



**Universidade do Minho**  
Instituto de Ciências Sociais

Martin John Dale

**The Dream Machine: Moving beyond the  
dichotomy between genre and auteur  
cinema**

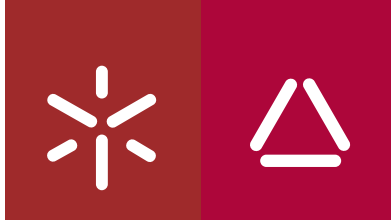
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**The Dream Machine: Moving beyond the  
dichotomy between genre and auteur  
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PhD Thesis in Communication Science

Work produced under the supervision of  
**Professor Doutor Moisés Adão de Lemos Martins**  
**Professor Doutor Nelson Troca Zagalo**

September 2020

## DIREITOS DE AUTOR E CONDIÇÕES DE UTILIZAÇÃO DO TRABALHO POR TERCEIROS

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## STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

ABSTRACT

At a time when the moving image is more omnipresent than ever in modern society, the cinema is suffering an identity crisis, with some commentators questioning whether the medium is already dead.

Hollywood cinema has shifted predominantly towards superhero and fantasy franchises complemented by kids animation movies, while Europe is divided between comedies with limited export potential and auteur films that are increasingly restricted to the film festival and museum circuit.

The inclusive vision of film as a universal art form has been superseded by a strongly perceived dichotomy between a more erudite “auteur cinema” on the one hand and a visually spectacular “genre cinema” on the other.

A key moment of change in the critical consensus in relation to film occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the first wave of the auteur theory was superseded by a second wave, which radically shifted the theoretical framework for thinking about cinema and for making films. This new critical consensus coincided with a sea change in the industry itself, in the wake of the rollout of television.

The industry is now undergoing a new transformation as a result of the digital revolution, with power shifting away from cinema and towards streaming platforms. The new theoretical framework associated to the second wave of auteur theory has had a decisive impact on curatorial strategies at the level of film funding by national film institutes, commissioning strategies of television broadcasters with cultural remits, film education, and the programming strategies of film festivals.

This thesis provides evidence for the growing dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema, including extensive statistical analysis in the annexes. It analyses the various set of theories that led to the creation of this dichotomy at a theoretical/curatorial level, and the associated historical forces that led to this divide. It offers a theoretical framework for understanding poetic cinema and why it was so inspiring to early filmmakers and how it can form the basis for moving beyond the auteur/genre dichotomy. It also analyses the contribution provided to these issues by recent cognitive film theory. In conclusion it traces a theoretical framework that can overcome this dichotomy and identifies future areas of research.

**Key words:** auteur, cognitive, genre, poetic

## RESUMO

Numa altura em que a imagem em movimento é mais omnipresente do que nunca na sociedade moderna, o cinema está a sofrer uma crise de identidade, com alguns a questionar se o meio está já morto. O cinema de Hollywood transmutou-se predominantemente em direção aos super-heróis e ao género de cinema fantástico, complementados por filmes de animação infantil, enquanto a Europa está dividida entre comédias com potencial de exportação limitado e “filmes de autor” que estão cada vez mais restringidos aos circuitos dos festivais de cinema e dos museus.

A visão inclusiva do cinema como uma arte universal foi substituída por uma visão fortemente dicotómica entre um “cinema de autor”, de carácter mais erudito, por um lado, e um cinema de “género”, visualmente espetacular, por outro.

No final dos anos 60 e início da década de 1970, ocorreu um momento chave de mudança no consenso crítico em relação ao cinema - quando a primeira vaga da teoria do auteur foi substituída por uma segunda vaga, que mudou radicalmente o quadro teórico. Este novo consenso crítico coincidiu com uma mudança radical na própria indústria, na sequência do avanço da televisão. A indústria está agora a ser perpassada por uma nova transformação, como resultado da revolução digital, com o poder a deslocar-se do cinema para as plataformas de streaming.

O novo quadro teórico associado à segunda vaga da teoria do cinema de autor teve um impacto decisivo nas estratégias curatoriais ao nível do financiamento de filmes pelos institutos cinematográficos nacionais, estratégias associadas a comissões dos organismos de radiodifusão televisiva com competências culturais, educação cinematográfica e programação estratégica de festivais de cinema.

Esta tese fornece evidências para a crescente dicotomia entre cinema de autor e cinema de género, incluindo análises estatísticas exaustivas apresentadas nos anexos. Analisa o conjunto das várias teorias que conduziram à criação desta dicotomia a nível teórico/curatorial, além das forças históricas associadas a tal divisão e que a esta conduziram. Oferece um quadro teórico para a compreensão do cinema poético e para o motivo pelo qual este foi sobremaneira inspirador para os primeiros cineastas, além do modo como este pode servir de base para ultrapassar a dicotomia autor/género. Analisa também a contribuição dada a estas questões pela recente teoria do filme cognitivo. Em conclusão, traça um quadro teórico que pode superar a dicotomia apresentada e identifica futuras áreas de investigação.

**Palavras-chave:** autor, cognitivo, género, poético



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## FOREWORD – DEFINITIONS AND KEY QUESTIONS

“Removed from the real world, isolated even from fellow-viewers, the spectator falls to dream and reverie in the womb-like darkness of the theatre” <sup>1</sup> - Amos Vogel

“The dimming of the lights begins the nocturnal voyage into the unconscious” <sup>2</sup> – Luis Buñuel

“Cinema today is better fitted than either philosophy or the novel to convey the basic data of consciousness” <sup>3</sup> – Jean Luc Godard

“I make films because I like to go into another world. I like to get lost in another world. Film is a magical medium that allows you to dream in the dark” <sup>4</sup> – David Lynch

“Movies are the most powerful empathy machine in all the arts” <sup>5</sup> – Roger Eberts

The two key terms used in this thesis – genre cinema and auteur cinema – are often used to distinguish between Hollywood and European cinema, in terms of the distinct conceptions, styles and traditions of filmmaking.

Genre cinema is identified first and foremost with films that have strong narrative structures, in particular linear narratives, characters who have clearly perceptible goals and take actions to attain those goals, with a clear character arc/ character evolution over the course of the film, a set-up to the narrative establishing the key framework of the story, several turning points, acts, and a pay-off/conclusion at the end of the film, typically with a closed ending that rounds off the points established in the set-up.

Films with a strong narrative structure have established strategies of filmic narration in terms of the types of shots and edit, including principles of framing, camera set-ups, types of edit such as continuity editing, match cuts and jump cuts.

Within this tradition of strong narrative structures, various genres exist, such as comedy, thriller, action, adventure, drama, romance, horror etc each with its associated set of conventions which have evolved over time. As such when viewers watch a genre film they engage with the strong narrative structure, clear filmic narration and the set of genre conventions. In so doing, viewers are also interacting with their experience of the filmic medium, from having seen many other films.

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<sup>1</sup> Vogel, 1976, Introduction

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.stonesoferasmus.com/2010/07/luis-Buñuel-on-film-and-subconscious.html>

<sup>3</sup> “Le cinéma et son double”, *Cahiers du cinéma* n°. 72, June 1957

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/whats-on/cinema/programs/past-programs/david-lynch-between-two-worlds>

<sup>5</sup> Roger Ebert's remarks as he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Thursday, June 23, 2005. Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/eberts-walk-of-fame-remarks>

Auteur cinema is more difficult to define and the associated theories have evolved over time.

In this thesis it is argued that there are two distinct waves of auteur theory.

The first wave is linked to the classic conception of auteur theory - wherein the director is viewed as the primary creative behind a film. This view is associated to thinkers in France such as André Bazin, Alexandre Astruc and François Truffaut, and in the United States to the film critic, Andrew Sarris. This first wave of auteur theory emerged in the late 1940s in France at a time when cinema was the most powerful mass medium and was used to identify auteurs working within both mainstream cinema, such as John Ford, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock etc and in independent cinema, such as Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati.

European filmmakers during this period advocated the importance of the director as the key creative force and tried to embrace both artistic goals and to reach broad audiences. European auteur films from the 1940s until the 1960s were irreverent, romantic and often explored themes such as transgression of social rules, eroticism and were linked to broader artistic movements of the early avant-garde, such as surrealism.

The second wave of auteur theory gained force in the wake of the May 1968 events and was highly influenced by a post-Saussurian paradigm (Aitken, 2001). It also coincided with the rollout of television and a drastic fall in filmgoing habits. This second wave is associated to the creation of a separate universe of "auteur films", contrasted to Hollywood commercial films.

In the context of the second wave of auteur theory, directors such as David Lynch or Christopher Nolan, who may be considered to be auteurs in the first wave auteur theory, are now seen as not strictly speaking working within the realm of "auteur cinema", but rather within Hollywood commercial cinema. In the context of the second wave of auteur theory, auteur cinema is typically identified as a counterpoint to genre cinema, often based on distancing mechanisms, alternative narrative structures and a more austere approach.

Alternative narrative structures include non-linear narratives, stories are less character-driven and may include events that lie beyond the main characters control, the characters are more difficult to decipher, they do not necessarily have clearly perceptible goals and do not necessarily take actions to attain those goals.

There is not necessarily a clear character arc/ character evolution over the course of the film. There is not necessarily a set-up establishing the key framework of the story. There are not necessarily turning points, acts, or a pay-off/conclusion at the end of the film. The ending may be open or closed and there is no need for a "happy ending".

The filmic narration may draw on the same set of techniques as genre cinema, such as framing techniques, continuity edits, match cuts and jump cuts but there is a distinct visual style of most “auteur films” and “genre films”. In the case of the second wave of European auteur films the position of the camera is often more static than recent Hollywood films (this depends on the director) and the pace of the editing may be slower with fewer cuts (this also depends on the director).

Within this specific tradition of the second wave of auteur cinema, directors tend to avoid the conventions of classic genres such as comedy, thriller, action and adventure. Auteur films are most frequently classified as falling within the drama genre.

Since the 1970s, Hollywood cinema has increasingly focused on genre films with strong fantasy elements/settings, such as superhero films, while European auteur cinema is increasingly linked to slow cinema in realistic settings.

Genre cinema is often claimed to be primarily aimed at entertainment, whereas auteur cinema is claimed to be aimed at art. The former is promoted by Hollywood, which is essentially driven primarily by the profit motive and focuses on producing entertainment to attract audiences and generate revenues. European auteur cinema, which has a high level of state funding, is driven to a much larger extent by cultural remits and the objective to achieve cultural and artistic goals.

The dichotomy between the two conceptions of cinema and the respective film circulation circuits is more marked than ever.

