for the entirety of the shot. This variation of course occurs in Ozu’s films as well, the fullness of the still life passing over into a state of things, an arena for human activity. What most differentiates Costa’s still lifes from Ozu’s is that they seem the result of greater effort, as if they have been stolen from the reaches of darkness encroaching at the edges of the frame. The sense of something manifest that is neither revelation nor an act of concealment, developed in relation to darkness above, is especially strong in the image of the bottles.

Yet these are also the types of image that Rancière claims present us, more than any others, with the sensible wealth of the world, which any of us can learn to possess. Is the darkness of the two images above a part of this wealth, or a testament to their fragility? Is it, that is, a testament to the fragility of our link the restorative beauty of such moments as those created by Costa? This wealth, this beauty, is perhaps that which anyone can learn to possess, but it is also easily lost. It does not reside anywhere in particular. It passes with the changing hours of a day and the shifts of light that accompany their procession. There is always something in it that is strange, since we are unable to recognise why it appears to us to be, if it appears to us as such at all, innately beautiful, without our having to consider its relation to us and our needs and desires. This beauty appears as a source of knowledge rather than something we can hope to know in its essence.

In the commentary included on the Criterion release of the Fontainhas Trilogy, Costa recalls being surprised when the material he was shooting for In Vanda’s Room began to coalesce into something that felt like a real film. We can get a sense of what a real film is...
for him through another comment he made in *Finding the Criminal*, a film that presents a meandering conversation between the filmmakers and Costa. He recalls that when he began working with Digital Video he wanted to find out if he could make films that would stand alongside those that he most admired. “I wanted to achieve a beautiful strangeness”, he remarks at one point. This will to “a beautiful strangeness” must be considered in conjunction with the drive to show us something that is not right, as well as the desire to collaborate with people who we do not usually see in films. To compose a beautiful strangeness, to confer something that is wrong, and to give voices to those whose voice is marginalised: perhaps this is the threefold imperative that shaped *In Vanda’s Room* and *Colossal Youth*.

The beautiful strangeness is ultimately produced in the creation of relationships that are neither revealed nor concealed. It arises in the interferences between the shared lives of real or fictional characters, and images like Costa’s still lifes, which are themselves haunted by our uncertain relationship to the splendour of the world as they present it. Or, in relation to the question of horizon, we can say the beautiful strangeness arises from the establishment of relationships between the events within a human, sensory-motor horizon, and the evocation of the world beyond it through the intermediary of images in which the absence of humans becomes the fullness of the world. In this way, these films establish new relations between humans and the world, even if that means that they merely create a space in which we can think both the distance of our thought from the world, and the impossibility of our creating ourselves from anything other than the stories that arise out of our encounters and journeys in it.
8. Becoming Animal, Desire, and Repetition: 

*Tropical Malady*

It is up to us to go to extreme places, to extreme times, where the highest and the deepest truths live and rise up. The places of thought are the tropical zones frequented by the tropical man, not temperate zones or the moral, methodical or moderate man.

- Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 103.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s *Tropical Malady* (2004) is a film composed of two parts that stand in uncertain relation to each other. Or, we could say instead that the two parts stand in a concrete relation to each other through the film’s presentation of them, yet we remain nevertheless unable to think this relation clearly, to speak of it sufficiently. This is true as well of the next feature film that Apichatpong made, *Syndromes and a Century* (2006). This chapter and the following one will therefore take up the problems presented by this way of structuring a film around a void, a fissure, a point at which a film begins again. With regard to *Tropical Malady*, I have chosen three central areas of inquiry. The first is the relationship between animal, human, and spirit established by the film. The second revolves around the potential for a desire that would not simply be the issue of a primal drive, thereby destined to arise again and again, or a psychological desire to repeat. A “true” desire would rather constitute a way out of such entrapping circularity. The third area of inquiry is repetition, specifically the notion that the second half of the film is an inexact, “good” repetition of the first, which somehow realises the manifestation of such a true desire. A number of problems related to knowledge, identity, and the distribution of forces across the boundary line at the film’s centre will be encountered in these inquiries, as will the difficulty of establishing our relation to a filmic world that is not self-identical, but rather identified by its difference from itself.

*Time, Animal, Human*
In Jorge Luis Borges’s story, “The South”, the protagonist, Juan Dahlmann, sits stroking the fur of a black cat in a café and has a revelation about the difference between human and animal. All contact between man and animal is illusory, thinks Dahlmann, “because man lives in time, in successiveness, while the magical animal lives in the present, in the eternity of the instant” (176). The idea that humans live in time is easily understood; we live between past and future, carrying the past with us through the present, as well as our hopes and fears for the future. We move along an irreversible, horizontal line, expanses of time stretching out before and behind us. But to say that the animal lives in the present, or the eternity of the instant, is, in a sense, to say that the animal does not live in time at all, that it is itself a force of time, one that may disrupt, profitably or otherwise, our chronological trajectory.

Nietzsche begins his essay, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”, by comparing man to animal, and comes to a similar conclusion as Borges’s narrator. For Nietzsche, the animal is to be envied due to the fact that “it at once forgets”, and because for it “every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished for ever”. He argues that the animal “lives unhistorically because it is contained in the present” (Untimely 61). If this line of thought is taken to its end, to say the animal is contained in the present is no different than saying it is a force of the present, that no duration encloses it, that the animal introduces and develops durations with its movements. In Nietzsche’s text, the life of the animal is opposed to the being of the human. He laments, “Empty ‘being’ is granted me, but not full green ‘life’; the feeling that tells me I exist warrants to me only that I am a thinking creature, not that I am a living one, not that I am an animal but at most a cogital” (119). Here, the animal is aligned with life and incessant becoming, an asubjective presentness full of potentialities the actualisation of which is not encumbered by the weight of a remembered past. For a human to become animal would thus be to experiment with powers of life that the rational landscape of human society, and the apparent causal relationships between events separated from one another along the line of time, often make difficult to access. It is also to act in a way that extends the realm of the human outside of the ideas that encircle it at any given time. It is a way of overcoming the mode of being by which man defines himself at a given point.

The ability of human beings to creatively embody and experiment with animal-time is at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal.¹ The composition of
works in which time may be experienced as heterogeneous intensities that attract and obstruct thought, rather than the chronological support in which one thinks, is also central to their assessment of the power of art. To make art is, from this perspective, a becoming-animal of man, as is, differently, any absorbing experience of it. This idea, too, appears in Nietzsche, with particular clarity in a passage from The Will to Power: “Art reminds us of states of animal vigor; it is on the one hand an excess and overflow of blooming physicality into the world of images and desires; on the other, an excitation of the animal functions through the images and desires of intensified life; -- an enhancement of the feeling of life, a stimulant to it” (422). Deleuze and Guattari likewise conceive of art’s value as a physical matter, an unleashing of sensations and forces – by the artist into the work and from the work into the spectator’s world – that attract our attention without our thereby being able to readily speak of their effects or importance. For Deleuze and Guattari though, art does not so much remind us of states of animal vigour as create them. The work offers an opportunity to enter a world in which sensations outstrip our ability to ignore or categorise them. At times, such works may offer a life apart from being, making us inhabit a dilating present rather than making the present something we are able to stand apart from and appraise with regard to its relationship to past events.

The notion of becoming-animal can be seen to resonate with Tropical Malady in a number of ways. This is especially true of the second half of the film, in which a soldier pursues a creature that takes the form of a man during the day and that of a tiger during the night. The soldier himself also seems to establish a new relationship to the jungle as he trails the creature, cracking open a reservoir of animality that had lain dormant within him, which makes him more at home within what had at first appeared as an alien space, without order. However, thinking becoming-animal through its figuration, its representation, is not without problems, as Deleuze and Guattari assert straightaway in A Thousand Plateaus that “a becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself” and “has no term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first” (238). That is to say, becomings-animal have no solid form, they are movement from one state or quality to another, and anyone or anything undergoing such a becoming is unstable and continually opening on to further ways of affecting or being affected that alter what it is. If we were to see the distinct forms into which the creature
transforms but miss the passage itself, we would be confronted with the provisional results of a becoming-animal rather than that becoming itself.

It is, however, also true that spectators are granted an intensely affective encounter with the jungle, alongside the depictions of the creature’s multiple forms, and the soldier’s transformation as he searches for it. Both the man and the creature are unstable ideas of humanity infused with animal and spirit, but the soldier’s experience of the jungle also passes to some degree over to the spectator. That is, the spectator inhabits a world that she gains knowledge of through both a vision that operates at a remove from what is seen, and images and sounds that establish a more direct connection between her and the jungle. Apichatpong’s deployment of sound is especially effective in immersing us in this tropical world, and this feeling is enhanced by numerous images that limit us to the fragment of that world to which the soldier has access to with his own senses. For instance, the camera often trails just behind him as he walks, and when he shines his torch into the darkness during the night we see only what it illuminates.

My argument is thus the following: particular becomings-animal are developed through this interplay of figures that embody concepts of human-animal transformation, with a cinematic time-space that may give rise to novel postures of orientation in spectators. These figures retain in their form something anomalous, and reroute the emotional and affective currents of the film in subterranean ways when thought in conjunction with a world both natural and phantasmagorical, where the enclosing space of the jungle and the untimeliness that reigns therein ask of us an animal, physical interaction. We move in a thought constituted by images and sounds that grows more hallucinatory as they grow more literal.

Part One: Happiness

While this argument is mostly related to the world of the second half of *Tropical Malady*, our encounter with that world is coloured by our memories of the film’s first half. This initial section is in fact preceded by a quote that raises the question of the relationship between the human and the animal, and toward the conclusion of this part of the film there is a scene in which the desire of the two protagonists for one another is rendered with a playful but foreboding animality. Therefore, before moving on to an assessment of the latter part of the film, I would like to briefly outline what takes place earlier in the film, and to
highlight those aspects of it that are of greatest concern to a consideration of what eventually takes place in the jungle. The connection of the film’s two halves will itself be the central object of concern later in the chapter, and if we are to understand the second half as a repetition of the first, we must of course first understand what exactly goes on in the opening segment of the film.

In the first scene of *Tropical Malady*, we see some soldiers who have discovered a dead body during their patrol. Among these soldiers is a young man we will come to know as Keng (Banlop Lomnoi). We then see the soldiers at the home of a family who lives near the jungle. This is where Keng and Tong (Sakda Kaewbuadee), the son in the family, first see each other, and it is the romance between these two men that is the central concern in this part of the film. However, we have already seen Tong before we reach the family’s property. Just after an image in which the soldiers enter the forest with the body, there is one of Tong walking naked through a clearing. No potential explanation for this appears until the final moments of the first section, and aside from this brief image, the narrative proceeds relatively straightforwardly until the break in the middle of the film. Keng and Tong run into each other again, and the former visits the latter at home and eventually persuades him to go out on the nearby town with him. They go to the cinema, where they spiritedly grapple after Keng puts his hand on Tong’s leg, and also visit a seafood restaurant where the singer dedicates a song to Keng, which Tong ends up performing with her on stage. For the most part, the stars seem to align for the couple, and their homosexual relationship is not threatened from without.²

Although the burgeoning love between Keng and Tong may at times seem somewhat overly romanticised, we may nevertheless detect the presence of a problem that threatens it from within. In an interview with James Quandt, Apichatpong claimed that he wanted the first half of the film to seem unrealistic, “like a memory of something, so that when you leave the theatre you question what was real and what wasn’t” (“Exquisite” 130-1). In a piece on the director, Quandt also quotes Apichatpong as saying that in a distillation from memory, like this section of the film, “we just keep the good part” (“Resistant” 68). But Tong actually often seems slightly wary of Keng’s advances, to be both taken in by and resistant to the saccharine terms of affection that Keng directs toward him. A problem resides around the question of just who Tong is, and we know, while Keng does not, that he is for some reason a guy who has at least once in his life wandered naked dejectedly through
a jungle clearing. It is not, however, that in this first half we are aligned with Keng’s perspective, that we simply see things through the rosy hued glasses of a man absolutely besotted. While such a perspective is not wholly absent, Apichatpong’s recreation from his own memories of a love affair, and the present of Keng, which is coloured with his infatuation for Tong, are indecipherable from one another. But the shining world seen through this lovelight will ultimately be doused in darkness, and when desire emerges again it will be something different, more complex, but perhaps also more resilient than that longing concomitant with a new love like that of Tong and Keng.

The darkness that will mark the second half of *Tropical Malady* slips in at the conclusion of the first. While sitting on a platform looking out over the jungle, Tong and Keng are joined by a woman who sells flowers at a nearby shrine. With her, they begin to descend into the caves beneath the shrine, but when they arrive at a tunnel that leads to a lake outside, she informs them that this particular cave snuffs out not only candlelight, but torchlight as well. When she asks if they would like to go further, an excited Tong answers in the affirmative, but Keng fearfully refuses, and they all then make their way back above ground. All three of them then visit a friend of the woman’s, who joins them in making a trip to town. Later in the evening, after darkness has fallen, we see Tong and Keng riding a motorcycle, enjoyment apparent on their faces as the former clings onto the latter from behind.

There is then a sharp cut away from the two on the motorcycle to a medium shot of Tong urinating with his back to the camera. In the following image, Keng lifts Tong’s hand up to his face and begins to smell and nuzzle it, ignoring Tong’s warning that he has not washed his hands, aroused no doubt to his actions by this very fact. [Figure 1] Tong eventually pulls his hand away and, in turn, takes Keng’s hand and begins to lick it, seemingly slightly possessed as he performs the act. [Figure 2] When Tong stops doing this, he smiles and giggles as Keng looks at him disarmed, fascinated and vulnerable. Tong then turns away and we see him, in the following image, walking beyond the light cast by a streetlamp into the absolute darkness further down the road. In this exchange human desire is given a particularly bestial cast, and undertones of violence and danger surface; an animal becoming is linked with the growth of love, and the primal nature of what we later see and hear feels related in an intimate and volatile way to the articulation of desire and its transformative powers in this scene. The darkness of the cave, which Tong is exhilarated to enter into, and
Figure 1

Figure 2
which Keng turns away from, also seems related to the play of desire enacted by the two men. There is an important difference between Tong and Keng that appears both in their response to the darkness of the cavern, and the degree of animality they embody in licking each other’s hands.

After Tong disappears into the night, there is a long sequence set to a saccharine but narcotic pop song, “Straight”, by the Thai pop band, Fashion Show. Keng rides his motorcycle through the dark rural roads and into town, apparently left ecstatic by the sniffing and kissing exchange. He is then shown in bright sunshine riding in the back of a truck with the other soldiers from his unit. This is the end of the blissful reverie. In the next shot we see Tong waking lethargically and looking out the window. A handheld camera then follows Keng through Tong’s family’s house, hovering behind him as if a revelation awaits him, and us, around the corner. But the next image, shot with a static camera, reveals nothing visually, and Keng enters the initially empty frame and sits on Tong’s now vacant bed. He flips the pages of a photo album, which the two had looked through together earlier, and as he does so we learn by way of the off-screen voices of Tong’s parents that a mysterious creature, some sort of monster, has been killing cattle at night, and that the villagers are terrified of it. The last thing we see is a photograph of Tong and another young man, which Keng is looking at. We can imagine that Keng, as he looks at this image, may well wonder just who the man he has come to love is, this man whose face is obscured by the sun’s radiance, just as his identity is obscured by the radiance of Keng’s desire for him. When Keng turns the page, the image, beginning with Tong’s face, is extinguished in light. It is as if it has been immolated from within.

**Part 2: Darkness (In Pursuit of the Were-Tiger)**

Between the two parts of the film the screen remains black for a little over fifteen seconds. Then, over a primitive painting of a tiger, the second segment is given a title: “A Spirit’s Path”. A legend is related in text on the screen about a shape-shifting shaman who once roamed the jungles and played tricks on villagers. We then see a brief scene of the shaman, who, in the form of a young woman, coaxes a hunter out of a tree by claiming that her mother has a fever. But as the hunter follows her, he notices a tiger’s tail curling up from below the hem of her dress. We are informed, again by text on the tiger painting, that the hunter shot the shaman and in so doing trapped him in the tiger spirit, and that therefore the
shaman’s spirit is transformed every night into a tiger to haunt travellers.³ While this final bit of information is related on the screen, the camera seems to float very slowly forward toward a rudimentary fence pieced together from branches, and Keng, dressed in a camouflage military uniform, with a rifle at his side, again steps into an empty frame, before passing through a doorway in the fence and beginning to move toward the jungle beyond it.

The characters are played by the same actors but given no names in this half of the film – save for the point at which Banlop Lomnoi, who plays Keng, refers to himself as Ekarat while trying futilely to contact army headquarters on his walkie-talkie. During the day, Sakda Kaewbuadee, “Tong”, is in human form, and at night he becomes a tiger. When in human form he is naked, as was Tong at the beginning of the film, but now he is covered in tattoos that had not adorned his body in the earlier image of him passing through a clearing. Although we do not see him as a tiger until the end, we hear him, in the darkness of the jungle, growling as Keng stalks him and is stalked by him. Keng searches for traces of him on bushes, trees, and the jungle floor, at one point coming across the point at which a human hand print gives way to the imprint of a tiger’s paw in the earth. Entering the jungle is like entering another world for Keng, one that initially appears unmappable, since one space beneath the trees greatly resembles another. The jungle also seems to be alive itself, as a result of the myriad animal noises made by insects, birds, and other creatures that both Keng and we are unable to see. The first night, he cannot sleep and lodges himself between the large branches of a tree, shining his torch toward some of the sounds that emanate from the darkness. His disorientation is also ours, sometimes due to the fact that we are aligned with his point of view, but more generally because we too find ourselves in a space seemingly without structure, a space that, certainly, structures no sort of human interactions.

Quandt claims that there are no Deleuzian any-space-whatevers in Apichatpong’s films, by which he presumably means ruined urban spaces that have lost their functionality, and generic transit locales (“Resistant” 18). The jungle itself, however, is a particular type of any-space-whatever, one of those tropical regions in which Deleuze claims the highest and deepest truths rise up. “Space is no longer determined, it has become the any-space-whatever which is identical to the power of the spirit, to the perpetually renewed spiritual decision” (MI 120).⁴ Deleuze wrote this with regard to the fragmentation in Bresson’s work, but it is true of Apichatpong’s jungle as well, though in a quite different sense, which needs here to be addressed.
In Deleuzian terms, the any-space-whatever is the space of the affection-image, and the affection-image, in the regime of the movement-image, occupies the interval between the perception-image and the action-image. As the image of the interval, the affection-image stands in an important relation to the regime of the time-image, since, as Agustín Zarzosa argues, that regime is oriented from “the collapsed sensory-motor system toward the interval” rather than, as in the regime of the movement-image, “from the interval toward the sensory-motor regime” (39). The interval persists in time-image cinema, persists in images that express affects that are not conferred an identity by the film’s other images. One important perspective to keep in mind with regard to the regime of the time-image is then that those films that explore it concern themselves, as John Rajchman writes, “with all that happens in between stimulus and response” (Deleuze 133), with the production of a present that does not pass such that it disappears in the sensory-motor sign constituted through it. The any-space-whatever’s potential for rupturing the linearity of chronology and the continuity of Euclidean space is dependent on the affect produced not being actualised clearly as emotion, or a change between emotions, experienced by a character, or as a correlate to the emotional tenor of the things that happen to and between characters. The interval takes precedent when it ceases to orient perception and action, and instead becomes expressive for itself, expressive, that is, as a movement of space-time that adds a dimension outside the horizon formed by the images clearly linked within a sensory-motor schema.

It is not only that sensory-motor links slacken as the interval dilates, but that this dilation shifts our experience away from the extraction of information from images in order to think them as parts of a coherent whole - which they externalise and in which they are internalised – and toward a confrontation with the difference of each new block of space, time, and movement. The jungle in *Tropical Malady* is an any-space-whatever because most of the images of it prefigure no connection to human activity. Such connectivity is suspended in the space of the interval. Instead, the jungle calls for those who enter to invent a new relation to it, a mode of being appropriate to the particular patch of it in which one finds oneself. The pursuit of the tiger-human creature is indeed the primary directive guiding this half of the film, but this pursuit is dependent upon Keng’s ability to establish a new relationship to the jungle. This is the “renewed spiritual decision” in the jungle, the decision to journey into the unknown despite the fact that it may again and again force one to reorient methods of thought, judgment, and action. As Natalie Boehler writes, the jungle in
Apichatpong’s films “is a radically different world, populated by spirits, mysterious beings, and half-animals. It is the realm of dreams, the non-rational, of secrets and desires. Whoever enters it leaves the safe communal space of the town or home and faces the unknown” (296). It is this facing of the unknown, or unknowable, that takes on a spiritual dimension in *Tropical Malady*.

Our experience of the space of the jungle corresponds neither to the subjective experiences of Keng, nor the objective perception, as if from outside, of his movements in it. We are imbricated in his pursuit, but also granted our own journey, for instance, through images of the jungle that do not accord to Keng’s perception and from which both he and the creature are absent. It is difficult to say precisely when images meant to communicate the experience of Keng pass into those that provide us with our own “trip” into the trees. This is another form of free-indirect vision, since the experience of the character and the vision of the filmmaker become intermingled. The camera may pan across a portion of the jungle, as if encircling us in it while we are not identified with Keng; sometimes, on the other hand, it floats, along with Keng or as an unattributable vision, tilted up to the treetops, which are illuminated by the sunlight that they almost entirely seal off.

We thus not only follow Keng with our eyes, taking in views of his movements and stillness, of the jungle and his views of the jungle, but also seem to enter a jungle ourselves, a maze without walls, a world the life of which surrounds us. [Figures 3 and 4] Sound plays a large part in the construction of a space that seems to be living, rather than a space marked out for humans to live in, a space that primarily functions as the arena in which human events unfold. The persistence of the ambient noises that fill out the soundtrack – a combination of noises recorded in the jungle, day and night, and electronic effects – is vital to the trance-inducing effect of the film. Sometimes sound provides a dissonant counterpoint to images, as when noises we have heard earlier appear without explanation. At one point, for example, we hear the saws that Tong used while working at an ice factory in the first half of the film. And at the pivotal moment when Keng sees a tree lit up by glowing, firefly-like creatures, and then watches the spirit of a dead cow rise up from the corpse and walk into the forest, we hear the sound of his walkie-talkie, which had been destroyed earlier by the creature. This strange use of sound heightens this moment, which shows us that a visionary capacity has opened up to the soldier as he has become more in tune with the jungle.
We are immersed in a sound world that heightens the illusion of actually being in the jungle ourselves. It makes us sense the life in the darkness during the nocturnal sequences, and even during the day reminds us of the fact that we see only a miniscule fragment of what goes on in the jungle. Boehler argues that vision is obstructed to such a degree by foliage and darkness that the image itself functions to disorient. “While sight is the primary human sense”, she writes, “and the sense most addressed by the medium of film, Apichatpong’s cinematography in the jungle scenes seems to subvert this primacy” (299). Sound heightens this disorientation, as she argues, both because what is heard seems most often to be outside of the frame, and since unattributable, or problematic noises (like the walkie-talkie and the ice saws) are constantly joined to the soundscape of natural jungle noises. Perhaps orienting oneself to the jungle, like the soldier, in the first place involves becoming used to the presence of sounds the sources of which one cannot hope to discover.

The lack of contextual information in this episode disorients as well. We are never really told what inspires this journey into the jungle, or whether or not these are the same people from the film’s first half. They are in as much they are the same two actors, but aside from their own distinct physical features nothing clearly confers or explains their identities. Rather than deciding that these men are or are not Keng and Tong, we are better off believing that they both are and are not the same people. One man, dressed as a soldier, pursues something that is man, animal, and spirit. And spirit is, as we are told, trapped by the forms that it inhabits, by its bodies. It is only truly spirit in the force of its transformations, the inexplicable, unseen mutation of man into tiger, of tiger into man. Its essence is to become other. The only time Tong’s transformation is depicted is by way of the soundtrack alone, his body having disappeared into the jungle, which we look upon as his cries of anguish become the growling of the unseen beast. This sort of irrationality belongs to the jungle. We may initially assume that Keng hunts down this monster because it is a threat to the people of the village we have seen in the first half, but as the film goes on we find that he pursues something else, that he in some way desires to be devoured by the creature, absolved of the strictures of time in the nexus of spirit, animal, and man.

It is difficult to say how much time passes during the soldier’s pursuit of the tiger spirit, how much time it takes for the man to begin his own transformation. One day, he catches up to his prey, while he is in human form. The spirit-man had become fascinated by his walkie-talkie and stolen it, along with the rucksack where it was stored. “Keng” ends up
being beaten unconscious and rolled down a steep hill after he chases “Tong” down. He awakes battered and bloody and continues. The soldier finds at one point that he is able to understand a baboon, and, later on, after covering himself with mud and catching a fish with his bare hands, he calls out to the baboon in a series of hooting noises. Time passes, a change occurs in him, but there is no possibility for us to say with certainty whether days, months, or years pass as tiger-spirit and man circle each other in the depths of the jungle. We have moved into a mythic time, suspended outside history.

It does, however, feel as if the hunt proceeds in a linear fashion, the soldier becoming more and more ragged, but also more hardened, more a part of this jungle, the jungle more a part of him, and, perhaps, us. In pursuit of the tiger-spirit-man, Keng indeed experiences a becoming-animal, establishes relations to the jungle that were at first not accessible to him, and we may do likewise. When the baboon speaks to him, it says: “The tiger trails you like a shadow. Kill him to free him from the ghost world. Or let him devour you and enter his world”. We arrive at a point of mystery in the end, a point at which the soldier’s fate is not something that we can comprehend anymore than the manifestation of spirit in the transformation between man and tiger. The soldier begins to walk on all fours toward the end of the film, to be closer to the earth of the jungle, to be more like the beast he pursues. It is at this point that the tiger appears to him. As “Keng” trembles and shines his torch up at the giant beast perched on an enormous tree limb, the creature speaks to him, in the voice of Tong: “Once I’ve devoured your soul”, it tells him, “we are neither animal nor human”. [Figure 5] What lies beyond such bodies is not granted us, but the jungle, as it is presented in the last half of the film, seems to harbour many strange, as yet unknown, forms of life.

**Exterminated Angels**

Before I continue my discussion of *Tropical Malady*, and eventually speculate as to the way the two halves of the film are to be thought with regard to each other, I would like to take a brief detour through Deleuze’s reading of another film in which the irrational, repetition, and desire enter into a unique arrangement. In Buñuel’s *The Exterminating Angel*, a story is constructed that is dependent upon the introduction of an irrationality into a world that we may otherwise recognise as our own. At a certain moment in which all the guests at a dinner party are in the same room, it so happens that they are no longer able to leave that
room, as we gradually see them come to understand. According to Deleuze, this scenario allows Buñuel to develop an “originary world”, an activity that Deleuze locates at the heart of naturalism. The originary world exists in a space between the affection-image and the action-image, between that image that expresses itself as pure quality in a space wrenched apart from the world (epitomised by the close-up), and the cinematic milieu, where actions are comprehensible because they are reactions to comprehensible states of things, where space and time are stabilised and we are given to know why people do what they do.

The originary world only exists and operates in the depths of a real milieu, and is only valid through its immanence in this milieu, whose violence and cruelty it reveals. But at the same time the milieu only presents itself as real in its immanence in the originary world, it has the status of a ‘derived’ milieu, which receives a temporality as destiny from the originary world” (MI 129).

The originary world animates a represented milieu by way of dark impulses, animalistic and brutal, irrational forces that are taken as the roots of all desires. Such desires cannot be extinguished once and for all, but can only exhaust the possibilities of their always-temporary satisfaction in a given milieu. Destiny in such a world is the eternal looping of cycles of impulse and its satisfaction, the fate of a will at the service of unconscious drives. This is a
truth that lies, for Buñuel, behind or beneath that of the action-image; actions are not
common-sense reactions to specific states of things, but the path of least resistance to the
satiation of impulses. Deleuze therefore claims that naturalists are deserving of the
Nietzschean title “physicians of civilisation”, since they aim to bring out the primal
motivations around which reason is mobilised falsely in the name of truth.

*The Exterminating Angel* attempts to reveal the irrationalities governing reason from
within by imposing an irrationality from outside, but according to Deleuze it also
ambiguously develops the idea of repetition as salvation, as a potential escape from a destiny
determined entirely by impulses. The characters in *The Exterminating Angel* are able to leave
the room when they assume precisely their positions from the moment in which they had
become unable to exit the room. Though they are then trapped again when they have come
back together in a church for mass – heightening the ambiguity of Buñuel’s position
regarding the powers of repetition, and implicating even the church’s spiritual aspirations in
the eternal return of the impulses – Deleuze, while rejecting the explanation that the good
repetition is the precise repetition, perceives in the film the potential for a *good* repetition,
which would be a line of flight out of both the cyclical world of the impulses and the
chronologically bound world enclosed by common-sense actions and reactions, the sensory-
motor schema of the action-image. “To reach a repetition which saves, or which changes
life, beyond good and evil, would it not be necessary”, wonders Deleuze, “to break with the
order of the impulses, to undo the cycles of time, reach an element which would be like a
true ‘desire’, or like a choice capable of constantly beginning again…?” (*MI* 129). To further
explore the potential for and of a repetition capable of transforming the conditions of
thought and life, I want to return to the world(s) of *Tropical Malady*, to seek in the film
something that could be affirmed as a true desire, manifested in its repetition, beyond the
impulses of naturalism, before its utility or sense in a given situation.