In this thesis it is argued that this dichotomy, which is intimately linked to the second wave of auteur theory, and which affects film education, festivals, exhibition, criticism, can be detrimental to the vitality of world filmmaking and that it is possible to move beyond this dichotomy. A key issue in this regard is whether genre cinema can also have artistic value and whether bridges exist between genre cinema and auteur cinema.

In the vision defended by critics such as Truffaut this was clearly possible, since they defended the idea that a filmmaker such as Hitchcock could produce entertainment that was also a work of art. By contrast, in the second wave of auteur theory there is a clear separation between Hollywood genre cinema and European auteur cinema.

Defining terms such as “art” or “work of art” is open to multiple interpretations. In order to shed light on this subject this thesis will focus on the set of ideas associated to “poetic cinema” and in particular the claims that films have the capacity to engage with that which has been described as the “poetic faculty” dreams, the unconscious and a “state of reverie”, hence the title: *The Dream Machine*.

Terms such as poetry, “state of reverie” or “the unconscious” are obviously complex to define and can lead to imprecision. Over the course of this thesis analysis will be made of the definitions of poetic cinema and how they have evolved over time.

In particular it will be argued that cinema has been identified as being a powerful tool to engage with dreams, non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious and that such engagement may be achieved by both genre films and auteur films, within the above definitions.

As such, a genre film with a strong narrative structure may engage with non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious and as such may be argued to have poetic force.

This issue is also related to the capacity of cinema to create modern myths. Myths in antiquity had many of the elements that we can identify with genre cinema – clear narratives, strong characters. They were often recounted using lyric poetry but nonetheless had clear structures that audiences could engage with.

The subject of myth and its link with poetry has been analysed by many authors. One insight on this issue is provided by Edith Wyss in *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance* who states that:

“Since antiquity, the myths were known as carriers of ancient wisdom. The “fables” were believed to be endowed with hidden meanings that disclosed themselves only to the thoughtful beholder. The belief was often voiced that the ancient sages invented the myths to veil purposely their mystical teachings from the vulgar who might defile and distort them. From such convictions arose a long-lived tradition of exegeses that created a rich fabric of meanings, allegories and allusions to which the myths supposedly referred. The belief in a previous inner kernel of ancient wisdom induced Boccaccio to write in his popular handbook of mythology that “the stupid only believe that the poets do not hide meaning under the rind of the fables” (Wyss, 1996, p.13)

She add that myths were viewed as popular and entertaining but contained wisdom which is why Pico della Mirandola referred to mythology as “theologia poetica”, likening the classic stories to sacred teachings, wherein these teachings were often preserved in both folk and popular contexts and often through images – paintings and sculptures.

From this perspective it is perfectly possible that both an auteur film and a genre film (inclusively fantasy films, horror films and superhero films) may have poetic force. The issue at stake is to understand how this achieved. For example, if we consider the ideas being developed in the context of cognitive film theory, one core idea is that films engage with viewers at an empathetic and sensorial level and that establishing empathy and identification with the characters in the film will have a decisive influence on the filmic experience.

This provides grounds for considering that genre films with linear narratives and strong characters may achieve a powerful multi-sensorial experience for the viewer.

Having stated the above some of the key questions to be answered within this thesis include the following. Some of these questions will be answered during development of the thesis. Others will be answered in the theoretical framework provided at the end of the thesis.

- How can we define a film with poetic force?
- Is a film with poetic force necessarily an auteur film?
- Are terms such as “auteur cinema” and “world cinema” also genres?
- Is one of the main distinguishing characteristics between what is normally viewed as a genre film vs an auteur film a question of filmic narration?
- If poetic force is related to fostering a “journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious” can this be defined in empirical, testable terms?
- Can a film with a strong linear narrative, related to attaining a goal or solving a problem, foster a “journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious”?
- Can films that resolve around resolving a core problem facing the lead character(s) have poetic force?
- Can a film aimed at a specific socio-demographic audience, for example children, teenagers or people without higher education, or university graduates, or over 40s etc all have poetic force, and do the elements that endow poetic force vary for different socio-demographic audiences?
- Can genres that appeals to a broad audience such as comedies, action, adventure, thriller, horror or superhero be considered auteur films or to have poetic force?
- Can the Hero’s Journey structure also be viewed as a “Shaman’s Journey”?

## THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is divided into 4 parts, complemented by an Annex with statistical data.

### **Part One – Cinema in Crisis**

Part One explains the importance of the subject matter addressed within the thesis, i.e. that the theoretical and practical dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema has been a contributing element in undermining the power of cinema precisely at a time when the moving image is more omnipresent in society than ever.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The European and American film industries have moved in opposite directions since the 1970s, primarily due to different economic factors on either side of the Atlantic but also as a result of the differences in the film theory paradigms dominant in Europe and America and different institutionalisation structures. The thesis argues that it is possible to move beyond this dichotomy, inclusively through exploration of new theoretical paradigms, such as cognitive film theory.

#### 2. A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD BEYOND - The power of the moving image

Moving images affect our cognitive processes in a different manner from the written word, enabling a different kind of multi-sensorial engagement and new possibilities of creating different states of consciousness, heightened awareness of the experiential world and experiences that resemble a “waking dream”. This makes the moving image particularly powerful for creating modern myths.

#### 3. IS THE CINEMA DEAD?

The moving image is more powerful than ever but theatrical exhibition of films is suffering a decline in admissions, amongst a wider perception that cinema has lost its centrality in modern society. TV series and social media videos seem to have gained relevance, whereas both auteur and genre films are often viewed as being formulaic. The number of film festivals has grown dramatically over the last ten years creating a parallel circuit, primarily for auteur films. At the same time there is a risk that auteur cinema becomes “ghettoised”, unable to cross over into the theatrical circuit, or even secure significant television screenings. There is a marked trend, even amongst the major film festivals, to move away from



films that enjoy strong theatrical success. At the level of the Best Picture Oscar, there has also been an increasing divergence between the top films at the box office and the films selected for this award.

## **Part Two – Theoretical Framework**

Part Two establishes the theoretical framework for analysing the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema, while also exploring the definition of poetic cinema, the relevance of cognitive film theory, review of the ideas of Joseph Campbell which have had a pivotal effect on contemporary Hollywood cinema, and analysis of theoretical foundations for moving beyond this “great divide”.

### 4. WHAT IS POETIC CINEMA?

Understanding the multiple meanings of “poetic cinema” is crucial for this thesis, because it is linked to the difference between auteur cinema and genre cinema. Some commentators, such as Truffaut and Maya Deren, have identified poetic cinema with films that have alternative narratives, contrasted to those with a classic linear narrative. This creates a clear dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema and provides support for the idea that genre cinema is essentially less artistic. However if we analyse theories of the poetic image and of poetic cinema and the ideas expressed by filmmakers themselves, we can see that there may be “poetic force” within classic narrative structures. This is a core dimension of the thesis.

### 5. COGNITIVE FILM THEORY – Film as a prosthetic experience

Cognitive film theory is a significant new current in film analysis that establishes a bridge with phenomenological film analysis that had a major influence on the so-called “film poets” working until the early 1970s and also on modernist writers such as James Joyce. It moves beyond the psychoanalytic semiotic paradigm of the 1970s high theory and provides the basis for moving beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema. It also potentially provides a bridge, that will be explored in this thesis, to theories based on comparative mythology and studies of the unconscious, as developed by theorists such as Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung and Gilbert Durand.

### 6. JOURNEY INTO THE DARK FOREST – Revisiting Joseph Campbell

The idea that linear narratives can’t be poetic has a long lineage. However Joseph Campbell explorations of comparative mythology suggests that myths can have a poetic dimension and may have

linear narratives or, in contemporary creation, may be explored via anamorphoses that can only be understood by using a “conic mirror”.

In particular Campbell draws a link between the artist and the shaman and views the latter as the forerunner of the poet. He identifies key stages in narrative structures such as the “moment of aesthetic arrest” and the “journey into the dark forest” which are directly linked to the poetic sensibility. For the purposes of screenwriting his ideas have been applied primarily via the “hero’s journey”, using an Apollonian model of a hero who overcomes a series of ordeals and returns victorious. But his full ideas, as developed in his works such as the 4-volume *Masks of God* are more complex and include Dionysian elements and alternative structures such as the Fisher King myth, the Shaman’s Journey and the Lover’s Journey.

#### 7. PALEFACE VS REDSKIN – Overcoming the great divide

The “great divide” between erudite and popular culture has profound theoretical roots dating back to the ideas of Plato. These influences have left their mark on contemporary film theory. In order to move beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema it is necessary to analyse these roots which includes the study of various dichotomies, such as the idea of Paleface and Redskin defended by Philip Rahv, the rational path vs the poetic path which dates back to Plato, Word vs Image, Apollonian vs Dionysian paradigms and the myth of Apollo vs Marsyas.

### **Part Three – The dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema at an institutional, theoretical and historical level**

Having established the theoretical framework for understanding the first and second wave of auteur theory and their respective intellectual foundations, Part Three explores the manifestation of the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema at an institutional, theoretical and historical level, which is necessary to understand in comprehensive detail before being able to move beyond this dichotomy.

#### 8. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AUTEUR CINEMA AND GENRE CINEMA

The great divide between auteur cinema and genre cinema is institutionalised within the European film industry at several levels, including the selection criteria used by funding agencies, the categories used in film festivals and the theoretical outlook of film critics.

## 9. EUROPEAN TRADITIONS OF POPULAR, QUALITY AND AUTEUR CINEMA

European cinema is sometimes viewed as if it were a single monolithic tradition which can be contrasted with Hollywood entertainment, however beyond the more detailed question of genre we can identify three major (sometimes overlapping) film-making traditions: “quality”, “auteur” and “popular”.

## 10. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF EUROPEAN AUTEUR CINEMA

The new paradigm of auteur cinema that dominated European film industry from the 1970s onwards is based on a set of ideas and operational principles, such as focus on the director above all other members of the creative team, movement away from classic linear narratives and the idea that popular cinema and auteur cinema stand at opposite poles.

## 11. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DIVIDE BETWEEN AUTEUR AND GENRE CINEMA IN EUROPE

This section aims to provide a broad historical overview of the attempts to use public policy to influence forms of cinematic expression. This is highly relevant for European cinema, given the high dependence upon public funding.

### **Part Four – Proposed Model and Conclusion**

Part Four draws on the elements developed in this thesis to develop a general theoretical model for understanding films, followed by the conclusion that summarises the main findings and the areas of future research.