**Repetition, Infinity, Desire**

The second half of *Tropical Malady* can be considered a repetition of the first, a
beginning again, inexact so, but in a deeply resonant way. It is less important that we
recognise it cognitively as a repetition than that we can in some way, first, feel it as such, and
then invent some way to think it, to speak of it, as such. This feeling of repetition is a point
at which thought comes up against a boundary, but this is a problem to be addressed
creatively, by way of a truth conceived in the belief that its value lies not in its status as Truth, but in its efficacy in describing an elusive generative power unique to Apichatpong’s film. Anyone who writes about Tropical Malady must confront the void at the centre of it, and a number of the claims made by those who have done so are relevant to my own arguments here. Quandt, in an interview with Apichatpong, asserts that, for him, the film is “the same story told twice, of a pursuer and his prey who yearn to merge or converge with the other” (“Exquisite” 129). Nathan Lee notes that the film “dramatizes states of being on the threshold of transformation”, and also comments upon the way Apichatpong “guides his audience toward the infinite, indicating a territory beyond words, sounds, or images” (“Jungle” 228). Finally, Dennis Lim asserts that the second half of the film, like the first, “traces an anatomy of desire” (227). Let us begin then, begin again, that is, with the idea of the second story as a repetition of the first, the infinite beyond the images and sounds as epitomised by the black screen between the two sections, and the assertion that the film addresses the question of what constitutes desire.

The second half is made to feel like a beginning-again through the long caesura of darkness between the two parts, a black screen that is, according to Apichatpong, a mirror facing in both directions (“Exquisite” 129). On either side of that dark divide, the primary bodies are those of Sakda Gaewbuadee and Banlop Lomnoi, and it is in the persistence of the presence of these bodies that the greatest potential for the repetition resides. If the second half is a repetition, then it is such through a figure of desire that cannot be reduced to the impulses, a desire for submission, to be devoured or to devour, which is not simply an evocation of the sexual drive, but some greater yearning, partially invented, inflected with memory, a conjunction of animal, human, and spirit. The desire is to become other than what one is through merging with an other, and while this desire is present in Keng’s pursuit of Tong’s romantic affections in the first half, in the second half it becomes more literal. The soldier plunges into the unknown in search of an entity defined by its transformations, which is defined more by its becomings than what it is at a given time. Tong seems to be defined by a part of himself that remains hidden somewhere in his depths in the first half, but in the latter, on the other hand, the mystery of the animal-spirit-man resides in surface transformations. There is then the confrontation, across the black space that both links and divides, between the one that is not who he is because his depths are unfathomable (something unthought within identity), and the entity that is not what it is because it only is
what it is through becoming other than what it is (that which is identified by its capacity for becoming different).

Identity is neither guaranteed by a final secret to be discovered within, since there is always some other desire to be forged there, nor by the body itself, which slides between the service of a mind that needs it to begin thinking, and its own animal presence as part of nature. The quotation that prefaces the first half of the film, from the Japanese novelist, Ton Nakajima, is instructive in this regard: “All of us are by nature wild beasts. Our duty as human beings is to become like trainers who keep their animals in check and even teach them to perform tasks alien to their bestiality”. This idea can be clearly related to Tong and Keng licking each other’s hands, and the transformation the soldier undergoes in pursuit of the beast, attuning himself to the jungle through a becoming-animal, depending on intensified presence more than foresight. If the words of Nakajima do not however ring in consonance with the film itself, it is because there is much to be gained in going the other direction, of becoming differently human through pursuing the presence of the animal, the body that gives nothing to thought but enters into the tropics where something will emerge without one’s being equipped to name it, to speak of it to oneself. If, as Nathan Lee argues, Apichatpong’s films not only dramatise states of being on the horizon of transformation, like the soldier and tiger, but draw the spectator toward such a threshold, it is by putting the body in touch, through sounds and images, with sensations that come before words, with a space that it must orient itself toward physically.

This is one sense in which Deleuze talks about the difference between belief in this world as it is, and belief in this world as it appears (whole, self-identical) filtered through principles that transcend it. “What is certain”, he writes, “is that believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named” (TI 167). What does it mean to give discourse to the body? Perhaps a clue can be found in Proust and Signs. There Deleuze writes that the encounter must come before the intelligence, one must be in an unknown region, “endowed for the signs” one will come upon, “ready to encounter them”: “one must open oneself to their violence”. The encounter comes first, the intelligence later, and, according to Deleuze, the intelligence “is good only when it comes after” (101). I am thinking of the black screen as such a sign, a sign that calls for interpretation all the more since it offers to
sight the experience of not seeing (knowing) through what is seen. Yet this is an experience of not seeing that must be accounted for later on, after the film has ended, after the body has been lead through a disorienting tropical world that’s relation to that of the film’s first section is not given. It must be interpreted. One must find a way to conceive of its essence, as its essence is also that in which the two halves are to be conceived as repetitions of one another, and as parts of the same entity. The black screen must, however, if one is not trying to achieve a dialectical unity, remain essentially a space of difference, an in-between that draws both halves of the film toward it without reducing them to a single identity.

**Fragment, Void, Repetition**

In *The Infinite Conversation*, Blanchot argues that commentators who Hegelianise Nietzsche based on the philosophers’ shared rhetoric of thought that goes beyond itself, thus constituting a creation that destroys rather than preserves, cannot be refuted. “It is almost inevitable”, Blanchot writes, “that this exigency of going beyond, this use of contradiction and negation for an affirmation that maintains what it does away with while developing it, should place us back within the horizon of dialectical discourse” (157). Yet, there is something else in Nietzsche that Blanchot identifies, something opposed to this going beyond without end, which promises to lead us into new territory only to instead infinitely prolong “the sky of men” (157-8). Nothing, Blanchot contends, is more foreign to Nietzsche than a future marked by this continuous elevation of humanity. Nietzsche’s motive may be seen instead as the will to manifest a glimpse of what is revealed when this sky is torn open, when it, like the umbrella imagined by D.H. Lawrence – the image of which is borrowed by Deleuze and Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?* – is slit so as to allow some windy chaos to pass through. The world would be thus “re-enchanted”, since we would be reminded of the presence of forces that cannot yet be named or classified (203-4). To summarise: while one cannot deny that a system with continuity can be pulled together from the disparate pieces of Nietzsche’s philosophy, there is, according to Blanchot, nevertheless an aesthetic tactic he employs that does indeed accord with his claim in *Twilight of the Idols* that to will a system is to lack integrity (35).

Blanchot calls this tactic fragmentary speech, a speech that speaks outside of its power to represent or signify. It is a speech that is plural because it always defines itself by creating an in-between, a separation that it both identifies with and that it pursues and is
divided by. It is a speech that announces nothing, which comes after that greatest of affirmations, the eternal repetition and re-emergence of the unique. It therefore plays a stranger role than that of making extreme proclamations. “It is as though”, Blanchot writes, “each time the extreme is said, it called thought outside (not beyond), designating to thought by its fissure that thought has already left itself, that it is already outside itself: in relation – without relation – with an outside from which it is excluded to the degree that thought believes itself able to include this outside, and, each time, necessarily, does truly make the inclusion by which it encloses itself” (158). This notion of Blanchot’s is clearly reflected in Deleuze’s insistence on the importance of the interstice in modern cinema. The thought of a film is broken up such that it no longer constitutes an inner speech that arises out of a chain of associated thoughts. Instead, a thought in images and sounds emerges for which the outside presented by the interstice is a constituent part, yet one that is included without its thereby belonging to either of the images or chains of images it links and separates.

In Tropical Malady, the main interstice that fragments the thought of the film is of course the black screen that divides and joins its two halves. The black screen belongs to neither half of the film, but is both its centre and an outside that could not be actualised in its images. Tropical Malady thus determinately puts in relation two worlds the relation of which nevertheless remains indeterminate, so far as it cannot be clearly thought and spoken of. These two films make up a single film, but the outside lodged between them, which they seem to enclose, marks the primary point at which the film becomes an assemblage or multiplicity, a composite defined by the difference it includes within itself, which plays such an important role in creating its identity. The film encloses itself then, encompassing both segments, but does not thereby become a whole in which identity and difference are diametrically opposed, and in which differentiation is ultimately subsumed in a single totality.

The play between identity and difference is central to the appearance of the film’s second half as a repetition that makes apparent an important difference. The repetition in The Exterminating Angel emerges from the sensory-motor relationships established in the originary world, and is prompted by the recurrence of the same, the characters again assuming the positions that they occupied upon being trapped in the room. This repetition belongs to identity, and if its accomplishment is only apparently a repetition that saves, that is because it does not actually change the destiny one is allotted in a world animated by primal impulses. What then would be the repetition that saves, which produces the
difference of a recast desire? This is a problem of the eternal return, which both Blanchot and Deleuze necessarily confront in their writing on Nietzsche. Here, Blanchot’s perspective on the problem can be of use in thinking the power of repetition in *Tropical Malady*. “The eternal return”, Blanchot contends, “says the eternal return of the Same, and the repetition says the detour wherein the other identifies itself with the same in order to become the non-identity of the same and in order that the same become, in the return that turns it aside, always other than itself” (*Infinite 159*). The paradox of such a repetition, according to Blanchot, is that it asserts sameness only as a detour, or the putting on of a mask, that will allow for a new thought or perception of difference to become possible. Sameness and difference are linked by something other than mere opposition here.

In *Tropical Malady*, the differences between the stories and the worlds they take place in may be overcome such that we nevertheless think the second half as a repetition of the first. Thought of the same arises through a kind of differentiation. But this thought of the one half as a repetition of the other opens onto another difference that pertains to the question of desire. The soldier hunting the were-tiger in the jungle can be seen as the return of Keng’s pursuit of Tong, but seen as such it affirms not only the identification of the two halves, but the non-identity of the whole constructed by their being appended together. The return of the pursuit “turns aside” the same such that it becomes “other than itself”, such that the desire that animates the pursuit through the jungle becomes again distinct from the warm light of first love. The almost mythic sense of a desire that engulfs human, animal, and spirit, produced in the latter part of the film, is like an originary tale of desire of which the love of the first half is a much more socialised manifestation. But the idea of desire as the need for another that is unknown, and whose world is unknown, becomes less a sort of eternally valid attribute of humans in being conjoined with this more staid and sweet version of contemporary romance.

Desire is not the same thing in the film’s two worlds, and this doubled desire suggests there could be innumerable other potential manifestations or assemblages that constitute a singular desire. In the temporal order of the film, a world is repeated in a second world, but in these two worlds being “spoken” together, conjoined as a single film, the affirmation of difference – a new desire – is repeated. But such a new desire does not depend on the endless ascendant transformation of man, but a void or an Outside that forces one to begin again, to take on an experience that’s relation to experiences preserved in
memory cannot be finalised. “What’s essential”, Apichatpong tells us in his synopsis for *Tropical Malady*, “are the memories. Memories from the first part validate the second part. Just as the second part validates the first. Neither exists wholly without the other” (“Synopsis”). Memory allows us to experience this play of sameness and difference, their intertwining and departure from one another, through the film. And it is this singular relation between the terms that validates the film as a construction that both summons and ultimately arrests our ability to think it as a whole. The interval, the black screen, cannot be bridged, like an empty space, but turns one aside as an impassable barrier, into an unknown region upon which it casts its shadow. Such a shadow, perhaps, is what preserves us from the bright light of a determinable destiny, of a world in which we could not attend to the emergence of the new.

**Love and Desire Without Destiny**

The repetition in *Tropical Malady*, it must be remembered, is a repetition of the love story, which is also the story of love, which can only be told as a repetition, and yet may only be a cause of belief in differing from every story of love that has preceded it. Love is an alchemy of memory and presence, the desired desire the eruption of what has been as it has never been before. Søren Kierkegaard claimed that “Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards” (33) The recollection forwards of *Tropical Malady* thrusts us into the interstice between the two parts, into a space of darkness and unknowing that is lit up by and reflects all the images of the film once it has ended, reverberates with all the sounds of the jungle and the city, echoing with, as well, the words spoken and written on the screen. The sameness of the different, but even more the difference that infects and redefines the whole: two things that are not the same yet are the same in their conjuring of a desire, repeated before it can be recollected as a repetition, that exists to be propagated by repetition rather than extinguished in satisfactions. It is not a desire that corresponds to a lack, but a desire that is productive, which satisfies itself not through the attaining of ends, but the redirecting of the lives that it takes hold of such that it can be reborn anew in a fresh image of difference. It emerges through the relationships presented by the film without which it could not be manifested, yet to which it clearly does not fully belong.
At the end of *Tropical Malady*, after the tiger spirit has told the soldier that once he has devoured his soul they will be neither animal nor human, we hear the words of the soldier: “Monster...I give you my spirit, my flesh and my memories. Every drop of my blood, sings our song...a song of happiness. There...do you hear it?” What we hear is wind. What we see is the jungle. [Figure 8] This song of happiness is composed of one of the jungle's many faces and the sound of the wind in the trees. The arrival at a new desire is achieved in an act of sacrificing identity, of giving oneself away, a paradoxical manner of coming into possession of the desired. Everything is relinquished, even the rooting afforded by memory, without which such a moment would be impossible. The question of repetition and desire is tethered to that of the human being, the question of her relation to the animal world, to the natural world, to thought and spirit. In order to answer such questions with any satisfaction, perhaps we must, as *Tropical Malady* urges us to do, from time to time travel into an intemperate zone in which memory must be relinquished for a period so that it may become capable of new acts of creation.
9. Hypnosis, Intoxication, and Fog: 

*Syndromes and a Century*

If you look a long time into an abyss, 
the abyss also looks into you.

— Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 146

There is no transformative journey into the jungle in *Syndromes and a Century*, the next feature-length film Apichatpong made after *Tropical Malady*. Nor are there any beings that combine human attributes with those of animals and spirits, though both of these features will appear again in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives (Loong Boonmee raleuk chat)*, 2010. Nevertheless, *Syndromes* begins with an image of trees that seems to suggest that the physical world, apart from the creatures that inhabit it, is itself animated by spirit. It is with this image that I will begin to analyse the film, in the process raising questions about animism that pertain not only to Apichatpong’s work, but to the capacity of cinematic images in general. This will open up problems of emptiness and fullness that will be returned to throughout the chapter, as well as providing an example of the strategies employed by Apichatpong in creating hypnotic images that elicit a specific sort of spectatorial absorption. There are distinct varieties of cinematic absorption that are closely related to the forms of automatism engendered by the regimes of the movement- and time-image, and exploring these I will draw on Richard Rushton’s attempt to formulate a “Deleuzian spectatorship” in relation to Michael Fried’s notion of absorption. Ultimately, *Syndromes and a Century* shows us that while every experience of cinematic absorption is a becoming other, some urge us to become others. In either case though, what matters most is the singularity of the trip taken, its movement outside already mapped co-ordinates.

**Apostles of Animism**

The music begins before the image of the trees appears, while the screen is black, and continues while the production credits roll. It is ambient electronic music, hazy around the edges, droning, and it seems directed toward instilling a sense of wonder in the listener.
As it progresses, it begins to integrate sounds that seem to be drawn from non-musical sources, specifically metallic clanging noises that bear a resemblance to what one might hear passing by construction sites of various sorts. These sounds form a contrast with the trees on the screen, which sway languorously, blown by a wind that we cannot hear, their natural movement slightly slowed. [Figure 1] The trees are severed from any sound that would give us the sense that they are part of the setting in which a story is about to be related to us. This is not an establishing shot, and if it is empty of human life, it is not in the least empty in itself. The tree that rises from beneath the bottom edge of the frame into the centre of the image, in particular, almost seems to move of its own volition, as a sentient being, animated by the respiratory processes of the unheard breezes. The slow motion makes its movements seem slightly unnatural, giving the sense that they are not merely the product of outside forces. During this image, a relationship is developed between the vivification of nonhuman life, and technical, human processes of image and sounds production.

The animism of the film’s first image is not related to Apichatpong’s Buddhism per se, which we will come to later, but rather to pre-Buddhist folk beliefs that continue to colour the imagination of rural communities in the Thai countryside. Such beliefs persist in varying forms in the region of Isarn, near the border with Laos, where Apichatpong grew up,
and where the first half of *Syndromes and a Century* is set. Such beliefs can enter into relations with Buddhism, but they nonetheless constitute a tradition distinct from it. Natalie Boehler, drawing on Suvanna Kriengkraipetch and Phya Anuman Rajadhon’s work on Thai folk beliefs, describes the animism that prevails in such regions in the following way:

In Thai folk belief, which is rooted in local animism, nature is strongly linked to spirit belief: all natural beings have a soul, a spirit, and can thus connect to the human world. Nature and its spirits form a higher order that pervades human life, nourishing and influencing it. The fact that there exist essentially good and bad spirits shows a strong ambivalence towards spirit life. The relationship between humans and nature, and human communication with the spirits of animals and plants are crucial to Thai folk belief and the attitude towards nature: man is not opposed to but assimilated into his natural environment via the spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. (301)

To approach a natural world animated by spirits artifice is necessary. The opening shot of *Syndromes* is markedly dependent on the production of a sense of wonder through the dilation of screen time by way of slow motion, and the employment of a musical piece that bathes both the image and the spectator in a warm sonic field. The image and music operate as a lure to draw the spectator into attentive quietude, and toward the contemplation of what could be called the “unnatural” spirit-life of trees. When the sounds of wind and birdsong slowly filter onto the soundtrack, it is as if we pass into a different dimension in the space of a single shot. Yet, the conditioning of a certain spectatorial state, related to others provoked later in the film, has already taken place, and an animistic image has been imprinted in the memory.

The evocation of animistic perspectives and the decentring of the human in Apichatpong’s work can be seen in relation to his adoption of a secular outlook coloured by both Buddhist philosophy and the folk beliefs of the region where he spent his childhood. However, many theorists, none of whom shared such an outlook, have noted a cinematic power for such evocation. In *Cinema or the Imaginary Man*, Edgar Morin draws on a number of provocative statements by film critics and theorists about animism and the moving image, in a chapter devoted to interrogating the animistic nature of cinema, and the causes of human perceptions of animism. Béla Balázs claims that the close-up “reveals the soul of things”, for instance, while René Clar declares that cinema “gives a soul to the cabaret, the room, a bottle, a wall”. Most provocatively, Boris Bilinsky, a Russian costume designer who worked on films in Germany, France, and Italy, declares that, “The cinema is the greatest
There is a difference between giving life to a room, or a bottle, and giving a life to things that are already alive – trees for instance – that is different than that we imagine for them, or that we would imagine for them if we stopped to give it a thought. Here, we come to a problem inherent in speaking about animism, cinema, and its audiences: the animistic perspective may be seen by some to approach, or even give form to, a reality that is ever-present but usually invisible, while it may be seen by others, less inclined to believe that humans are linked to the natural world through the spirits that animate it, as an illusion that accords with no reality save that produced by the images and sounds that make it up.

**The World Outside**

If we give ourselves over to Apichatpong’s vision, suspending our judgment of the validity of the underlying reality that he believes he approaches through cinematic fabrication, we are taking on a view that is not our own, and we see, feel, and think outside ourselves. Yet, it is only in abandoning our reserve and entering into his world(s), that the films are likely to make us do any of these things in ways that are valuable to us. The film takes us somewhere and makes us think many thoughts that are not our own at the time we think them, yet they become ours as we carry them forward with us. If we think about *Syndromes and a Century*, the questions, “where is this film taking us?”, and “what is it making us think”, become quite pertinent only a matter of minutes after the opening image of the trees, to which these questions could also be aptly applied, has ended.

After one brief narrative scene, in which we are introduced to a few of the characters from the first half of the film, we are confronted with a very strange image that leaves the characters behind, for a moment, through a camera movement that comes to rest in a framing dominated by a green field, which is separated from a pale blue sky by a band of trees and a wooden building at its edge. [Figure 2] In the scene that leads to the shot, Dr. Toey (Nantarit Sawaddikul) interviews the newly arrived Dr. Nohng (Jaruchai Iamaram), who had previously been serving as an army doctor. The interview is highly idiosyncratic and filmed in only two long, static takes, one that captures Nohng in close-up facing the camera and Toey, the other a medium long shot that takes in the room almost in its entirety, showing us Toey and Nohng across the desk from each other, as well as Toa, an admirer of Toey, who sits on a couch closer to the camera toward the right edge of the frame. We will
come to the eccentricities of this interview shortly, but here I would simply like to describe and comment upon the lead up to the shot that leaves us facing the field.

After the interview, Toey sends Nohng off to the emergency ward, and during the same static shot in which he exits the room, we see Toa, with extreme awkwardness, offer a gift of crispy pork to her. A little less than a minute later, during the same shot, Nohng returns, and asks if Toey really meant to send him to the emergency room on his first day. He then implies that he is uncomfortable being around blood. Koh (Nitipong Tinthupthai), an orderly of some sort, then arrives to tell Toey that she is needed elsewhere, and she and Nohng follow Koh out of the room, leaving Toa behind. After she closes the door, there is a cut to the other side of it, and the camera slowly tracks forward as Koh passes in front of it in silhouette, and Toey, also in silhouette, closes the door before exiting the right side of the frame behind Koh.

The camera continues its slow and constant forward movement until all signs of the building – the blinds to Toey’s office at the left, and the open-air window ledge in front of it – disappear, and we are left looking out across the field. The credits then roll discreetly on screen while the soundtrack is taken up by Toey and Koh’s conversation, the volume of which does not lessen though they are moving further and further from the camera as it...
slowly glides away from them. In fact, while the conversation at the beginning is between Toey and Koh, at some point Koh, or rather Nitipong Tinthupthai, the actor playing him, comments that he has accidentally left some device that is attached to his trousers on: the microphone. The actors then, amidst laughter, talk as themselves about getting sick of playing the same scene over and over. While we are identified with a vision that moves, quite literally, away from the people who have just been introduced, those people slip out of the roles that we have only just begun to recognise them in. Our absorption, if we are still absorbed in what we are seeing and hearing, has nothing to do with a suspension of disbelief at this point, but solely with a vision that possesses us, leading us on an investigation carried out by an unattributable consciousness animated by indecipherable motivations.

Throughout this chapter I will use the term investigation to describe shots that carry out a “trip” with little or no regard to organising narrative space. I have adopted the term from Deleuze’s characterisation of the “report” in Antonioni, which is an image that tends toward abstraction, replacing action with displacement of figures in space (TI 6). “It is as if the most objective images”, Deleuze writes, “are not formed without becoming mental, and going into a strange, invisible subjectivity”. An imaginary gaze is constituted that “makes the real something imaginary, at the same time as it in turn becomes real and gives us back some reality” (8). The reality captured by the camera becomes a mental space, the space of a “trip” without hodological co-ordinates, that is, in which no field of forces is developed, since the image imposes itself as a “real” force of vision, of seeing that is not dependent on something that should be seen in the image, information which would makes the image’s function in relationship to the film’s other images clear.

The “field” image is in fact the only shot displaying such a camera consciousness in the first half of Syndromes and a Century, which unfolds otherwise entirely in static takes that are relatively lengthier than those employed in the second half. It is in this latter half of the film that we are given over to a number of protracted investigations of the sort described here. Nevertheless, there are a number of points of contact between this image and the investigations later in the film, which are however very different from it in tone, due to both the hypnotic music used in the later sequences, and the curving, circular movements of the camera employed there. In this first investigation, we seek out an image of the natural world in which signs of the human – the house, the manicured field – are apparent. But is this a
technological perspective on the harmony of humanity and nature, or simply a pleasant view
that Apichatpong wanted to pass along to us?

Once the movement of the camera ceases, we are left to gaze out on a warm and
sunny day, from a window, much as we would, perhaps, if we found ourselves pausing to
acknowledge the pleasures of such a day. While the shot begins by identifying us with a
moving camera, which seeks out a view on something, it ends by leaving us to a brightly lit
image that beckons to our own, unique memories of such days and such places, of existing
in the world, rather than apart from it, looking in. That the narrative thread we are
led along simultaneously – through the conversation between Toey and Koh – snaps toward the end
of the shot, suggests that the film wants to establish a relationship with us that goes well
outside of our engagement with the narratives it will present. This image is like a gesture that
seems to tell us, by involving our bodies and memories in this way, that the reality of the film
is part of our own reality, whatever strange trips it takes us on along the currents of its
thought.

**Two Circles: The Narrative Trip**

The narrative structure of *Syndromes and a Century* itself constitutes a kind of trip,
since it invokes the powers of repetition and circularity such that the relations between the
two halves of the film are not clearly transmitted to us. Here, I would like to briefly explore
this aspect of the film, since the narrative structure is intimately linked to the images, like
that of the field, that depart from it. Whereas *Tropical Malady* tells two tales that repeat the
pursuit of a desired other, the second version of *Syndromes and a Century* seems to go off in a
different direction altogether after beginning from an apparently similar point of departure.
This is partially related to the distinct settings themselves. While the first story takes place in
and among the sedate surroundings of a rural hospital, the second is set in and on the
grounds of a modern hospital in Bangkok. Sometimes the spaces in the latter seem to
preclude events that take place in the first, as will be discussed shortly.

Nevertheless, the stories are clearly permutations of each other. A number of
characters reappear in both halves: Toa, Nohng, and Toey, of course, but also the dentist,
Ple (Arkanae Cherkam), and an old monk (Sin Kaewpakpin) who visits each hospital with
two younger companions. One of the companions, Sakda (Sakda Kaewbuadee), is a monk as
well, and plays an important role in the rural segment. Lastly, there is Pa Jane (Jenjira
Pongpas, a woman who has an injured leg and appears as the friend of Noom (Sophon Pukanok), a man Toey was once enamoured with, in the first half, and who is glimpsed in the basement of the hospital during the film’s final investigation. Noom himself does not appear in the second half, while Nohng’s girlfriend, Joy (Jarunee Saengtupthim), instead is seen visiting him in the Bangkok world. In that world, Nohng also speaks with many characters that do not appear in the first part of the film, including a number of doctors and a young man suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. While Nohng has left the army and has a problem with the sight of blood in the first half, in the second he is, to the contrary, a haematologist, and still a first lieutenant in the army. There are then differences between one version of a character and the other, and not only differences in their relations with those around them.

Three scenes are played out twice: Toey’s interview of Nohng, the old monk consulting a doctor (Toey in the first half, an older man in the second), and Ple performing a dental check-up on Sakda. In the case of the last of these, the difference is stark. The first time it takes place in a dental office full of wood panelling, the casement windows of which are open to let the air pour in, and through which we see the sunlight pooling on broad-leaved tropical plants. Sakda explains that he had wanted to be a DJ, and had the opportunity to become one, but felt a calling to be a monk too strong to ignore. Ple is a singer who performs songs in the Luk Thung style, and he begins to sing Sakda a song as he uses his dental instruments to investigate the state of the monk’s teeth. Sakda, for his part, seems to find the whole situation quite strange, but pleasingly so, and he smiles and laughs as Ple breaks off his examination to concentrate on his singing. This half of the film concludes with the two of them speaking outside, Ple admitting that he feels a connection to Sakda and has been wondering if he is his brother, whose early death he feels responsible for, reincarnated. Sakda assures him he is not, but the two do seem to have connected in a consequential way. However, in response to an offscreen voice Sakda wanders hurriedly away from Ple, and he disappears into the night as the dentist futilely tries to follow him. The last image of this part of the film is of Ple alone in his office, apparently wondering what has become of his companion.

The second time around, Ple has a female assistant, which immediately presents an obstacle to the development of any intimacy like that that grows between the dentist and the monk in the first half. Sakda says nothing of any DJ dreams, and Ple does no serenading.
Actually, Sakda seems extremely uncomfortable, and testily removes the facial covering, which he accepted amiably earlier, that Ple places over his eyes. The difference between the two hospitals appears most starkly in the contrast between Ple’s office in the rural hospital – with its sunlight, open windows, and nearby greenery – and its Bangkok counterpart. The latter is a large white room lit by lamps suspended from tubular, plastic piping; it is separated into white cubicles furnished with white furniture. [Figures 3 and 4] It is a space pervaded by impersonal procedure, and it seemingly prefigures a different outcome to Ple and Sakda’s encounter.

Nohng’s interview and the old monk’s consultation are less dramatically different, but there are a few aspects of the former that should be taken note of. The first person seen in both halves of the film is Toa, who is captured in close-up, straight on in the first half, and slightly off-centre in the second. However, it is Nohng that we see next in close-up the first time, and Toey we see next the second time. [Figures 5 and 6] Apichatpong, in an interview following a screening of * Syndromes* at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 2010, claims that the first half is evocative of his mother and the second of his father, not in the stories they tell, but through the distinct settings and formal attributes such as colour, light, and camera movement (Fysalides, Pt. 2). That the interview in the first half begins with a frontal close-up of Nohng, approximating Toey’s point of view, and the latter with the same type of close-up of Toey, aligning us with Nohng’s point of view, can be seen to reflect this.