## 12. THEORETICAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING FILMS

This chapter aims to answer the key questions identified at the beginning of the thesis. It identifies a theoretical framework for understanding the inner journey of narrative structures and of character evolution. It includes analysis of models such as the Shaman’s Journey, Lover’s Journey and Fisher King myth, models of the human psyche based on the division between mask and shadow, analysis of the importance of the drives of Eros and Thanatos, and the role of the Trickster character in stories.

## 13. CONCLUSION

Main results and areas of future work.

## ANNEXES – STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE THESIS

### ANNEX 1 - THE AGE OF THE IMAGE – The shift from print media to audiovisual media

This annex provides data on the shift from the print age to the digital age, which offers complementary information to that provided in the main body of the thesis.

### ANNEX 2 - STATISTICAL DATA ON THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AUTEUR AND GENRE CINEMA

This annex analyses the genre balance of different national cinemas, the box office success of directors such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Federico Fellini and the admissions for films that have won prizes in the leading film festivals and in the Academy Awards.

### ANNEX 3 - THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF STREAMING PLATFORMS

Throughout most of the twentieth century, cinema and the major US studios maintained a dominant position over the media content market because although filmgoing diminished dramatically after the roll-out of television, cinema continued to be the premium form of content, that was commercialised via film theatres, home video, payTV and freeTV.

In the current digital market that is no longer the case. Economic power has shifted to the streaming platforms and they do not depend solely on films. Their main revenue sources include series and documentaries and this is radically altering the balance of power within the film and TV industry.

### ANNEX 4 - COMPARISON OF NATIONAL CINEMAS BY FILM GENRE

Europe and Hollywood have moved in opposite directions since the 1970s. Analysis of the data demonstrates that Hollywood has shifted away from the drama and romance genres and towards genres heavily based on special effects, such as animation, sci-fi and fantasy. Europe has moved in the opposite direction – for example France produced a higher proportion of thrillers and crime dramas in the 1960s and has moved towards “drama” films with a strong auteur dimension. Cross-country analysis of film genres reveals how each country has a different genre profile. For example the strongest country for the romance genre is India. In terms of comedy the US consistently produces a high number of comedies, but this pattern is also found in some European countries such as France. Other European countries, such as Portugal, produce a very low proportion of comedies.

## THESIS OVERVIEW

“The soul never thinks without a picture.”<sup>6</sup> (Aristotle)

When cinema was first invented it caught the popular imagination. You didn't need to be able to read or write, or understand complex literary devices to be able to immerse yourself in new worlds, both real-life and fantasy. You could see new things and go to unexpected places. You became an invisible observer who could rub shoulders with the rich and famous, the beautiful and the monstrous, go boldly where no man had gone before.

And the way that images passed before the eyes resembled a waking dream, a phantasmagorical flight of the imagination that entranced people in a spell as they watched the film.

For intellectuals, film also posed a challenge. Socially, it might restructure the power relations between the classes and give new force to social upheavals already underway. Theoretically, it posed a challenge – is film a language, an art form? how should it be understood in the light of western tradition, based on the written word?

Over a century later, the moving image continues to amaze us, while also causing unease.

In a world of post-truth and fake news, some commentators view the visual spectacle as undermining the very fabric of society. The seventh art seems to have become domesticated. It has been officially recognised as an art form, but in the process has lost some of its power and allure.

An art film is now often considered to be something which only the select few will be able to understand.

As a commercial enterprise, categorised according to genres, cinema also seems to have become more predictable and formulaic.

The sense of expectation for the next great film, that will change people's lives has abated. People are more concerned with moving images that can be seen on smaller screens – from the TV set to the cell phone. The dream machine seems to be running low on fuel.

There are multiple explanations for the marginalisation of cinema. The former picture palaces closed decades ago, in the wake of the rise of television, as nostalgically depicted in the Italian film *Cinema Paradiso (1988)*. But the current situation is different. The current malaise in the world of cinema is part of a bigger picture, linked to major currents of thought in Western culture.

One key issue is how we perceive the world, and our relationship with it.

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<sup>6</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.quotes.net/quote/51053>

Two key approaches to knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the world, in the history of Western society since antiquity were identified by British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, as follows: “There were, in fact, two tendencies in Greece, one passionate, religious, mystical, other worldly, the other cheerful, empirical, rationalistic, and interested in acquiring knowledge of a diversity of facts” (Russell, 1961, p.39)

Other commentators have focused on a bifurcation between the religious/poetic path, between a more ascetic approach and a more romantic approach, as will be explained herein. There is what can be termed a more “solar” path, for example that pursued by neo-Platonism focusing on use of the mind to reach the One, and a more “lunar” path, linked to traditions such as Gnosticism, romanticism and animism.

The rational path is associated to mind-body dualism, wherein the mind’s power of reasoning can unlock truths about the world, and the mind’s capacity for contemplation and transcendence can ultimately lead to divinity. The “solar” religious path also has links to this division between corporality and spirit.

The romantic branch of the “poetic path” is linked to “romanticism”, animism, phenomenology. It can also be linked to attempts to move away from purely Cartesian rationalism.

It is very difficult to find the right words to classify these issues, since each term has multiple meanings. For example if we use the term “poetic path” to capture what Russell defined as a passionate, religious, mystical, other worldly tendency, this may be ambiguous due to the multiple meanings of words such as religion and poetry.

For the purposes of this thesis, which also includes analysis of “poetic cinema” whose multiple definitions will be explored herein, use of the term “poetic path” should be understood in the context of these multiple tendencies as will be explained herein.

The invention of the moving image, which has great power to arouse emotions, non-verbal consciousness, a state of reverie and the unconscious, altered modern communications and was quickly seen as a potential menace to the status quo built on the written word.

Western society has been decisively shaped by the written word, first by the invention of the alphabet around five thousand years ago and then by the invention of the printing press over 500 years ago.

Many theorists believe that the focus on the word, and the power of verbal language, has been a key factor in the dominant approach within Western philosophy, based on mind-body dualism, which structures the way that we see the world.

The invention and increasing importance of the moving image has been a shock to the system, not solely within the field of the audiovisual industries but throughout Western culture. This impact has now been further leveraged by the digital revolution.

Since its invention, the moving image has often been embraced more enthusiastically by thinkers in the New World, especially in the United States, and has often faced greater reticence in the Old World, especially in Europe. This has stimulated fierce intellectual debate about the relative power and merits of the word and image.

The division of cinema into two great categories – of auteur and genre films – reflects this debate and to a certain extent mirrors the “great divide” between erudite and popular culture. This divide has been further reinforced by increasingly institutionalised film production structures, which have created two distinct circuits - the theatrical circuit and the festival circuit.

Hollywood genre films dominate the theatrical film circuit, which are complemented in Europe by “commercial films”, above all national comedies. These films are based on strong narratives, visual action, genre, often fantasy settings, franchises, sequels and remakes. Auteur films dominate the festival film circuit and are often perceived as a mirror image to the dominant Hollywood form.

Key film movements in the past, such as the New Wave movements, challenged filmmaking traditions and drew inspiration from both genre and auteur cinema. Truffaut, in his seminal 1954 text, *A certain tendency of French cinema* criticised films made by what he called “men of letters” and campaigned for a more visual cinema, saying that “One of the major failings of those who attempt to explain what the cinema is about is that they believe they are doing it a service by using literary jargon.” (Truffaut, 1954). He believed strongly in narrative and visual cinema and guiding his audience down the winding corridor of the story.

In the context of 1970s high theory there was a major shift in auteur cinema and in the new paradigm Truffaut was seen by some as a “glorious aberration” (Frodon, 1995, p. 50).

The first wave of auteur theory – the *politique des auteurs* - claimed that directors such as John Ford and Hitchcock were auteurs even though they worked in Hollywood. The application of these ideas to current cinema would include the likes of Tim Burton, David Lynch, Quentin Tarantino, Wes Anderson and Christopher Nolan as “auteurs”.

But the “cinema d’auteur” in the sense that the term is normally perceived in Europe is far removed from Hollywood filmmaking. Many European auteur films maintain a strong link to visual cinema, often with little dialogue, but are very distinct from popular genre films.

Several recent movements - such as the “films du milieu” in France - have however drawn on both tendencies. The films du milieu movement has nonetheless encountered difficulties in France since there is a growing dichotomy between French “commercial films”, on the one hand, often dominated by a TV aesthetic, and French auteur films, on the other, often with an austere aesthetic.

In other parts of the world, such as Latin America, there has sometimes been a greater freedom in exploring links between genre and auteur approaches. For example, Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón who won the Academy Award for Best Director in 2019 has directed auteur-type films such as *Roma* (2018) and *Y tu mamá también!* (2001) (which includes road movie genre elements) as well as big-budget genre films such as *Gravity* (2013) and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004).

In Scandinavia successful films and TV series have been produced in recent years that explore the crime drama genre, mixed with auteur elements.

Developments in the field cognitive science, such as the work of António Damasio and neuropsychologist Richard Davidson, and application of these ideas to cognitive film theory has introduced a new twist to these ideas. For example, cognitive film theory focuses on the importance of empathy and multi-sensorial engagement in the cinema, which is often overlooked by traditional approaches that see film as a system of signs, and tend to concentrate on the importance of film form.

The importance of emotion and empathy within filmic communication inevitably raises the question of genres. Genres may be divided into primary genres that are linked to emotions - drama, comedy, romance, thriller, action, adventure and horror - and specific genres linked to the respective settings /historical contexts, such as Western, War, Gangster, Film Noir, Sci-Fi, Fantasy.

If we consider that one of the core dimensions of drama is to engage with audience’s emotions, and that the very word “aesthetic” is also linked to feeling, then working within a genre is not necessarily antithetical to a film having artistic quality. Discussion of these issues, often fierce, is linked to the general prevailing climate of crisis – climate, economical and political – wherein some consider that the very future of humanity is at risk, externally, due to mass extinction, and internally, due to the rising development of computerised thinking, bureaucracy and the development of artificial intelligence which has led us to question what it means to be human.

In the postmodern era of intertextuality it sometimes seems that nothing new can be said any more and that we have lost faith in both artists and scientists.