In the director's statement released with * Syndromes*, Apichatpong claims that the film is, as well, an experiment in recreating the lives of his parents before he was born. Since the narrative of the first half proceeds from Toey’s view of Nohng, and the rural hospital and the formal aspects of this half – lengthy static shots and natural lighting – reflect the sensibility of Apichatpong’s mother, it seems fairly safe to conclude that Toey is in some way a stand in for her, while Nohng is aligned with Apichatpong’s father. It may then seem somewhat strange that Toey is pursued by one admirer, Toa, in both halves, and pursues another, Noom, in flashback in the first section, while Nohng’s girlfriend visits him at the hospital in the latter. From this perspective, it seems that this day, which we repeat in two circles of existence, is the first day on which Toey and Nohng meet, before the faintest idea that what remains of their lives will be intertwined has been formed. The event that the
Figure 3: Part One

Figure 4: Part Two
Figure 5: Part One

Figure 6: Part Two
narratives move toward is, adopting this view, not contained within the images of the film.

The second aspect of the interview I want to consider concerns the circle. In both of Toey’s interviews with Nohng, she asks him whether he prefers triangles, circles, or squares, and after he chooses circles, she questions him as to what his circle would be made of and what colour it would be. He responds twice that it would be made of glass and it would be clear, and when prompted by Toey, in the second interview, as to what it would be made out of if no glass were available, he says plastic. Like other questions in the interview, this one is dryly humorous, but the figure of the circle is the dominant image of the film, and so we should attend to Nohng’s response. His attraction to circles seems almost the opposite of Noom’s fascination with orchids, the twining roots of which, Noom remarks at one point, many people do not like because they seem to lack form and order. Though there are no orchids in the second half of the film, the investigations there tend to make the straight line of the film labyrinthine, to make it seem to lack form and order. The shot or sequence that unwinds a straight and labyrinthine line, the circle that encompasses but opens always onto another circle at the point at which it arrives at closure: these are the two figures that the film seeks to reconcile.

The most significant circle in the first half is the eclipse that we see. It should be remarked as well that the eclipse appears in relation to a story unfolded in flashback, and that Toey chooses to tell Toa this story, of her time with Noom, at the same table where she once sat with Noon himself. Once the pursuer, Toey has come full circle to find herself the pursued at the same location. In addition, the eclipse itself does not even belong to the day in the flashback on which Pa Jane tells Toey a story at Noom’s farm, but to the day on which the events of that story took place. Our passage to the conjoining circles of the eclipse thus has itself a touch of the labyrinthine to it. In the eclipse image, we simply see a circle of light slip out from under its dark counterpart, illuminating the sky as it does so (Figure 7). This image clearly presents a relative movement that is analogous to the film’s global movement: two circles, two worlds, are joined in a single identity from which they depart, and to which they will return. It is a movement of a set, in Deleuze’s terms, which also expresses the whole of the film (Mi 22-3). The second half too moves toward a dark circle that will, in its own way, threaten to eclipse all light. But before approaching this circle, we need to turn our attention to the hypnotic, absorptive power of the straight line, and this will require a somewhat protracted theoretical interlude.
In his writings on theatre, Bertolt Brecht argues vehemently against art and artifice that dissipate the boundaries between spectator and spectacle. “The process of fusion”, he claims, “extends to the spectator who gets thrown into the melting pot…and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total work of art. Witchcraft of this sort must, of course, be fought against. What is intended to produce hypnosis, is likely to induce sordid intoxication, or creates fog, has got to be given up” (“Note” 347). In an essay that seeks to elucidate Deleuze’s conception of cinema spectatorship, Rushton makes a good deal of this quote, which he has himself borrowed from Colin McCabe’s 1975 article, “The Politics of Separation”. Rushton argues that for Deleuze cinema is precisely a kind of witchcraft that induces hypnosis, intoxication, and fog, but that this is where its power and fascination lie (49). Films, Rushton seems to argue, whether good or bad, whether they offer social worlds akin to our own, whether they accord with our own political sympathies or not, offer experiences of absorption that allow us to inhabit identities outside of our own. It is indeed true that Deleuze analyses the same aspects of Godard’s work that McCabe does and comes to altogether different conclusions about their function and value. Here, a brief consideration of McCabe’s arguments should allow us to better understand Deleuze’s.
Considering two films by Godard – *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle*, 1967) and *Tout va bien* (1972) – McCabe applies Brecht’s notion of distanciation in the theatre to cinema. He therefore espouses the desirability of a cinema that forces spectators to actively participate, by obstructing the fusion of spectator and screen. A film should, he argues, produce effects that make spectators remain in control of what they feel and think, and this is to be achieved by a separation of elements. There are three such elements – music, text, and setting – in theatre, according to Brecht, and McCabe claims, with reference to Christian Metz’s work, that there are five in cinema: “the moving picture image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded musical sound, recorded noise and writing” (“Politics” 46). For McCabe, separation should be undertaken through a literalism in which representation is punctuated by formulation, that is, the elements should be separated such that the spectator is forced to think the relationships between the represented events from without, rather than having them thought for him by the film. “It is the effort to achieve this articulation”, writes McCabe, “which is exactly the process of learning – a process which can only operate on condition that we distance and separate ourselves from the full plenitude of the image – that we read a set of differences organised temporally and spatially (“Politics” 46). The subject must not be “relieved of his mind once inside the cinema”, so that he will be left capable of learning about the production that goes into the making of cinematic meaning. It is the fusion of elements, McCabe argues, following Brecht, that allow for the fusion of the spectator and what is seen and heard, the merging of the spectator’s mind and the thought produced by a film.

Yet it is, Rushton contends, a passivity that allows us to fuse with a thought that is not our own that marks for Deleuze the particular power of cinema. We are not relieved of our minds, but become receptive to their occupation by a thought that is not our own. Rushton concludes that for Deleuze cinema is an absorptive experience, “a matter of placing oneself where one is not, of becoming someone or something one is not. That is, cinema, for Deleuze, offers the possibility of becoming other than what one is, of being someone (or something) else” (51). Deleuze posits as a power of cinema its ability to move us beyond our own subjectivity, whereas McCabe calls on films to serve the pedagogical function of showing us, at a distance, how meaning is made (how elements are usually fused) such that we no longer remain subject to such processes.
Cinema is not theatre, and tactics of distanciation in the latter, from Deleuze’s perspective, open onto a new form of automated thought in the former. For him, the discontinuous and continuous are not opposed in cinema, but the two regimes of the image – movement and time – reconcile them in different ways (TI 175). The whole ceases to be “One” in the regime of the time-image not because it is discontinuous, but because its continuity includes interstices that keep us from articulating clearly the relationships between sequences, or sound and image tracks. Nevertheless, in passing from one to the next without pause we do in some sense think their connection. A discontinuity does not arise that allows us to distance ourselves from the film, which continues to move forward. The seriality of such cinema forces one to begin new chains of thought again and again, shattering the monologue of the single thinker, but there is nevertheless a continuity that includes the interstices between these chains. The question, Deleuze claims, is not one of distancing, but of “properly cinematographic automatism, and its consequences” (TI 173). So what are for McCabe disruptive combinations of elements that establish a distance between spectator and screen, and give the thinker back his own thought, constitute for Deleuze a thought that the spectator takes on that is still automatic, but plural, since it begins again and again when confronted by relationships that are not articulated by the film.

**Void and Absorption**

In the chapter on *Tropical Malady*, I argued for the necessity of confronting the void at the centre of the film, the effect and importance of which is emphasised by its duration. It clearly divides the film into two different worlds, which nevertheless must be thought together as a single filmic world. *Syndromes and a Century*, on the other hand, is simply divided by a straight cut, meaning that the movement from the rural hospital to its urban counterpart is instantaneous; there is no prolonged punctuation of this leap into a different dimension. If we, following Deleuze, make a distinction between a spiritual automatism that makes us take on the thought of another, and one that makes us take on a thought that is multiple, which being broken up by interstices begins again and again and cannot be attributed to a single other, then we must acknowledge these are two different types of absorption, and that *Syndromes and a Century* makes operative a time-image automatism for a number of reasons.

First off, there is the primacy of the interval, most clearly illustrated by the void without extension at the centre of the film, which divides it into two worlds. There are also
the other inexplicable transformations of the film’s style, which give the film an understated serial structure. In this vein, we can think of the shot that moves away from the characters to peer across the fields as a kind of thought that is outside, or unassimilably other to, the thought that thinks the loose sensory-motor links of the narrative produced by the sequences that proceed and follow the dolly shot of the field. This shot is an investigation that has almost nothing to do with establishing the setting in which the various situations will be played out, and constitutes a subjectivity, a camera consciousness, that cannot be attributed to any of the characters.

Such unattributable investigations propagate in the film’s second half, and are broken into two extended “trance” sequences. In the first of these, the camera glides in lateral tracking shots around the grounds of the hospital, taking in statues, which it pans back toward as it passes, giving a strange curvature to the space within the frame, a sense of circular motion. It then tracks forward and backward, and laterally, along a long white corridor, following Dr. Nohng as he walks toward and passes by people in brightly coloured athletic shirts. [Figure 8] We see in the corridors as well a group of nurses, and catch a glimpse of the monks walking away from the camera as it slowly dollies backward. There is then another series of shots that pass by statues outside, again panning as they do so in order to give a curvature to the space of the image. [Figure 9] This sequence is accompanied by droning ambient music that sounds as if it is inhabited by whirring machines, but birdsong is also audible throughout, and the voices and steps of the people in the hallway can be heard in the images of the corridor. Again, as with the first image of the film, the music seems to summon a heightened attention from the spectator, who takes on a vision that registers thought about the places passed through and by, without the relation between that thought and the lives of the characters being clearly presented.

The point here is this: there are not only two sides of a the void at the film’s centre, the two distinct narratives that take place in two quite distinct settings, which the film makes us think together. Each of the camera’s mobile investigations itself constitutes an interval, an instance of seeing quite distant from the sight with which we receive information vital to the formation of a whole, or which increases our knowledge about the narrative. An image-thought rises out of the void and returns to it, making way for another investigation to begin. Static shots in this half of the film also sometimes become less the stage for a narrative to play out than unattributable visions, since they often begin and/or end emptied
of human beings for a prolonged period. Space ceases to be the arena for human action, and instead constitutes directly a change in the filmic world under development, all the aspects of which cannot be thought as features of a self-identical totality.

**The Spiritualisation of Nature**

Apichatpong has spoken of the similarity he sees between cinema and architecture, which he studied in Thailand before attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he earned an MFA in filmmaking. According to him, to design a building is to “provide space for users who experience the construction visually, through time”. He continues:

The darkness and light, the angles, etc, everything contributes to how you want the users to feel. Filmmaking is the same. But it is more emotionally direct and can be more playful – like a huge sculpture that people can walk in. So when I think about the film’s narrative, I think in three dimensions, like creating a space. But somehow the experience is very linear because it is like you are walking horizontally through the space, you do not see it from overhead as God (“Making” 13).

Apichatpong here affirms the absorptive capacity of cinema: a film can be like a sculpted space in which we make a journey, but this journey is automated, and we are not able to explore whatever perspectives we choose as “users”. We do not have total control of the movement of our thought in such a space, and if we distance ourselves from the film’s world, we cannot understand how it makes meaning, as McCabe argues. We can make ourselves unreceptive, but this will not allow us to understand what the film does, as we must enter into it in order to see and hear what it can do.

Yet, the regime of the movement-image does leave one relatively in control of what one has experienced once a film has ended, and Deleuze himself claims a number of times, often with reference to Godard, that a pedagogy of the image is a feature of time-image cinema. Such an argument, in fact, appears quite early in *The Movement-Image*, in the second chapter. The frame, Deleuze argues, can teach us – whether through rarefaction (framing images in which the whole accent is placed on a single object, the limit being the black or white screen) or saturation (for example, images framed in depth in which more data is available than can be perceived) – “that the image is not just given to be seen”. That is, he writes, “It is legible as well as visible. The frame has the implicit function of recording not
merely sound information, but also visual information” (14). In a letter to Serge Daney, written after the two Cinema books and published as the introduction to Daney’s Ciné-Journal, Deleuze links such pedagogy, which he calls a pedagogy of perception, with what Daney calls the spiritualisation of nature. “A visionary cinema” arises, according to Deleuze, “that no longer sets out in any sense to beautify nature but spiritualizes it in the most intense way” (Negotiations 70). Images present a spiritualised world when they contain a rarefaction or saturation of visual information, such that we begin to wonder if there is not more to the world in the image than we are capable of comprehending.

To learn about perception is to learn that we are usually, contrary to what McCabe says, not confronted by a plenitude of the image, which threatens to hypnotise us, but with the image reduced to what it is in our interest to see. Deleuze thus identifies the regime of the movement-image with the question, formulated by Daney in his own periodisation, “What is there to see behind the image?”, or as Deleuze puts it in The Time-Image, “What is there to see in the next image” (261). “Of course”, writes Deleuze, “what there is to see behind an image appears only in succeeding images, yet acts as what takes us from the first image to the others, linking them in a powerful beautifying organic totality” (Negotiations 68). But seeing behind an image means different things. It means seeing the whole, which exists in a non-spatial dimension and is unreeled in the differentiation achieved in sequential images, and in the links of association established between them. However, it also means not seeing the whole of the image, but seeing through, in the sense of “by way of it”, to a sign that has been organised there for one to recognise, as information. It means being able to use the image to know what interests one in it.

On the other hand, Deleuze links up the time-image with Daney’s question, “What is there to see on the surface of the image?” (Negotiations 69), or in The Time-Image, simply, “What is there to see in the image” (261). One encounters images, whether rarefied or saturated, which one cannot see through, but which one must read without recourse to knowledge about precise relationships they have with other images of a film. We do not learn to read them by stepping away, but by giving our thought over to them, without thereby being able to exhaust what is in them. We learn to see that there is always more to an image than what opens onto a classifiable sign – variants of the perception-, affection-, or action-image – that we may recognise it as. This pedagogy of perception replaces an encyclopaedia of the world, according to Deleuze. Such films do not try to convince us they
are showing us the world as it is, and explain the relationships between its features, but show us that there is always more to the world than we are able to think, that something lurks in the image that makes our relationship to the world uncertain. The world is full of gaps and holes, as Bazin claimed, and these make it appear spiritualised, subject to an order of forces and relationships that we are not able to observe or formulate.⁴

**The Surface of Things**

In *Syndromes and a Century*, there is a running joke that has to do with hiding behind things to peer at someone whom one is in love with. In the first section of the film, Toa hides behind a water cooler that is far too small to conceal him in order to spy on Toey. She sees him, and follows him up a flight of stairs as he retreats. Once at the top though, she finds he has vanished, and before descending, she peeks around the corner of the hallway one last time, as if to make sure he isn’t actually there. She also tells Noom in this part of the film that if she were secretly in love with someone, she would hide behind a pillar and look out at him. In the second half, we also see Toa peeking out at Toey, but this time it is from behind a Buddha statue on the hospital grounds, and when she sees and approaches him he moves further behind the statue, such that we can no longer see him.