The bold daring voices of the cinema’s past either don’t exist or have been muted. In the context of European cinema, there seem to be fewer directors who can produce films with a strong artistic



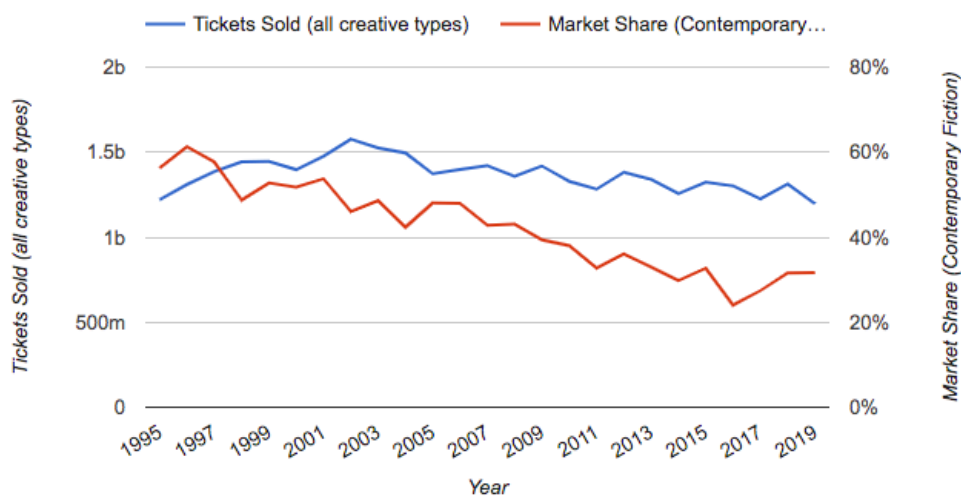
dimension and a powerful audience appeal, as Fellini, Bergman, Buñuel, Godard and others did in the past.

Both European cinema and Hollywood have become institutionalised and often seem formulaic. European cinema is dedicated to either producing “commercial” films with a TV aesthetic that cannot be exported, or “art” films, capable of winning prizes at film festivals, but with little audience engagement in theatres. Hollywood is dedicated to producing “entertainment” capable of generating box office revenues, but is losing audiences, especially amongst young people.

Streaming services such as Netflix are considered by some to offer hope, by producing edgy TV series, but even these edgy series often seem to be formulaic. In the mainstream cinema segment, the box office share of contemporary fiction has slumped from 60% of the total box office in 1995, to around 30% in 2019. By contrast other genres have risen, in particular the superhero genre which in 2019 represented 24% of all tickets sold in the US market.

### Box Office History for Contemporary Fiction

#### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



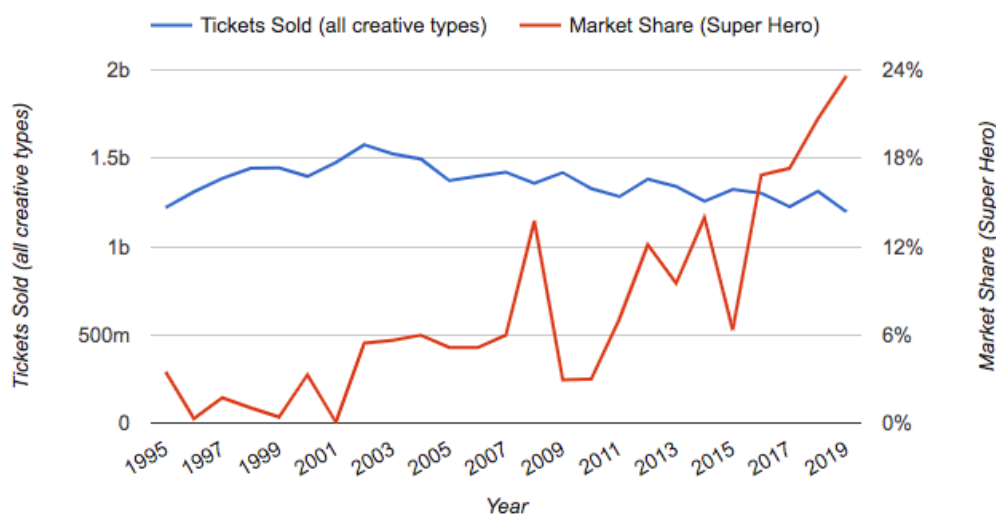
**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

Chart 1 Box Office History for Contemporary Fiction (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

## Box Office History for Super Hero

### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

Chart 2 Box Office History for Superhero (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

(For further information see Annex 2)

This phenomenon sparked a major debate in late 2019, that began with Martin Scorsese's comment in an interview with Empire magazine prior to the release of *The Irishman (2019)*, when asked about the films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe:

"I don't see them. I tried, you know? But that's not cinema...Honestly, the closest I can think of them, as well made as they are, with actors doing the best they can under the circumstances, is theme parks. It isn't the cinema of human beings trying to convey emotional, psychological experiences to another human being."<sup>7</sup>

During the 2019 Lumière film festival, Francis Ford Coppola backed up this idea, stating:

"When Martin Scorsese says that the Marvel pictures are not cinema, he's right because we expect to learn something from cinema, we expect to gain something, some enlightenment, some knowledge, some inspiration...I don't know that anyone gets anything out of seeing the same movie over and over again. Martin was kind when he said it's not cinema. He didn't say it's despicable, which I just say it is."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.indiewire.com/2019/10/martin-scorsese-marvel-movies-not-cinema-theme-parks-1202178747/>

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/21/francis-ford-coppola-scorsese-was-being-kind-marvel-movies-are-despicable>

UK director Ken Loach echoed these sentiments, when interviewed by Sky: ““I find them boring. They’re made as commodities ... like hamburgers ... It’s about making a commodity which will make profit for a big corporation – they’re a cynical exercise. They’re a market exercise and it has nothing to do with the art of cinema.”<sup>9</sup>

The Lumière film festival’s president, Bertrand Tavernier said that he broadly agreed with these frustrations but provided a broader historical context and noted that some superhero films have creative interest:

This is a very important issue and relates to a tension that has always existed. You can find the same kind of fight in the 1940s between serious films like *Grapes of Wrath (1940)* vs light musicals starring Betty Grable. In France we always had the debate between people who wanted to make meaningful films that had something to say, and others primarily aimed at entertainment. But in the past, it was easier for the two kinds of cinema to co-exist and now with the fact that films cost so much, it’s more difficult to get access to screens. Maybe the Marvel films are occupying so much space they are preventing other films to be released(...) Even in the Marvel films, “Black Panther” was interesting and “Spiderman 2” was brilliant.<sup>10</sup>

Hollywood director James Gunn (*Guardians of the Galaxy*) also suggested that there is a historical dimension to this debate, that echoes the criticism of gangster films decades ago:

Many of our grandfathers thought all gangster movies were the same, often calling them “despicable”. Some of our great grandfathers thought the same of westerns, and believed the films of John Ford, Sam Peckinpah, and Sergio Leone were all exactly the same. I remember a great uncle to whom I was raving about Star Wars. He responded by saying, “I saw that when it was called 2001, and, boy, was it boring!” Superheroes are simply today’s gangsters/cowboys/outer space adventurers. Some superhero films are awful, some are beautiful. Like westerns and gangster movies (and before that, just MOVIES), not everyone will be able to appreciate them, even some geniuses. And that’s okay.<sup>11</sup>

This question reflects different generational views and different conceptions of cinema.

At the other end of the spectrum from superhero films, some of the most acclaimed auteur films have minimal theatrical success and circulate primarily in film festivals and increasingly in contemporary art museums. Paul Schrader has noted in relation to what he calls “slow cinema” that such films “are rarely shown in theaters. Their reach extends to film schools, cinemathèques, and art museums.” (Schrader, 2018, p. 10).

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/22/superhero-films-are-cynical-exercise-to-make-profits-for-corporations-ken-loach?fbclid=IwAR0CH6Oo57pMXssrolmH6RY8dB9cqA3mf9qpxUfokOgJ5QEMy1j5nLRS5\\_E](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/22/superhero-films-are-cynical-exercise-to-make-profits-for-corporations-ken-loach?fbclid=IwAR0CH6Oo57pMXssrolmH6RY8dB9cqA3mf9qpxUfokOgJ5QEMy1j5nLRS5_E)

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2019/film/global/bertrand-tavernier-coppola-scorsese-cavatte-cinemas-bright-future-1203368885/>

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.instagram.com/p/B32ck7XA5FP/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed&utm\\_campaign=dlfix](https://www.instagram.com/p/B32ck7XA5FP/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=dlfix)

Cinema appears to be increasingly polarised between blockbuster films, packed with special effects, fast paced editing, and vertiginous camera movements, at one end, that monopolise the box office, and slow auteur films in real world settings, shown primarily in film festivals at the other.

This development is also related in part to the increasing popularity of television series with high production values and alternative viewing circuits for videos, such as YouTube.

In order to stand out from this competition, films have to be clearly distinct from competing offers. The polar opposites of blockbuster films in fantasy settings and slow auteur films in real world settings both demarcate their position from television fiction.

The key argument in this thesis is that the critical discussion about film tends to revolve around a simplified dichotomy which overlooks the capacity of many films to have poetic force. For example, in relation to films in fantasy settings, the capacity for films to create “movie magic” has inspired filmmakers ever since the medium was invented, obvious examples including George Méliès and Jean Cocteau.

It is clear that at least some of the current blockbusters, which tap into mythic traditions, have at least the potential to create “moments of aesthetic arrest” and transport spectators into a “dream space”. Others however are purely formulaic.

This question is also linked to the distinction between “erudite” art forms and “popular” art forms, whereas it can be argued that this distinction reflects the social hierarchy, in which there is a small elite capable of greater aesthetic sensibility than the majority of the population.

What is particularly relevant in this regard is that cinema was embraced from the outset as a universal art form that is accessible to everyone. In general the moving image has played a key role in democratising access to art. For example, it has been a key contributing force to the idea, defended by postmodernism, that we are moving beyond the dichotomy between high and low art.

In the early years of cinema the medium was embraced as a key motor of social change and cultural revolution. In today’s post-utopian era, there often seems to be resignation that the masses are unable to appreciate art, including auteur cinema and that we must wait for some future revolution, of education and standards, for auteur cinema to finally be embraced by the general public. This goes against the idea defended by film poets such as Cocteau who saw the cinema as an instrument for extending the reach of poetry, which he described as “beneficial poison” adding that pictures, stars, decors help sugar the pill and ensure that it is absorbed into their system.” “The soul is invaded”, he says, “with words and objects which just because they don't present a winged appearance impel it to plunge deep into itself.” (Fragneau, 1972, p. 64)

Europe had a generation of filmmakers who saw themselves as film poets, such as Cocteau, Fellini, Tarkovsky, Buñuel, Pasolini and many others who believed that their film poetry could change the world. For example, when Buñuel filmed the slicing of a woman's eye in *Le Chien Andalou (1929)* his underlying idea was to open people's eyes to the wondrous world of poetry, to change their view of the world. This utopian vision has to a certain extent been lost in contemporary European cinema.

This vision of the potential of using film poetry to achieve social change nonetheless continues to be strong in certain parts of the world, one of the most notable examples being Latin America. For example the three Mexican directors, known as the "Tres Amigos" - the directors Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón and Alejandro G. Iñárritu - have directed films that involve both auteur and genre elements.

There is currently a movement, with one of its main focuses in France, to review the critical consensus that has dominated film theory and film curating over recent decades. One example is the work of Bertrand Tavernier and Thierry Frémaux at the Institut Lumière. Tavernier's documentary project, *My Journey through French Cinema (2016)*, aims to rehabilitate many French directors who were severely criticised by leading film critics in the 1960s and 1970s, and who worked precisely in using film as a medium that can have a strong popular appeal and a poetic/artistic dimension.

Whereas there have always been multiple trends within cinema, and some films that have a more "serious" agenda, while others primarily aim to "entertain", the dichotomy between genre cinema and auteur cinema started to become particularly marked in the 1970s, during the period of high critical theory. This dichotomy continues to mark the cinema debate today.

This thesis does not argue that all films should try to achieve large audiences - on the contrary.

One of the core objectives embraced by contemporary artists in the 1960s was the need to move beyond the art museum and engage with people in other locations, including the street. The museum plays a key role in preserving and exhibiting art, but some artists fear that it poses the risk of becoming a mausoleum, creating a space that only a small section of the general public will visit.

The very word "art" has negative connotations for many people. Adjectives such as "arty" and even "artistic" can be off-putting to some. The cinema has both benefited and suffered from the link between film and art. Recognising cinema as the seventh art rightly underlines its importance as one of the great contemporary art forms. But terms such as "art film" or "arthouse" can create a ghetto-like situation, which puts some audiences off seeing such films.

The tendency to create an arthouse circuit and a “mainstream” circuit intensified from the 1970s onwards and has now created two circuits with a distinct modus operandi – the commercial circuit and the festival circuit.

It is obviously very positive to have a festival circuit, but this poses the question of the capacity for cinema to engage with audiences and change society.

Before the mass market rollout of television, cinema was the dominant form of entertainment and both mainstream films and “artistic” films enjoyed wide audiences and had a powerful impact on society. As a consequence of the rollout of television, and the consequences of changes associated to the digital age, cinema has an increasingly marginalised role, posing the danger that any film which isn't highly dependent on special effects and fantasy themes will be condemned to an arthouse ghetto where its impact on society is muted.

The intimate link between the moving image and the world of dreams, non-verbal consciousness a “state of reverie” and the unconscious was one of the principal characteristics noted by commentators following the invention of cinema in 1895.

The capacity for the cinema to function as a “dream machine”, creating an altered state of consciousness amongst spectators and opening their eyes to new hitherto unavailable sensorial experiences ignited the world's imagination.

The type of “dreams” produced by the cinema included the creation of fantasy worlds by filmmakers such as George Méliès, epic dramas, romances and even documentaries to remote parts of the world that people had never seen before. The capacity for film images and montage to create dream-like sequences inspired filmmakers such as Luis Buñuel and Maya Deren.

The digital revolution has intensified the power and circulation of sound and images. But whereas the moving image is omnipresent in modern society, the term “cinema” has been reduced to an increasingly narrow spectrum of all audiovisual production and now assumes a relatively marginal role in society.

Robert Sklar in his book, *Movie-Made America* (Sklar, 1975) argued that the movies played a decisive role in defining modern America, but that can no longer be said about cinema per se, even though moving images continue to play an important social role.

In the context of current film production there are many film directors who have also been identified as auteurs and who have worked in established genres such as sci-fi, superhero, thriller and war. Examples include Christopher Nolan, Clint Eastwood, David Lynch, James Cameron, Darren Aronofsky and David Fincher.

If we look at some of Europe's highest acclaimed directors from the "golden age" of European art cinema, they also crossed an auteur and genre approach and worked in genres such as sci-fi, film noir, thriller and war.

Tarkovsky directed films in the sci-fi genre such as *Solaris (1972)* and *Stalker (1979)*. Godard explored auteur and genre elements, such as musical, film noir, and thriller, in films such as *Pierrot le Fou (1965)* (which he dubbed the first film noir in colour).

There is also a long list of contemporary continental European directors have also combined auteur and genre elements, such as Gaspar Noé and Paul Verhoeven.

In France, the "films du milieu" have also crossed auteur and genre elements, including films such as Julia Ducournau's vampire film, *Raw (2016)*.

The capacity for moving images to serve as a dream machine seems to have shifted to the streaming platforms such as Netflix, which are producing films such as Cuarón's *Roma* or Scorsese's *The Irishman* with the clear goal of winning Academy Awards. The major studios are unwilling to finance these projects. Netflix is also producing series that attract creators and audiences because they offer a broader canvas than the 90-minute film format.

The Internet is also another source of vibrant filmmaking talent, and audiences have shifted from traditional TV to Internet viewing. The "dream machine" is perhaps alive and kicking, but now living on other platforms than traditional cinema screens. There are nonetheless reasons for concern.

In the context of this thesis I aim to explore the following ideas:

- 1) There is an effective dichotomy between "cinema d'auteur" and genre cinema, at a business, institutional and theoretical level – i.e. in terms of film circulation circuits, public policy for the sector and theoretical models.
- 2) This dichotomy has intensified since the 1960s and is detrimental to filmic creation because it tends to dampen filmmaking endeavours that occupy a middle-ground, mixing auteur and genre elements and which have produced some of the most powerful films.
- 3) In terms of film circulation circuits, until the 1960s films of all kinds, whether more genre-orientated or with a stronger artistic dimension circulated in the commercial circuit and the films that won top prizes in film festivals and award ceremonies such as the Academy Awards were also top-selling films at the box office.
- 4) European auteur films enjoyed significant domestic success and also cross-border success and were the source of major international coproductions and pan-European companies such as

Rome-Paris Films formed by France's Georges Beauregard and Italy's Carlo Ponti, whose productions included Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963). International sales of European films had their highest point in the 1960s, fell during the 1980s and fell further from there: Declining Sales for Italian, German and French Films in Neighbouring markets.

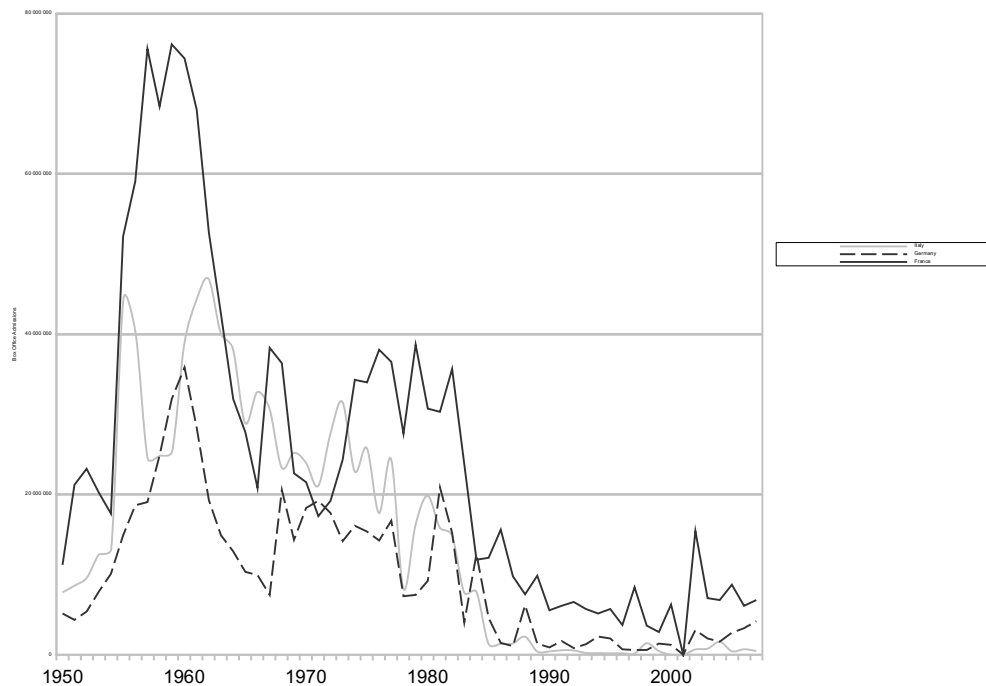


Chart 3 Cross-border sales of Italian, German and French films

Source: Sean Pager: "Beyond Culture vs. Commerce" (2010)

(See Annex 2 for further information)

- 5) From the 1970s onwards there has been a growing tendency towards clearly separated circulation circuits for auteur films and genre films, with the art house circuit and mainstream circuit. This has been reinforced by new film distribution models based on wide releases on a large number of screens, backed by blitzkrieg marketing campaigns for genre films. As the home video market developed, the art house circuit dwindled. This trend has massive increased in the digital environment. To compensate this loss of access to screens the film festival circuit has expanded dramatically since the year 2000, through the creation of more festivals and new sections in existing festivals such as the Berlinale. This has created two dominant circulation circuits – commercial cinemas and film festivals, wherein the former is dominated by genre films and the latter by auteur films.



- 6) Leading film festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, etc. increasingly allocate their top awards to films that will have major circulation in film festivals, but limited success in the commercial circuit.
- 7) In the Academy Awards, there has been a growing divergence between the top award winners and the best-selling films at the box office. Whereas in the 1960s the Academy Award winners for Best Picture were also the top films in the box office this is very rarely the case nowadays. This can be demonstrated using the following charts (that are also included in Annex 2 with further information). The admissions for the Best Picture winner have fallen significantly since 2003 [the year when *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) won Best Picture].