The shot comes during the investigation sequence of the hospital grounds and the corridor, which I earlier described, after we have left the corridor and returned to lateral tracking shots of statues that the camera pans back toward in passing. We see Toa partially behind the statue as the camera dollies to the left, and after he disappears behind it, Toey steps into the frame from the right, walks over to the statue and leans in to look behind it. [Figure 13] The image has none of the light-heartedness of its analogues in the first half, due to the presence of the droning music on the soundtrack, which at this point is unpunctured by any sounds from the diegetic world, and because it is embedded within this three-minute long, largely dysnarrative passage. Toey’s look behind the statue is an investigation that is part of another investigation. Apichatpong cuts, pointedly, just as she looks behind, emphasising our inability to look with her: in fact, nothing of her look will be revealed, as we will only see her once more in the film, as part of another trip, sitting at her desk as the camera slowly zooms out [Figure 14]. Her face in this shot, like the image itself, is a surface that we must read, yet nothing that we take from it will provide any clues as to what is to be seen behind this shot, nothing of which will be conveyed in subsequent images.
Figure 13

Figure 14
What can be seen behind the image appears on the surface of the image by the end of *Syndromes and a Century*. That is, we approach a circle of darkness that is, as noted before, an image that expresses the movement of the film as a whole. Perhaps a consideration of this circle, and its relations to the film’s other circle(s), is an appropriate stage for a final encounter between Deleuze and Apichatpong. “Abandon the circle, a faulty principle of return”, Foucault wrote in considering the strategies at work in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*: “abandon our tendency to organize everything into a sphere. All things return on the straight and narrow, by way of a straight and labyrinthine line” (“Theatrum” 343). Apichatpong seems to want to reconcile the circle with the cinema’s automated and linear thought, the linear movement of the spectator’s thought through the space carved out by a film. The long investigation toward the end of the film provides the most interesting material with which to consider the link between these apparently contradictory movements.

**The Edge of One of Many Circles**

This final investigation begins with the return of the droning music from the earlier statue/corridor investigation, and an image of more trees, outside the hospital, shot at a steep low-angle as the camera pans to the left while tracking to the right. The only diegetic sound audible is the wind, and it seems too loud to correspond to the gentle movements of the leaves. It gives the image a hallucinatory quality, initiating us into this new trip. We pass by one last statue, and then enter the basement and track down a hallway to glimpse two workers undertaking some demolition work, revealing the source of the sledgehammer and saw noises that became audible upon entering the basement. We then see Dr. Wan (Wanna Wattanajinda) awoken from a tipsy sleep – she was drinking whisky to prepare for a television appearance – by the still audible blows of the sledgehammer.

There are then two static, wide-angle shots of corridors. We witness Joy and Nohng separately and slyly enter and then quickly exit the first, apparently having slipped off somewhere private after some earlier kissing gave Nohng an erection. The next image is also empty when it appears, for a few seconds, and then Pa Jane, who had not appeared anywhere else in the second half, steps in from a doorway, looks at a bulletin board and leaves through the doors at the far end of the hallway. Next comes the zoom out that slowly carries us away from an immobile Toey, who sits at her desk deep in contemplation. The empty corridors are replaced by the immobile features of a face that seems fixed on an
intractable thought. No movement stirs these features, which seem to prepare an event—
that could perhaps result from her occupation with this remote thought—that the film will
not show us. As the camera draws us away from her, we are removed for all intents and
purposes from the faint narrative that has proceeded from the images that make up this
section. Departing from this human face we begin to circle into an encounter with a
nonhuman face, a deeper sort of emptiness than that offered up as Joy, Nohng, and Pa Jane
enter and then absent themselves from the screen, but one that should perhaps be seen as
related to the face of Toey, which itself seems to arouse thought of emptiness (the lack of
information given by it) and fullness (the solidity and indivisibility of its expression).

The music is teeming with a song of synthesized horns by the time the next image
begins, and there is a pulse at the centre of it, which repeats deliberately, like the thrum of a
machinic heart. The camera moves circularly, panning left as it tracks to the right, and it is
tilted up toward a roof with rectangular fluorescent lamps, large silver ventilation ducts, and
black snaking piping suspended from it. The air is permeated with some sort of dust or fog.
In the next shot, we see machines used to make prosthetic limbs, and we can more easily
recognise that we are in a room that we have seen before, the one in which Dr. Nant, the
physical therapist, was earlier working with a patient who had a prosthetic leg. We continue
to circle, though now at a relatively flat angle, the camera still panning left and moving, more
slowly, to the right. A long, silver ventilation tube, also suspended from the ceiling, comes
into view and the camera tilts up toward it slightly, ceasing to pan as we are carried in a slow
curve toward the mouth of it, which seems, by some mysterious form of attraction, to draw
us straight in as we come to face it. The circling stops in the face of this dark circle, an abyss,
as Nietzsche wrote, that is capable of looking back into those who look a long time into it.

[Figure 15] And Apichatpong leaves us, deliberately, to look a long time into it, almost two
minutes from the point at which the camera’s movement ceases. From this position, we see
that the vent has become operative, as it is sucking up swirls of dust left behind by the
fabrication of artificial limbs.

What are we seeing on the surface of this dark image, which brings the strangest of
the film’s investigations to a close? At the end of the circle, at its very edge, another circle,
empty but animate, animated by that great apostle of animism, cinema. This is the image, we
could say with Deleuze, of Rimbaud’s dictum, “Je est un autre”, I is another. That is, it is the
image of the dark region opened up in the human being by her existence in time, which
divides the I from the ego. It is the image of the abyss at the heart of identity, and this abyss, in the very heart of the image, suggests the centrality of the interstice. There is something unthinkable within the image, not only in its relationships to other images, from which it is divided by interstices from which the thought of the outside emits its attraction. What is this attraction? It is the desire to transcend the relationships and forces outside of human beings that exist at scales that we cannot access, which could reveal the secret of the relationship between humans and the world. But even within the human, as within this image, we begin with a relationship that is never simply given, which must be incessantly reinvented: the relationship between the ego in time, sensing, and the I that orders time, that confers meaning on events through relating them to past and future. It is not that we see nothing in this image of the circular vent. The dust it sucks up is laden with potential meanings. But the duration for which we are left facing this opening makes the present dilate, moving us away from thought of the meaning of this dust, and towards an experience of presence, in which I and ego, perhaps, for the spectator overlap like two concentric circles, as they seem to for Toey as she sits at her desk, a part of the emptiness that makes itself fully present.

This image could be seen as well to reflect the Buddhist belief that identity is remade
anew at each moment, or as a vision of time’s circularity: this image is the circle that repeats, and in its repetition subjects chronology to circularity, the events of history to a beginning again that makes them traces of a deeper reality. The circular void swallows up a dust that is indeed like the residue of history, its molecules like the residue of events that have receded into oblivion. There are contradictory motivations at work in the image. Though it presents an image that reflects a deeper reality than the world of appearances in which we live, it is also animated by a sort of historical sense, which makes the camera scan the spaces of the present for whatever they may make visible or thinkable of a past that is not present.

This is partially what drives the camera’s investigations: what can be seen in an image when the filmmakers are not even quite certain what it is that makes it an integral part of the film? The searching carried out by the image is a kind of thought, but what is the object of this thought? In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, Foucault writes, “we want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference” (381). The camera in these investigations examines the surface of things for traces of such lost events, of what cannot be seen but haunts a place. It seeks out what has disappeared, an invisible violence (a military violence that would require veterans to have prosthetic limbs, for example) that insists in a hospital or a landscape (as in Uncle Boonmee), or, simply a time that has gone by (like that in which Apichatpong, as a child, spent many hours in the physical therapy ward where his father worked). Apichatpong seems to feel that spaces retain something of the past presents that have passed through or made them. He seems to believe the ghosts of the past can be conjured cinematically. But there is also a hypnotic intent at work in this image, which eventually carries us away from these historical concerns, and opens up an opportunity to approach pure presence.

**Time and Presence**

To close this chapter, I want to return one last time to the question of absorption, this time in relation to time and presence. In theorising cinematic absorption, Rushton draws on the work of Michael Fried, and he specifically cites Fried’s claim that absorption in painting is achieved by painters like Courbet and Manet in canvases that represent people in various states of deep absorption, thus successfully creating the illusion that the paintings
exist for no viewer. It is, however, two different claims, which he makes in “Art and Objecthood” – his (in)famous polemical essay from 1967 – that are of interest to me here. In this text he contends that cinema escapes theatre automatically, and that the point of such an escape from theatricality is to achieve a form of presence. The thrust of the argument he makes in *Art and Objecthood* is that art should offer an experience of presence rather than of the endlessness of duration, the experience, that is, of contemplating the way in which a work is experienced in time. The former sort of experience he aligns with modernist art (Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko, for example), the latter with the minimalism of artists like Donald Judd and Sol Lewitt, which he terms literalist. “The experience of literalist art”, Fried writes, “persists in time, and the presentment of endless or indefinite duration…The literalist preoccupation with time – more precisely, with the duration of experience – is…paradigmatically theatrical, as though theatre confronts the beholder and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of Objecthood but of time” (166-67). Literalist art is theatrical for Fried because it does not absorb us in the experience of a work of art, but makes us contemplate the conditions under which our experience of a work takes place.

We can recall here that McCabe praises the literalism constituted by Godard’s separation of cinematic elements because it gives thought back to the spectator. It is in fact the case that Fried is ascribing an entirely different value to artistic experience here, a presence in which we are not reflective, not who we are, in which we are possessed by the thought and affects constituted by a work. In any case, we are not forced to contemplate the time that it takes us to perceive. There are a number of interesting points here that can be brought in contact with both Deleuze and Apichatpong. The argument that cinema automatically escapes such theatrical experience makes clear that Fried recognises automatism as the characteristic feature of cinema. However, Deleuze would say that cinema does not achieve automatism automatically, but only once it creates movement-images rather than mere images in movement, or, alternatively, that cinema begins once the image is defined by its own movement rather than the movement of the things in it (*MI* 25-6). Fried actually recognises this when he argues, 41 years later in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, that cinematic absorption is dependent on the deployment of a number of techniques rather than the apparatus – camera, projector, screen – itself (13). In “Art and Objecthood”, however, he thought that cinema simply provided a “welcome and absorbing refuge to sensibilities at war with theatre and theatricality” (164), but that its automatism made it
impossible for even the most experimental cinema to constitute “modernist art”.
Fortunately, he also recants on this opinion in *Why Photography Matters*.

Deleuze claims that in becoming literal the cinematic image does not sacrifice its
automatism, and that when it does so it becomes hypnotic in an entirely different way. In the
literal image, the actual forms a crystal with its virtual. One cannot see through the image to
what one is supposed to see *in* it, the class of sign that it constitutes. In the vision offered by
such an image, one becomes a seer, possessed by a vision that makes one neither certain of
what is of interest in the image, nor that there is even anything definitively pertinent in it. No
virtual image enters into recollection until we have seen everything that we are able to see.
The image absorbs and creates its object, Deleuze writes, drawing on Robbe-Grillet (*TI* 67),
and this is the case with Apichatpong’s investigations in *Syndromes and a Century*. They make
us present to a past that remains attached to the passage of a present that does not allow us
to shave off a virtual counterpart – such that the image would play a part in composing an
actual state of things – or to pass onto another present that would be its future. “It is
characteristic of cinema”, Deleuze writes, “to seize this past and future that coexist with the
present image. To film what is *before* and what is *after*…Perhaps it is necessary to make what
is before and after the film pass inside it in order to get out of the chain of presents” (36).
He claims this is characteristic of cinema, even though it is not characteristic of the
movement-image, because it is something that cinema can do better than any other art form.
And to get out of the chain of presents is to achieve presence. Presence is constituted by an
image that is not in the present, which, that is, remains attached to its past and future, rather
than becoming the virtual image of a present that has passed.

The images that compose Apichatpong’s investigations are absorptive in this way,
inducing a presence through an extended present in which an event is not constituted
through the intermediary of the bodies on screen, but the protraction of a vision. We act on
the offer of presence such images extend to us by letting go, by identifying with an image of
the world that absorbs the things and people within the frame into a new object, a singular
image of the world. The image of the vent opening is both a reflection of that world, and a
direct image of that world’s transformation. It is a feature of that world that can be
synthesised with neither those features created by the other investigations, nor the film’s
narrative looping. As it comes to reside in our memory, we may struggle later to think the
relations between these images and sequences, but in the moment of facing such images,
perhaps we may be able to, however briefly, annihilate the distance separating us from them.
“We are literalists most of our lives”, Fried writes in “Art and Objecthood”; “Presentness is
grace” (167-8).

_Syndromes_ both offers us an experience of the cinematic image as part of our own
world, asking us to see what can be seen in it when its relation to the film’s other images is
uncertain, as well as to think the relation of the two fictional worlds behind the images.
There is not one chain of thoughts that absorbs us, but a series of thinkers marked by their
difference from one another, no doubt reflecting Apichatpong’s Buddhist belief that we all
become others as we pass through time. The moments of presence we are graced by
_Syndromes_ both allow us to persist as what we are for the length of certain investigations, and
constitute the event of our departing from what we were a moment before. Such moments
indeed renew the pleasures of everyday activities like those Apichatpong chooses to end the
film with: a quiet afternoon by the riverside, the wonderful mania of community exercise.
More than that though, in allowing ourselves to take such trips, which always constitute an
emergence of the new, we perform an act of faith that expresses the belief that the world
always exceeds the ideas within which we frame it and thereby delimit the scope of human
nature.
Conclusion

We can now summarise both the notion of thought that I have claimed is indicative of the films analysed, and the principal problematic features encountered in these films. The spiritual automatism of the regime of the time-image brings together problematic features that constitute thought in addition to, and in interference with, those processes that make possible spiritual automatism in the regime of the movement-image: differentiation and specification. As can be seen in 2046 and In the Mood for Love, story material can be developed such that it presents problems that both reflect and enter into uncertain relations with those problems developed aesthetically or structurally by a film. For instance, the relationship developed by 2046 between love as repetition of the same, and love as the emergence of difference is problematic. Nevertheless, the whole in this regime of thought is the outside, which is the presence of relationships that are not given by the film. The outside is the interstice that separates features such that their difference from one another becomes constitutive of a film’s identity as an assemblage of incommensurable relationships.