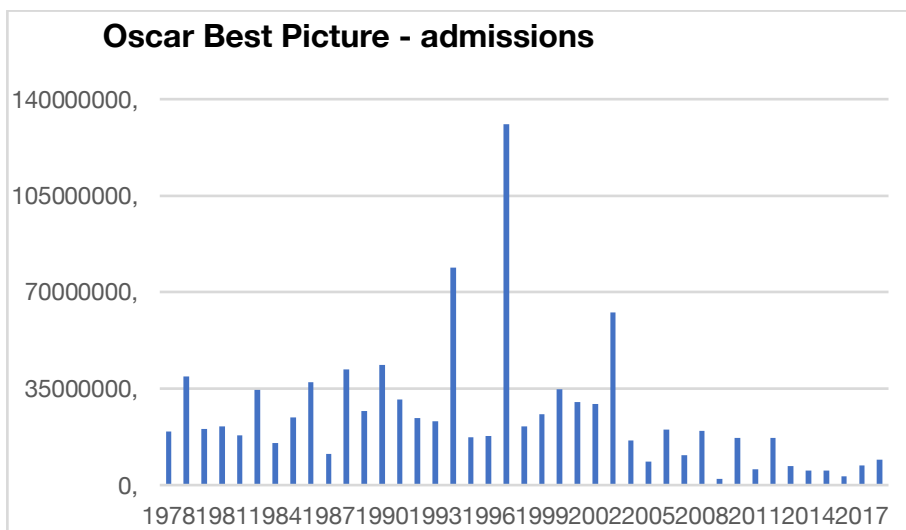


Chart 4 Admissions for Academy Awards Best Picture

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo

The ranking in the US box office has significantly fallen (i.e. the numerical position has increased, from being in the top 10 to below the top 100).

(See Annex 2 for further information)

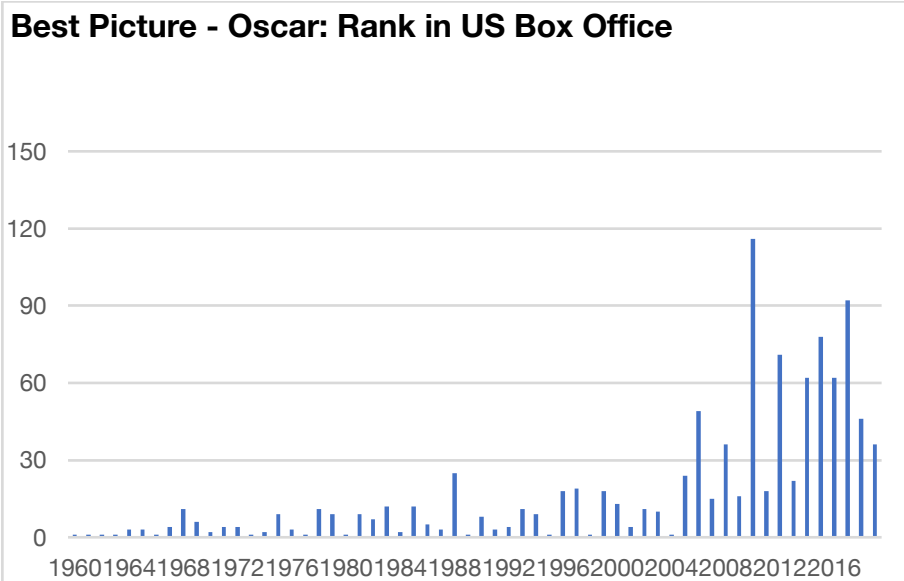


Chart 5 Rank in US box office for Academy Awards Best Picture

Source: 1960-1979 Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com>, 1980-2019: boxofficemojo)

- 8) The top-selling films at the box office tend to have fantasy settings – either fantasy/sci-fi worlds, or a fantasy dimension in real-world context (eg superhero films). By contrast the films that tend to win festivals and the Academy Awards primarily have real-world settings.

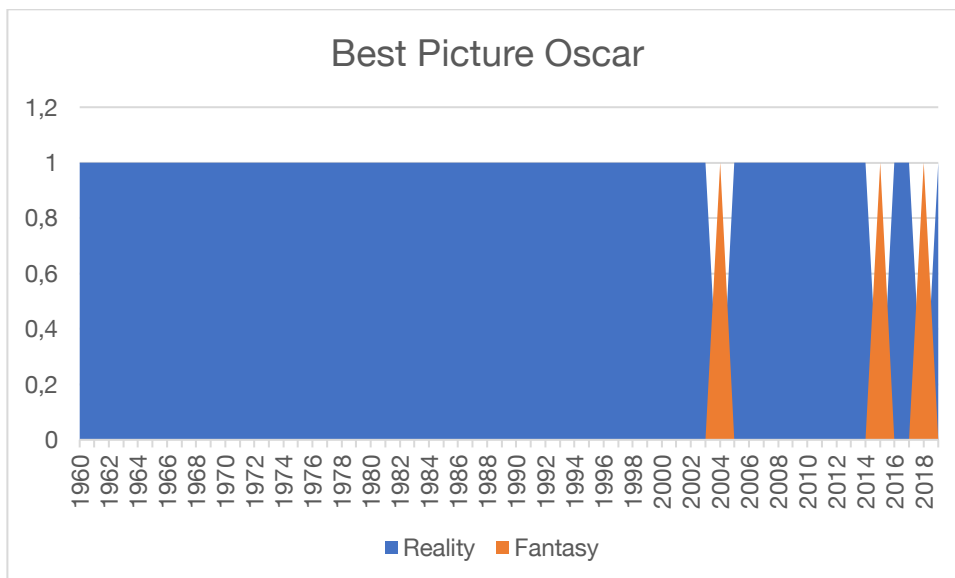


Chart 6 Academy Awards Best Picture – Real-world context vs Fantasy context

Source: 1960-1979 Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com>, 1980-2019: boxofficemojo)

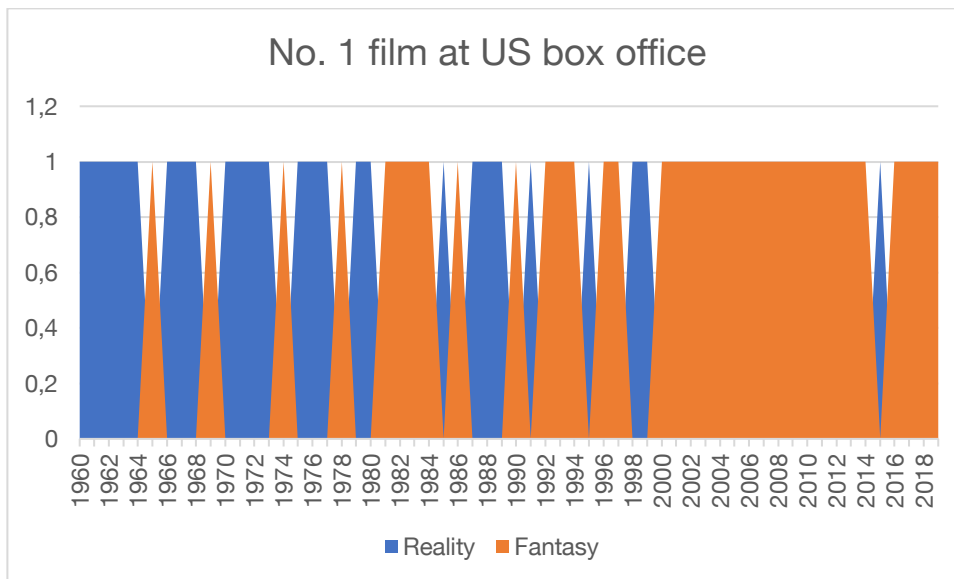


Chart 7 Top film at US box office – Real-world context vs Fantasy context

Source: 1960-1979 Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com>, 1980-2019: boxofficemojo)

- 9) At an institutional level, both the major Hollywood studios and film institutes are risk-averse structures that use a set of principles to determine the films that they support/fund. The modus operandi of Hollywood studios is based on high-concept projects, that can make extensive use of spectacular special effects and which draw on screenwriting theories rooted in ideas such as Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*. The European Commission has established distinct funding rules for "normal films" and "difficult films" which broadly corresponds to the dichotomy between genre films and auteur films. The majority of films funded by European film institutes are within the category of "difficult films" i.e. auteur films.
- 10) The production mix of Hollywood films has shifted progressively away from genres such as drama and romance, towards sci-fi, superhero, fantasy and animation. The production mix of European films, as can be seen in countries such as France or Italy, has shifted away from genres such as comedies, thrillers and action towards drama and auteur films.
- 11) This shift is also related to the impact of television. Many traditional film genres such as romance, drama and crime, passed from cinema to television in the 1960s, and cinema refocused on effects-driven films (in the US model) and auteur films (in the European model).

On the basis of these core trends, the thesis aims to explore the following issues:

- 1) The institutionalisation of the American film studios and the European film institutes has made them both risk-averse and prone to choosing safe bets, which explore genre and auteur cinema in a formulaic and predictable manner.
- 2) The areas of greater growth and arrival of newcomers, such as streaming platforms like Netflix, and Internet videos are less institutionalised and often less formulaic. However they also are tending towards a certain level of predictability.
- 3) Some of the most interesting exceptions are crossover films, such as the French “films du milieu” which combine auteur and genre elements. Some of the best recent films such as Todd Philipp’s *Joker (2019)* or Netflix’s *Breaking Bad (2008)* achieve this. Scandinavian crime drama also explores this middle ground.
- 4) American screenwriting theory, as developed in film schools and in the industry, is highly influenced by the ideas of thinkers such as Joseph Campbell, Jung, New Age ideas, and screenwriting gurus influenced by these ideas, such as Christopher Vogler.
- 5) European film theory has multiple strands and it’s extremely important for this thesis to distinguish between the set of ideas associated to the Nouvelle Vague, and the subsequent theories that began with 1970s high theory. It’s also important to note that European film theory as taught in film schools and used in curatorial strategies, tends to steer away from the Joseph Campbell “monomyth” model.
- 6) The set of ideas that paved the way towards Italian neo-realism and subsequently the Nouvelle Vague, including film magazines such as *Cinema in Italy* and the early period of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif* in France, included thinkers such as Bazin, Truffaut and Godard who had major admiration for American cinema, in particular its visual and mythic dimension and criticised what they viewed as its excessively literary dimension of French cinema, for example.
- 7) A second, distinct major strand, which revolutionised European film theory and film production from the 1970s, was high critical theory, influenced by Lacan, theories of the male gaze etc, shifted away from the early ideas of the Nouvelle Vague towards a more radical counter-cinema approach that presented Hollywood cinema as the epitome of late capitalism and patriarchal society. These ideas were also linked to the Third Cinema movement and to the New Left.
- 8) Unlike the Hollywood model inspired by the ideas of Jung and Campbell, 1970s high critical theory drew extensively on the ideas of Freud, Lacan and semiotic theory. It is a radically different

theoretical model from the key ideas that have structured American film production and film education since the 1970s.

- 9) Film theory has significantly evolved since the 1970s including greater openness towards genre cinema and study of European genre films. Political thinking has also evolved radically.
- 10) Nonetheless, the dominant model for understanding film continues to be radically different in Europe and America.
- 11) In this context, it is often asserted that linear narrative structures are less “artistic” or less “poetic” than alternative narrative structures, and that films whose stories are driven by goal-orientated characters and the actions they take are less “artistic”.
- 12) These ideas are in certain cases linked to theories associated to Brechtian-style distancing mechanisms, wherein it is argued that films with distancing mechanisms and that break the illusion of film are more “artistic” than genre films.
- 13) The ideas are also linked to “slow cinema” as explored in Paul Schrader’s book *Transcendental Style in Film* (Schrader, 2018), in which he suggests that only a certain film form can achieve a transcendental dimension.
- 14) This dichotomy can also be described as the distinction between erudite cinema and popular cinema, between high-brow and low-brow cinema etc and also involves a social dimension and cultural hegemony dimension, in which European auteur films are portrayed not just as being more “artistic” than genre films but “superior” at multiple levels, including the fact that people who appreciate auteur films are intellectually and culturally superior to those who only enjoy genre films.
- 15) The set of thinking associated to this outlook can be traced back to the ideas of Antiquity, to mind-body dualism, phenomenology and to what Bertrand Russell described as the two main traditions dominating Western thought since Antiquity which can be paraphrased as the rational path vs the poetic path.
- 16) Mind-body dualism is also linked to the invention of language, then writing and the alphabet and then by the printing press.
- 17) The invention of the moving image which is increasingly dominant in modern communication calls into play non-verbal elements and pre-linguistic forms of communication. This has radically

transformed society and existing social structures and is also linked to the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema.

- 18) The power of cinema to communicate through sound and image and engage with the human senses in a different way than language is linked to a broader interest in “primitivism” and subsequently “animism” which offers a different model from mind-body dualism and has multiple manifestations, including major currents of modern and contemporary art, anthropology and phenomenology.
- 19) One dimension of the evolution of thinking in this regard is studies in the field of cognitive science and the associated field of cognitive film theory, which revolves around texts such as Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error*. These theories argue that our cognitive understanding of the world is not based solely on the power of reason but also depends on other cognitive processes which may be located in other parts of the brain than the neurological zones associated to language capacities and reason.
- 20) At this level the theoretical dichotomy can be portrayed as the distinction between animism and mind-body dualism and also, albeit at a far more complex level, between immanence and transcendence.
- 21) In the case of both immanence and transcendence there is something non-empirical, non-verifiable, which can be portrayed as requiring faith or spiritual understanding. In the context of animism vs mind-body dualism, the path towards achieving a glimpse of immanence is based on shamanic principles, whereas the path towards a glimpse of transcendence can be achieved through art (as Paul Schrader suggests) or religious guidance.
- 22) The shamanic potential of cinema as an art form that can create a different state of consciousness, offering a glimpse of immanence is one of the key areas analysed in this thesis, linked in part to the ideas of Joseph Campbell, in particular his 4-volume *Masks of God*.
- 23) Following this line of reasoning, it will be argued that traditional narrative structures and also alternative narrative structures can both achieve an artistic or poetic dimension and offer a glimpse of immanence and/or transcendence.
- 24) As such, from a theoretical perspective, the theoretical underpinnings for a rigid distinction between auteur and genre cinema fall apart and it is possible to pave the way towards moving beyond this dichotomy and rethinking the theoretical underpinnings of film production and circulation both in America and Europe.

- 25) These ideas also provide a theoretical model for understanding major cultural phenomena such as superhero films, or franchises such as *Harry Potter* or *The Game of Thrones*.
- 26) Film studies often focus on films that enjoy festival success with very limited commercial success. These films are considered to be more artistic and more likely to have retrospectives in contemporary art museums and similar institutions.
- 27) Popular films, such as superhero films, are analysed in the context of media studies, but are often simply ignored (not even watched) in the context of serious film theory.
- 28) Superhero films are not the main subject matter of this thesis and the issue at stake is not whether they are inferior or superior to other films, but how to understand them in theoretical terms and how to understand the growing divergence between the taste of audiences (towards fantasy films) and the taste/interest of film theorists, critics, festival programmers and juries etc (towards auteur films in real-world settings).
- 29) Films in fantasy settings can explore this otherness in a different way from films in a real-world setting and may have a transcendental/immanent dimension. If the context of understanding the “other” is ignored it can have extremely dangerous consequences. For example Michael Moore wrote about Todd Phillips’ *Joker* which won Best Film at Venice in 2019 that the film is “about the America that gave us Trump – the America which feels no need to help the outcast, the destitute. The America where the filthy rich just get richer and filthier.”<sup>12</sup> He says that it is in the tradition of *Taxi Driver (1976)*, *Network (1976)*, *The French Connection (1971)*, *Dog Day Afternoon (1975)*. But at a wider level the interest in fantasy films and people who like fantasy films are also viewed as intellectual inferiors, as “outcasts” in a way.
- 30) Fantasy films are seen by some as saying more about the world and achieving greater audience and also artistic impact than many auteur films. For example British actor, Andy Serkis recently commented about *Black Panther (2018)*: “It feels like the tide is changing...In a sense, it’s a shame, because all movies should be like Panther. We should have arrived at this point a hell of a long time ago. The world is obviously polarised at the moment but there are big movements happening which are fighting against the division. This plays a big part in that.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.facebook.com/mmfint/posts/10156278766436857>

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/andy-serkis-interview-black-panther-motion-capture-vr-star-wars-planet-of-the-apes-a8387651.html>

31) This thesis is in no way about superhero films or defence of such films, but it does try to explore the intellectual roots beneath the theoretical divide between auteur cinema and genre cinema and provide the grounds for moving beyond this dichotomy at a theoretical level.

## **TIMELINE OF THE MOVING IMAGE**

The current dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema, at the level of film circulation, institutional structures and theoretical models is intimately linked to the current state of technology and the structure of the industry. This can be illustrated using the following broad timeline:

**1891-1915** Cinema began with individual kinetoscopes (1891) and the first public screening was in 1895. Early films were shown in circus tents, nickelodeons (especially from 1905 to 1915) and kinetoscopes. The films were initially single reel shows (i.e. short films) and included both fiction, documentary and news and also local “actuality” films. National film industries began to develop, not just in the USA, also in Italy, France, Denmark and Russia.

**1915-1929** Commencing with *Birth of a Nation* (1915) films were increasingly distributed as feature length films, often complemented by shorter films and news reels. They were essentially silent films until the first sound feature, *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Lightweight cameras could be used enabling significant visual experimentation.

**1930-1950s** Film established itself as the dominant popular entertainment medium. Sound film enabled Hollywood to reinforce its domination over the world film industry. Camera and sound equipment was much heavier, limiting visual experimentation. Hollywood cinema was constrained by the Hays Code. European cinema in the 1930s and war years was subject to strong propaganda remits. After the end of the Second World War, a greater spirit of freedom was unleashed, which in the early post-war years was especially marked in Italy and Scandinavia. Lightweight cameras and less censorship meant that a new period of European cinema became possible. In the 1950s television began its rollout in the US and UK, reducing cinema audiences in those countries, while filmgoing remained popular in continental Europe.



**1960s – mid 1970s** New Wave cinemas exploded throughout Europe and in other parts of the world, notably in Latin America. Taking their basic inspiration from Italian neo-realism, the New Wave expanded the horizon of cinema. The fact that the television rollout was later in continental Europe meant that both commercial films and “arthouse” films could enjoy major box-office success – a classic example being Pasolini’s *Decameron (1971)* which had over 10 million admissions in Italy alone. The American Majors were investing in European films and helped them circulate around Europe. European co-productions attained a peak in the mid 1960s with almost 50% of films in Europe being coproduced (Dale, 1997). In the second half of the 1960s the US studio system collapsed, the Hays Code was abandoned and the New Hollywood was ushered in by films such as *The Graduate (1967)*, *Easy Rider (1969)* and *Bonnie and Clyde (1967)*. In the early 1970s the top American films were highly influenced by European filmmaking traditions, classic examples include the first two *Godfather* films.

**Mid-1970s – 1990s** European and American films began to trace opposite paths. Europe’s public funding systems ramped up their activities throughout the 1960s and the dominant 1970s high critical theory led to a major shift towards “auteur cinema”. The rollout of television meant that many genres, such as comedy, drama, crime etc, shifted to television drama and European cinema increasingly focused on auteur films (Dale, 1997). By contrast Hollywood began its shift towards films in fantasy settings with a strong dependence on special effects. This began with films such as *Star Wars (1977-)* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)* and progressively increased from the late 1970s onwards. At the same time the home video market exploded, first with VHS and then DVD which created room for independent filmmakers including many European producers, such as Dino de Laurentiis, who shifted their focus away from their home countries and began to produce edgy English language films aimed at the international market. Pay TV operators such as HBO and Showtime provided another window for feature films and also increasingly invested in TV series with high production values, classic examples including *The Sopranos (1999)*. These series became as important, or even more important, for payTV channels.

**2000 onwards** With the increasing power of CGI special effects and demand for superhero franchises, Hollywood cinema is increasingly dependent on fantasy film settings. The DVD market began to collapse at the end of the first decade, first in rental and then in sales. As spending shifted to streaming platforms such as Netflix, they branded themselves on edgy TV drama, complemented by films. The collapse of home video and the continued rise of TV drama meant that the Hollywood studios began to

see their revenues declining, which motivated the Fox/Disney merger and the launch of the Disney Plus streaming platform. In Europe, the main broadcasters struggled to maintain their revenues and audience shares in a multi-channel environment, with inevitable casualties. In some markets the main casualties have been public broadcasters, but in many cases they have found it easier to adapt due to public funding and it has been private broadcasters that have suffered the biggest revenue squeeze. Broadcasters are increasingly focused on investing in films and series that have a strong domestic potential, above all, and international potential as a bonus. This has led to reinforced emphasis on a small number of feature films aimed at the commercial exhibition circuit, above all comedies. In the auteur cinema segment there has been an explosion of film festivals and the dichotomy between the two segments is more marked than ever. There are nonetheless some exceptions, such as the films du milieu in France, and crime drama films and series in Scandinavia.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This PhD proposal is integrated within my broader research into the factors that determine the audience and critical footprint of films.

The initial PhD proposal was presented in July 2011, entitled: *Celluloid Footprints: How storytelling techniques influence the impact of national cinemas. Including an in-depth case-study on Portuguese cinema.*

The final text includes extensive research in order to define the factors to be taken into consideration to understand the paradigm of the moving image in the digital environment and factors underpinning audience engagement.