The unthought in thought, on the other hand, first of all designates images called opsigns in which subjectivity and objectivity become imbricated, or in which we are presented with visions unascrivable to the mental state of any character. The image itself is haunted by an unstated relationship. We see without knowing from where we see, or exactly what we are meant to see. We thus “see better and further than [we] can react, that is, think” (TI 164). The unthought in thought also designates the thought of the whole when it becomes the outside, because the breaking up of a film’s features makes thought plural. The film is a form of free indirect discourse, whether because, like Wong and Ceylan, or Apichatpong in the last half of Tropical Malady, the director has made a character his intercessor, or because, like Costa, the director collaborates with real people whose speech-acts enter into an uncertain relationship with many of the film’s images.

We are sometimes unable to know whether what is seen is subjective or objective, or are unable, as in Syndromes and a Century, to attribute images to anyone except the filmmaker, who pursues his own aesthetic or thematic preoccupations with a high level of autonomy from the task of providing story information. The identity of such images is constituted by the difference of these perspectives, which appear in a singular configuration such that they cannot be separated from one another. In addition, forces are produced that are not made
relative to one another: while they may seem to communicate the importance of a particular moment in a film, we are unable to comprehend that importance in relation to the situations developed in the film’s other images (and sounds).

We are thus asked to believe in the world, in the sense that we enter into a thought constituted by laws that we do not have access to. To believe in the world is to affirm transcendental existence, which offers up images of connection that are based upon a logic that is beyond our grasp. The strength of such connections is determined by their presentation of a problem that revolves around grace and chance. Are these connections that already exist in the world, which have simply not yet been named and classified? Or are they simply chance occurrences, without any meaning grounded in the world as it is? To believe in the world is to pose this problem, but it is also to take a middle path through it, by admitting that we cannot know if such connections are innately meaningful, but also affirming our power of making such links, with others and the world, such that they compose a line of flight. This flight is a subtle way out of the bind presented by the problem of grace and chance, cutting between predestination, on one side, and absolute arbitrariness, on the other.

With In the Mood for Love, we encounter a problematic relation between emptiness and fullness. It is not problematic because, as Chow argues, it offers us images that seem to fully and precisely evoke the Hong Kong of the period, but actually present us with the impermanence of all things, thus suggesting the ultimate identity of reality as a void (77). Rather, the problem is developed through the possibility that the event of the film is expressed in the sequences that combine slow motion and “Yumeji’s Theme”, which are relatively bereft of story information. The story sequences are then potentially empty, in the sense that they do not present the event that they gesture toward. Even the relations between characters that are developed are produced for the most part by conversations. What is suggested is, as Deleuze writes with regard to Zen thought in The Logic of Sense, the notion that “the event is the identity of form and void” (136).

This is reflected as well through Mo-wan and Li-zhen’s performances as each other’s spouses, and as their future selves. Simulation produces, or nearly produces, events that they are unable to bring about in the fullness of their own identities. Only in constructing a divide within identity, and developing, however provisionally, an additional identity, is the desired change presented as possible. The entire film is also permeated with the thought that what is seen is filtered through the memories and fantasies of one or both of the characters. This
poses problems to knowledge: we are unable to distinguish between subjective and objective images, an effect that is heightened by the temporal disorientation created by the changes of Li-zhen’s cheongsam. Finally, the film is haunted by the thought of a transcendent position from which these problems could be resolved. The offscreen thus constitutes an outside that exerts an intense form of attraction, and haunts the film with the thought that its essence is constituted by something which it does not contain.

In *2046*, we begin with the problem of the identity, or lack thereof, between the two versions of Mo-wan. They both are and are not the same man. In the end, this departure from himself appears to leave him open to a vicious circle of repetition, rather than constituting the possibility of introducing a desired change. It seems to preclude the appearance of such change. Love appears in two guises. It is rendered firstly as an incitement to rebel against the corruption of time, in order to regain what was once lost (although it may not have actually ever been possessed). This is the journey to 2046. Love is, however, also presented as the repetition of the new, the emergence of what could not have been prefigured, that which breaks the cycles of repetition. One must first return from 2046 to approach such a possibility. Love is thus both the sickness and the cure in Mo-wan’s world.

In simulating the movements and “colourings” of Mo-wan’s memory, Wong has free reign to indulge his own “delirious” aesthetic sensibility and affection for temporal labyrinths. This is clearly an instance of the type of free-indirect vision through which the filmmaker expresses himself through the intercession of a character (*TI 177*). Wong also does some sifting through his own past. Thus in the taxi rides that punctuate the film, both *In the Mood for Love* and *Happy Together* are evoked, while the figure of Mimi/Lulu introduces a more problematic tactic of intertextual reference, positioning *Days of Being Wild, Mood*, and *2046* in an impossible but captivating relation to one another. Perhaps this should be understood in relation to the problems introduced by Mo-wan’s memory in the film. We seem to see him invent possibilities that did not exist in the situations he reflects on, since images from different relationships are associated with one another in complex orderings. If his memory of *Mood’s* Li-zhen precludes him from approaching love as the emergence of the new, the images in which he recollects the past seem to map in that possibility where it never existed. Memory appears an act of creation related to that of Wong himself.

In the chapter on *Distant*, Ceylan’s two central objectives in making his films up to and including *Climates* were established. The first motive is “self-improvement”, the
reflection on his own failures with regard to others and himself. The second is putting humans in touch with the world, with the cosmos, as he says. With regard to the first objective, it can be said that the issue stems from a problem of identity, specifically the fact that one can betray oneself. It is not in the interests of Mahmut (who is clearly an intercessor for Ceylan) to treat others badly, or to fail to motivate himself to live up to his own aspirations. Yet he does both these things, and this split within him is offered more directly in those images of Ceylan’s that present an “unthought in thought” by interlocking subjective and objective points of view.

For instance, some images show us Mahmut looking contemplatively out from the shores of the Bosporus, but also seem to be imbued with his own subjectivity. It is not simply a question of atmospheric images of the world corresponding with his state of mind, but the problem presented by their seeming to do so at the same time as we see him. Furthermore, there are images of both Mahmut and Yusuf that pass from subjective to objective in the space of a single shot. These again reveal the uncertainty of the position we are put in with regard to differentiating the internal worlds of the characters from objective views of them in the world. Finally, there is a use of sound and music that similarly breaks down this boundary. This is most strikingly encountered in Yusuf’s confrontation with the wrecked ship, where the sound “collage” serves multiple purposes that are difficult to reconcile with one another. It suggests his subjective disorientation, but also adds definition to the image of the snowbound vessel, and presents an autonomous, nearly psychedelic atmosphere directly to the spectator. Ultimately, the failures of Mahmut seem related not only to his distance from the world and others, but himself, and this is where we end up: with images that register the unthought in thought as the source of these other problems.

Many of these strategies reappear in Climates, but in this film, Ceylan plays his own intercessor, whose failure to live justly appears above all as an inability to attend to and relate with the Otherness of Bahar. In the early image of her on the hillside, we come to face the singularity of the human face stripped of its functions of communication, identification, and socialisation. This both carries it toward nonhumanity, and affirms the absolute singularity of each human being. The second pivotal scene is then that of the couple’s break up on the beach. Dream and reality seem to permeate one another (as toward the end of Distant), and the violent image of Isa shovelling sand over Bahar’s face seems to express the problem that is not fully articulated through the scenes of them in the film’s reality. Their breakup is then
conveyed in an image that disturbs the relation between space, movement, and time. This aberrant movement is also a form of violence, wrenching itself apart from the rest of the film as the world it seems to constitute is incommensurable with that developed by the other images of the film.

When Isa pursues Bahar to the snowy eastern region of Anatolia, many of the same strategies employed in relation to Mahmut in Distant appear once again. Here though, more than simply the “doubling” of Isa is suggested by the appearance of images that both position him within the frame and reflect his mental states. We now see as well that the world can take on a face, in which human beings, and their ruined palaces, may form features. It can be said the unthinkable nature of these images comes to include another indivisible facet: the absolute distance of the world is affirmed at the same time as the potential of reflecting a consciousness in landscape images. Finally, with the end of the film we turn toward a problematic of emptiness and fullness. The event of the couple’s failed reunion in Isa’s hotel room is captured in images from which the characters are absent, or in which a shallow focus has been employed such that vision is heavily obscured. With Bahar’s disappearance into the landscape we see the emptiness of absence become the fullness of the world, a nothing that is both present and without stable form.

With In Vanda’s Room, we encounter the second type of free indirect discourse described by Deleuze. Costa expresses himself through the intercession of autonomous, independent characters that he does not fix in any role (II 177). This is clearly most true of Vanda, but the speech of others, like her sister, Zita, and Nhurro, also goes toward the constitution of the action of the film as a series of conversations in which the people on screen reflect on their lives in Fontainhas. The camera captures these characters as they enter into their own becomings, or inventions of themselves and their lives, through the stories that they tell. The film’s other event is the destruction of the neighbourhood, which is most powerfully conveyed as a disturbance through the offscreen noises of demolition. The sound presents us with information about the situation at the moment the film was made, and seems to express both the violent acts that are spoken of, but not seen, and the violence inherent in the rampant drug abuse of the characters. Not only does this drug abuse, which goes on throughout the film, not itself express this violence, but it is also often rendered in “beautiful images” that themselves seem autonomous with regard to the “action” of the conversations.
In considering the nature of the figure of a place that cinema may constitute, I considered both *Stromboli* and *Killer of Sheep* in order to throw into relief the specificity of some of Costa’s strategies. The figure is rendered along a line of the outside that brings together the vision of Costa, the speech of the characters, and the historical moment of Fontainhas. The result is an assemblage that brings elements of reality into a particular configuration. It does not capture the “way things are”, exactly, but it does allow us to reflect on what is “wrong”, or intolerable with the situation we see and hear. Still lifes and “passages” between conversations draw out the nature of Costa’s own unique vision of the neighbourhood, but it is reflected with equal intensity in those close-ups of characters in which light seems to emanate from their faces. This opens up a problem to do with the nature of darkness, which will be further developed in *Colossal Youth*.

The interstices between different features are multiplied in *Colossal Youth*, just as the letter that Ventura recites throughout the film is itself composite in such a way that it becomes an indivisible artefact of plural speech. While the letter brings together the words of Desnos, and the multiple “impossible” authors who composed it in *Casa da Lava*, the film goes about once more establishing lines of (dis)-connection between Costa’s vision and the characters’ speech. Ventura is, however, a character unlike any that appeared in *In Vanda’s Room*. He is himself run through with a crack, which as Rancière argues, makes thought circle around the problem of experiences that can be shared, and others that cannot. Through Ventura we are confronted very concretely with a worker whose identity becomes collective, encompassing the experiences of other workers who have had similar experiences. We see, when he visits Nhurro at the museum, that he and the other immigrant workers he stands in for are not welcome in the buildings that they helped to construct.

Yet, we are also confronted with a second Ventura, whose bandage carries the past into the present of the film, and makes his identity problematic in a different sense. He thus not only seems to take on a collective identity in speaking for those who are not present to speak for themselves, but also appears as a man haunted by a version of himself from the past. If he is defined by the darkness of this relation, which is recast throughout the film, darkness is itself double. It appears both as a threat from without, which could extinguish the light of those carefully lit faces from *In Vanda’s Room*, and the precondition for creation, for living a life that is not simply a series of reactions. The sensible wealth of the world is not only presented in still lifes that capture the transient play of light on everyday detritus, but
through the shadows themselves, which neither “reveal or conceal”, but offer a source of rejuvenation for the imagination, such that the people of Fontainhas, who have nearly all been relocated, may perhaps fabricate the legends of their lives in a manner befitting their destiny.

With Apichatpong, we face the appearance of the outside at the centre of the film, the world defined by the difference that cleaves it in two. In Tropical Malady, this opens onto an exploration of desire, which appears in the first half of the film through Keng’s gentle pursuit of Tong, and in the second, transfigured, in the quest of the soldier into the jungle after the “were-tiger”. While the nature of desire cannot be captured with a return to a primal state, becoming-animal nevertheless appears to offer its own line of escape. With relation to Nietzsche and Borges, we defined this line of escape as a transformation of the human relation to time. This would be a form of presence, a shifting toward the empirical self, or rather its temporary alignment with the transcendental I. This sort of presence is most powerfully prompted by the presentation of the jungle in the second half, as an “any-space-whatever”. It is a spiritualised nature that we encounter, without any principles of connectivity, which therefore requires the production of new links, which can be “made in an infinite number of ways” (MI 113). We must enter into the unknown, like the soldier, but once there we find our bodies are more than capable of establishing a new sort of rapport with the world.

Then there is the problem of repetition, which is related to that of desire. Even in the first half, it is suggested in a number of ways that Tong is in some sense unknowable, and that therefore Keng’s pursuit is dependent upon the establishing of relations with what cannot be known – a burrow into the darkness, which he fails to take up when the two descend into the shrine below the cave. I considered, with reference to Blanchot, the power of plural speech, the speech of the “between-two”, which he formulates in relation to Nietzsche. Through such speech we do not say the beyond, but the problematic relation that induces thought of the new. This was related to the notion of eternal return, understood as the re-emergence of the new, rather than, as in The Exterminating Angel, the eternal recurrence of the cycles of the impulses. The important thing is that a new relationship between difference and identity is produced, which is not one of opposition. The “good repetition” presents a desire not as a recurring primal drive, but a new configuration dependent on
memory, but dependent as well on the intermittent abandonment of it and, more generally, the self (as acted out by the soldier at the film’s conclusion).

The figure of the repetition in *Syndromes and a Century* is instead the circle. The first half brings us back to where we began, but once we have begun again we journey, in a more staid manner than *Tropical Malady*, into an elsewhere. The harmony of the two circles appears in the figure of the eclipse seen in the first half, while the impossibility of such a precise return appears with our final encounter with the circular vent at the end of the silver tube. Before we have arrived there, however, Apichatpong takes us on a number of “investigations” in the latter half of the film. These break up the loosely organised conversations that make up the action of the film, and give the film a pronounced serial structure. In considering this broken line of thought(s), I claimed that it is not the case, as McCabe had argued, that the “separation of elements” distances us from absorption in the automatic linking of features. It is rather constitutive of the regime of the time-image to absorb us in a thought that can include the outside and recast itself in the problematic features it gives rise to.

*Syndromes and a Century* ultimately occasions an encounter between this power of linear automatism, and the figure of the circle. This comes to a head in the image of the vent, which both constitutes the culminating event of the film, and provides us with an image of emptiness that can be referenced to both the “unthought in thought”, and its reflection, “the outside”, which reveals the uncertainty of our relation to the world. Yet in this image we also see historical traces, a dust that is sucked into the vent, which is closely related to a violence that is absent from the image, but which is thus registered. As an attempt to recreate the lives of Apichatpong’s parents, and to reflect their distinct sensibilities, the film is constituted on a premise of duality, of a thought divided from itself. Nevertheless, the investigations in the latter half of the film, especially the last one, align us with a vision that makes us see further than we can think about such historical or biographical information. Ultimately, we are carried toward moments of presence, and perhaps, as Fried says, grace.

We can return one final time, then, to the problem of grace or chance. Is the connection that we seem to have with the world predicated on clichés that actually prevent us from knowing its true nature? Do we lose the potential for any connection with this world once we assert that the connection we appear to have with it is illusory? By “filming belief in the world” cinema produces a response to this problem that is aligned with neither
of these poles. It does not overcome this problem, but in producing new links recasts the relationship between words and things, thought and sense. When Rancière argues that Deleuze brings to the fore “the dialectic constitutive of the cinema”, he misses this most important point. It is not that the modern image of thought is defined by the original identity of thought and non-thought, and that this assertion is played dialectically against the claim that cinema is the art that “overturns this identity and rehabilitates the claims of the human brain to its place at the center of the world” (Film 122). It is rather, as Deleuze claims, that cinema can put into effect a spiritual automatism that is “a method of the AND, ‘this and then that’, which does away with all the cinema of Being = is” (TI 174). In the regime of the time-image, we encounter movement-image thought, but also the formation of problems that should be taken themselves as positive acts of thought, not simply the “thwarting” of the processes of thought associated with movement-image automatism.

What is at stake are new links between humans and the world, and cinema contributes to this cause by inventing combinations of images, or images and sounds, that constitute additional links, not any single, essential link. “Something possible, otherwise I will suffocate”. In The Ethics, Spinoza expresses what is useful about such new links. He writes, “Whatever so disposes the human body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man; the more it renders the body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or of affecting other bodies, the more useful it is” (137; Ch. 4, Prop. 38). Of course, those images and combinations of features that affect us in new ways also disempower our ability to think their nature clearly. But this is always a new beginning, and in the understanding and invention that comes after, we may find many new ways of ourselves affecting those with whom we share the world.
Notes

Introduction

1. The passage from Nietzsche can be found in “Schopenhauer as Educator”, in Untimely Meditations: 177.
2. From this point on, these books will be referred to as The Movement-Image and The Time-Image, and they will appear as MI and TI in in-text citations.
3. See Rodowick, Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine, and Marrati, Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy.
4. On the dogmatic image of thought, see also Marrati: “The Problem with this model is that it neutralizes both sense and time” (83).
5. On the relationship between seeing and saying, see, for example, the following passage from Foucault’s The Order of Things:

   It is not that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other’s terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendour is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax. (10)
7. On Levinas, the Other, and the outside, see chapter five, “Knowledge of the Unknown”, in the first part of Blanchot’s The Infinite Conversation: 49-58.

Chapter 1

1. See Spinoza 37 (Par. 85).
2. On the points above also see Deleuze, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy 43-5.
3. On Spinoza, spiritual automatism, and cinema see Rodowick 174-5.
4. See for example MI 145-6.
5. The italics are Deleuze’s.
6. See Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, especially 45-8, and Foucault, “The Thought of the Outside”, in Foucault/Blanchot. For a discussion of Deleuze’s development of the concept of the outside, see Ropars-Wuilleumier.
7. See Pasolini 176-82. Also see MI 73-8 and TI 142-4.
8. The italics are Pasolini’s.
9. See Foucault, The Order of Things 340-58. The unthought in thought is defined in the following passage as a dimension between the empirical and transcendental parts of man:

   Man is a mode of being which accommodates that dimension – always open, never finally delimited, yet constantly traversed – which extends from a part of himself not reflected in a cogito to the act of thought by which he apprehends that part; and which, in the inverse direction, extends from that pure apprehension to the empirical clutter, the chaotic accumulation of contents, the weight of experiences constantly eluding themselves, the whole silent horizon of what is posited in the sandy stretches of non-thought. (351)
10. “In modern cinema…the time-image is no longer empirical, nor metaphysical; it is ‘transcendental’ in the sense that Kant gives this word: time is out of joint” (TI 260).

Deleuze follows Kant in opposing the transcendental to the metaphysical or transcendent,
and time ceases to be a single totality to become constitutive of the disjointed relation between the I and ego. On the relationship between the unthought in thought and time, also see Deleuze’s introduction to Kant’s Critical Philosophy, specifically the section in which he proposes Rimbaud’s proclamation, “*je est un autre*” (I is another), as a poetic formula for expressing Kantian philosophy. And on the importance of this latter text with regard to Deleuze’s work on cinema, see Rodowick 128-30.

11. For Deleuze’s initial definitions of saturation and rarefaction, see *MI* 13-4.
12. On the relation of the interior monologue, or inner speech, to thought in the regime of the movement-image, see *TI* 27-28, 176-7. See also Eisenstein’s development of the idea of inner monologue in “Film Form: New Problems” 129-31, and Pasolini’s distinction between interior monologue and free-indirect discourse, 175-6.
13. For different perspectives on this concept, see Bogue, and chapter six in Marrati.
14. See Deleuze’s critique of early phenomenological film theory - by way of Bergson – on this basis: *MI* 58-60.
15. See *Foucault* 89-92, where Deleuze claims that Foucault’s major achievement is “the conversion of phenomenology into epistemology” (90).
16. The relationship between power and affects is clearly stated in *Foucault* “Power-relations are the differential relations which determine particular features (affects)” (63). See also *MI* 99-100 and 108-9.
17. Also see *Negotiations* 60, where Deleuze argues for the importance of exploring the relationship between cinema and the biology of the brain.

Chapter 2

1. See Yue and Bruno.
2. I’m referring here to Deleuze’s adoption of D.H. Lawrence’s umbrella metaphor, which appears in the introduction Lawrence wrote for Harry Crosby’s book of poems, *Chariot of the Sun* (1928):
   In a violently poetic text, Lawrence describes what produces poetry: people are constantly putting up an umbrella that shelters them and on the underside of which they draw a firmament and write their conventions and opinions. But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears in the rent. (*What* 203)
3. Chow relates that the interview took place at Cannes in 1997, and Wong was answering a question about the titling of *Happy Together* (*Chunguang zhaxie*). The interview originally appeared as “Chunguang Zhaxie: 97 qian rang women kuaile zai yiqi” [Happy Together: Let’s be happy together before ’97], in *Dianying shunangzhoukan [City Entertainment]*, no. 473 (1997): 44. The translation is Chow’s.
4. On Hitchcock and mental images with regard to modernist cinema see *TI* 3 and 22. On the development of mental images in Hitchcock’s work, see *MI* 201-9.
6. See as well Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*: “Whether the spoken word is a narrative vehicle or the basic action, the result in either case is that the complete freedom of the camera is restored” (76). In *The Time-Image*, see especially 235-7, in which Deleuze relates the dissociation of image and sound, with reference to Burch and Ozu, to the readability of the image and the “act” constituted by speech.
7. *The Time when Flowers Were in Bloom* is a translation of *In the Mood for Love*’s original, Mandarin title: *Hua yang nian hua*.

Chapter 3

1. For Deleuze’s reading of the eternal return see *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 43-67.
2. Massumi’s description of the “punctual” escape of affect plays on both Benjamin’s formulation of cinematic shock in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (238), and Roland Barthes’s discussion in *Camera Lucida* of the punctum, that element of a photograph that affects one beyond considerations arising from what is represented. For Barthes’s initial differentiation of punctum and studium, see 25-7.
3. Once again, *The Time when Flowers Were in Bloom* is a translation of *In the Mood for Love*’s original, Mandarin title.

Chapter 4

1. “The Film and the New Psychology” was delivered as a lecture on March 13, 1945, at L’Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinematographiques, and was then published in *Sense and Non-Sense*.

Chapter 5

2. For this example of Hitchcock’s, see Gary Leva’s 2008 film, *Pure Cinema: Through the Eyes of the Master*.
3. This is from note 503 of Walter Kaufmann’s edition of *The Will to Power*. In subsequent references to this work, the note numbers will also be given in endnotes.
4. On Levinas and cinema, see both of Sarah Cooper’s contributions to the edition of *Film Philosophy* dedicated to the topic. See also Megan Craig’s *Levinas and James: Toward a Pragmatic Phenomenology*, which at one point brings together Deleuze and Levinas with reference to the close-up (53-5).
5. The allusion here is to Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, which Dönmez-Colin references just before taking up Climates in her discussion.
6. See Deleuze’s criticism of the movement-image’s increasing dependence on represented violence: “When the violence is no longer that of the image and its vibrations but that of the represented, we move into a blood-red arbitrariness” (*TI* 159).
7. Notes 495 and 501.
8. Also see *MI* 216-7, and *TI* 1-12.

Chapter 6

2. See *TI* 42-5.
3. Making use of Louis Delluc and Léon Moussinac’s theoretical writings, Morin also describes *photogénie* in the following way: “This quality not in life but in the image of life, how should we define it? *Photogénie* is ‘that extreme poetic aspect of beings and things’ (Delluc), ‘that poetic quality of beings and things’ (Moussinac), ‘capable of being revealed to us only by the cinematograph’ (both Moussinac and Delluc)” (15).
5. Deleuze differentiates his position from Bazin in the opening pages of *The Time-Image*. On this point, see Marrati, 86-7, where she explicitly relates this distinction to the question of belief in the world.

6. Deleuze quotes Gerima, who says, “if there is a plurality of black ‘movements’, each film-maker is a movement in himself” (TI 212). On the points in this paragraph, see TI 211-2.

7. The chapter “What Is a Minor Literature” in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, which presents the three characteristics of minor literature concisely and with lucidity, is extremely helpful in making sense of the somewhat convoluted account of the three correlating characteristics of minor cinema in *The Time Image* 207-15. And, for a reading of the importance of Creole in Costa’s films, see Overhoff Ferreira.

8. On the “toing and froing” between image and speech, see TI 237.

9. On Perrault, Rouch, and fabulation, see TI 144-50, and for further claims regarding fabulation see 213-4.


Chapter 7

1. On the relationship of characters that make fictions through speech-acts and the present, see TI 147.

2. The *Praça do Comercio* is situated on the banks of the Tagus River, and was reconstructed as the centre of commerce in Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake. It is worth mentioning, if only because it emphasises that Ventura’s labour went into the construction of buildings in some of Lisbon’s most iconic, functional, and central locales.

3. See TI, 147.

4. This passage is taken from the section of *The Order of Things* in which Foucault discusses the unthought in thought, which, as we have seen, Deleuze makes use of in describing the new relations with thought established by modern cinema. See for example, TI 162, 170, 266.

5. See TI 146-50, on free-indirect discourse in Rouch and Perrault. This analysis introduces many characteristics to be found in Costa’s work since *Osso*. Also, see 177, for the relation between the serial time-image – the “genesign” – and free-indirect discourse.

6. See chapter five, “Knowledge of the Unknown”, in the first part of *The Infinite Conversation*; 49-58.

7. *Autrui* is the Other, not simply another person, for Lévinas, for which he uses l’autre.


Chapter 8


2. On the plausibility of the (lack of) response to the homosexual relationship in *Tropical Malady*, see Benedict Anderson, “The Strange Story of a Strange Beast: Receptions in Thailand of Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s *Sat Pralaat*”.

3. In the essay cited above, Anderson gives a brief history of the legend of the “were-tiger” in Thailand, the *seua saming*, a legend that he claims is not particularly well known even in present day Thailand. Andersen quotes the Thai historian, Nidhi Iowsriwongse:
The true *seua saming* are always human males. Only men have the spiritual power to change their shapes as they wish. They can appear as tigers, but inside the tiger is a human intelligence and soul. Usually they change shape to escape some danger, mostly from other human beings. There is another kind of *seua saming* which is female, but it is a spirit not a human being. It can appear as a tiger or as a beautiful woman but it is always a malevolent spirit. (163-4)

Unsurprisingly, and as Anderson notes, Apichatpong had in mind the legends of his homeland in creating *Tropical Malady*, but the were-tiger fable in the film is not identical to any particular legend.

4. The italics are Deleuze’s.
5. This is clearly stated in the following reflection of Proust’s narrator in *The Fugitive*:
   It is life that, little by little, case by case, enables us to observe that what is most important to our hearts or to our minds is taught us not by reasoning but by other powers. And then it is the intelligence itself which, acknowledging their superiority, abdicates to them through reasoning and consents to become their collaborator and their servant. Experimental faith.
   (482)

6. Also see Lawrence’s text, cited earlier.
7. On Blanchot, Deleuze and the eternal return, see Brently Young. See also Ropars-Wuilleumier.

**Chapter 9**

1. The texts cited by Boehler in this regard are: Phya Anuman Rajadhon’s *Essays on Thai Folklore* and Suvanna Kriengkraipetch’s “Thai Folk Beliefs about Animals and Plants and Attitudes toward Nature”, in *Thai Folklore: Insights into Thai Culture*, ed. Siraporn Nathalang.

2. This text is reprinted on the first, unnumbered page of the booklet accompanying the BFI DVD of the film.

3. On Godard and serial thought, see *TI* 173-81.


5. On the last point about Apichatpong and his father, see Fysalides, Pt. 2.

6. See for example, Courbet’s Realism, to which Rushton makes reference in his essay.

7. Deleuze’s reference is to Robbe-Grillet’s “Time and Description in Contemporary Narrative”.
Works Cited


---. “The Trembling Moment”. Interview by Kenji Eguichi. *Outside in Tokyo*. Outside in...


Nietzsche, Friedrich. Beyond Good and Evil. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth:


Nochimson, Martha P. “Lies and Loneliness: An Interview with Tony Leung Chiu-wai”.


Ropars-Wuilleumier, Marie-Claire. “Image or Time? The Thought of the Outside in *The


Zarzosa, Agustín. “Layering Images, Thwarting Fables: Deleuze, Rancière and the Allegories...

**Filmography**


*Early Summer [Bakushû].* Dir. Yasujiro Ozu. Shochiku, 1951. Film.


Film.


Passing Fancy [Dekigokoro]. Dir. Yasujiro Ozu. Shochiku, 1933. Film


DVD.


Film.


Film.


The Town [Kasaba]. Dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan. NBC Film, 1997, Film.

Two or Three Things I Know About Her [Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle]. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard. CFDC, 1967. Film.


The Wind Will Carry Us [Bad ma ra khahad bord]. Dir. Abbas Kiarostami. MK2, 1999. Film.