The ideas explored within this text have also had a direct influence on the creative options I have taken in the films and videos that I have directed.

Other research conducted by me, such as my book *The Movie Game* (Dale, 1997), my strategy report for the Portuguese Ministry of Culture and my articles for *Variety* have also influenced the development of this thesis.

In particular the large body of articles I have written for *Variety* since starting this thesis have been extremely important for developing many of the ideas developed herein.

In addition to extensive research within the framework of the initial proposal, I have been teaching theoretical-practical disciplines in the University of Minho, using an approach that draws upon the ideas developed in this text and which reaffirm the idea of learning by doing and the distinctive characteristics of visual communication vis-à-vis text-based communication.

Since I began this thesis research in 2011, I have produced and directed a large number of films dedicated to exploring tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the “sense of place” of different destinations. These films have achieved considerable audience engagement, primarily in Portugal, with over 10 million views over the last 2 years.

The work associated with this PhD is only part of my broader research, which now spans three decades, and which can be briefly summarised as follows:

- 1) Poetic cinema. During my master's degree studies at the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, I produced extensive research into poetic cinema, supervised by Amos Vogel founder of the New York Film Festival and Cinema 16 and author of "Film as a Subversive Art" (Vogel, 1976) The exploration of how film can be used as a poetic medium has framed both my own research into this field and my own filmmaking activity ever since. My scholarship for studying in the United States ended before terminating the thesis, but some of the ideas previously developed have been incorporated herein.
- 2) Académie Carat. In 1991 I had a 10-month scholarship in Paris from this foundation which introduced me to top French film and TV professionals and the chance to travel the world, which led to my book *Europa, Europa – Developing the European Film Industry* (Dale, 1992). This book, with preface by UK producer David Puttnam, published by the Media Business School and the Academie Carat, analyses the relative strengths of the European and American film industries and the factors that explain why the Hollywood Majors are so successful, in particular in terms of the centralised script development and distribution capabilities, and the role of the "creative producer" in nurturing film projects.
- 3) *Awaiting the Phoenix* (1994). This article, published by BBVA, analyses in greater depth the audience drop for European films as a consequence of the roll-out of television, in particular from the 1960s onwards and the possibility of reversing the decline in audience engagement for European films.
- 4) *The Movie Game* (1997). This 350-page book, with preface by UK producer and writer, Terry Ilott, provides an in-depth analysis of the production models used in US, UK and continental European Cinema, and provides strategy recommendations for audience engagement for European films, focusing in particular on the need for stronger distribution structures, stronger sales agents, and for European producers to develop self-publishing strategies. References in Google Scholar: 133.
- 5) Film journalism for *Variety* (over 380 articles since 1997) and annual reports on Portugal for the *Variety International Film Guide* between the mid 1990s and mid 2000s. These articles have enabled me to interview leading producers and directors working in America, Europe, Asia and Africa, and analyse new trends such as emerging cinemas (e.g. in Northern Africa and Central America), growth of the visual effects industry (especially in France and the UK), the impact of tax incentive schemes (especially in France, the UK, Eastern Europe and analysis of new schemes in Portugal etc); growth of digital media (e.g. web series), strategies of television broadcasters (including a profile of TF1) and latest trends in documentary filmmaking.

- 6) Report for the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Audiovisual Sector (CIMA) (1997). I wrote a key section on the film industry in this report, which was one of the factors that led to restructuring of the Portuguese film institute as ICAM – Institute for Cinema, Audiovisual and Multimedia, with additional funding for the sector.
- 7) Strategy consulting for the Portuguese film institute, ICAM,(1997-2000) as adviser to the President, José Costa Ramos. Identification of strategies of how to increase the involvement of distributors in Portuguese films, use of digital technologies to provide new opportunities for a new generation of Portuguese filmmakers, and launch of a new film fund, that was entitled Conteúdos S.A. The latter initiative was aborted by the Minister, but the strategic thinking subsequently led to the creation of the film fund FICA, an initiative that had mixed success and was later suspended.
- 8) Strategy consulting for RTP and the holding company Portugal Global (2000-2002) focusing on development of RTP's Internet sites and launch of an educational TV channel.
- 9) Strategy consultancy report for Tobis Portuguesa (2004) on the likely impacts of digital technologies (which subsequently led to closure of the film laboratory).
- 10) Production of several reports for the Think Tank on European Film and Film Policy (mid 2000s), that was chaired by Henning Camre, focusing on film distribution and the impact of new technologies.
- 11) Production of a strategy report on Portuguese cinema (2009) for the then Minister of Culture, José António Pinto Ribeiro, including recommendations such as introduction of film tax incentives, cooperation with Portuguese film schools and reinforced development support.
- 12) Strategy advice in the context of meetings of Portuguese film schools. Between 2014-2018 I coordinated annual meetings of Portuguese film schools during the Fantasporto film festival. I also took part in the Meeting of Portuguese film schools organised by the Portuguese Film Academy in December 2017 and was nominated as one of the members of the Secretariat of a potential future Federation of Portuguese film schools. The issues we have discussed include the creation of a Federation, higher public support for film schools, cooperation protocols between schools and a promotional and distribution platform for student films.
- 13) Translation for leading cultural art institutions in Portugal, including the Serralves Museum, Centro Cultural Vila Flor, Centro Cultural de Belém, José de Guimarães International Centre for the Arts, Ministry of Culture, Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual, Office for the Media (GMCS), Media Regulatory Authority (ERC), including direct collaboration with curators such as Nuno Faria, Miguel von Hafe Perez, Ricardo Nicolau and many others.

- 14) Translation for projects related to Portuguese heritage, including texts related to Expo 98 in Lisbon, in 1998, Guimarães European Capital of Culture in 2012, texts for Porto City Council related to Porto as a World Heritage site, translation of the application documents for the Portuguese cork oak forests ("Montado) as a World Heritage site, and the application of Bom Jesus de Braga as a World Heritage site. My involvement in these projects related to Portuguese heritage have also contributed to my perspectives developed in this thesis.
- 15) Work for the European Commission (2014-2018) as expert evaluator and reviewer for projects applying for funding and funded projects in the context of Horizon 2020. The work itself is confidential but issues addressed include new production technologies such as High Frame Rates, High Dynamic Range, new film lighting systems, new systems for drones, new distribution strategies and new computer assisted production tools.

In the context of this broader research, one of the key topics that interests me is the power of the film medium and how to explore it, the new paradigm of the moving image in the digital environment, what audiences are looking for, how filmmakers use the aesthetic and poetic dimension of film to engage with audiences, what determines which films build strong word of mouth, and in the current context of social media why certain films are shared by users over others.

Over the last seven years I have explored many of these issues in my own research and my teaching activities at the University of Minho.

In the future, after completing this PhD I also aim to develop feature film projects, and the theoretical framework provided within this practise-based research will be used for this purpose.

## CONTEXT

In 1997 I published my book *The Movie Game: The Film Business in Britain, Europe and America* (Cassell) that provided an in-depth analysis of the workings of the film industry.

One of the main issues that concerned me in that work was to explain why the European film industry had fallen so far behind the American film industry, and at a broader level why US-based content companies seemed to be poised to dominate the heralded Information Age.

My previous analysis focused primarily on supply-side issues related to the absence of major film and content distributors in Europe, the lack of research and development expenditure, the fact that producers made their revenues primarily at the stage of putting together the production budget rather

than subsequent commercialisation, the lack of creative producers, the failings of the subsidy systems, amongst other issues.

There was a clear problem identified in my book, as summarised in the review made of it in *The Economist*.

The majority of European films have virtually zero box-office appeal," says Mr Dale bluntly. Whereas a typical Hollywood film is eventually seen, one way or another, by 220m people, a European film is lucky to be seen by 1% of that number. Over 300 European films a year, roughly one-and-a-half times Hollywood's total production, disappear virtually unwatched. "No other part of the world produces so many films which are immediately forgotten," he says. It is a celluloid version of Europe's wine lakes and butter mountains.<sup>14</sup>

Since I wrote the book there have been significant changes in the European film industry including widespread adoption of tax incentives that have attracted Hollywood productions and more production of "commercial films" with strong support from broadcasters that have attracted domestic audiences. However at a broader level, the problem of weak audience engagement identified in my book continues to exist.

In particular the dichotomy between commercial and auteur films has been further reinforced, effectively creating a ghetto from which films with greater artistic ambition find it difficult to escape.

For "auteur films" there is the chance to show such films in the expanding film festival circuit, which provides an opportunity to screen films that cannot access the theatrical cinema market, but it's difficult to achieve cross over hits.

In terms of audience engagement the situation is radically different from the so-called "golden age" of European cinema. The art vs. commerce debate has evolved over the past two decades including the production of films that combined genre and auteur elements, and the evolution of TV series, which some directors see as a more fertile creative ground than cinema at present.

The Internet and social media revolution has also revolutionised the situation, because there is now room for a wide panoply of artistic approaches, including auteur elements, genre elements and anything else beyond and in-between.

In this context, there is a need for a new understanding of "literacy" because there has been a major shift from the print age to the digital age, in which audiovisual communication is an increasingly central part of modern communication.

In the new image-dependent landscape there is an increasing gulf between high-end content, such as high-budget films and TV series, commercials etc, and low-end content, ranging from soap

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<sup>14</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.economist.com/business/1997/03/20/home-alone-in-europe>

operas to amateur productions. Mid-range content is losing viability. This poses a major challenge to European content production, because the momentum of image creation is increasingly dominated by players based in North America, both in terms of platforms such as Netflix, Amazon, iTunes etc, and in terms of content creators.

The objective of this thesis is to address the perceived dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema, and at a wider level between “artistic” and commercial approaches to audiovisual production.

It is argued herein that the key to addressing this issue is associated with the potential poetic dimension of film and audiovisual media and its ability to engage with the human mind.

By its very nature film enables us to go beyond our normal human faculties of sight and hearing. This capacity excited filmmakers as soon as cinema was invented and in today’s digital age in which there is relatively inexpensive access to filmmaking and post-production equipment, which is constantly evolving, it excites many hundreds of million people around the world.

The excitement of filmmaking that exudes from films such as Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) or James McBride’s film *David Holzman’s Diary* (1967) is also evident in the works of many YouTubers, such as Devin Graham or Casey Neitstat.

Imaging technology has massively expanded human visual experience, ranging from the telescope to the microscope. This has provided scientists with new tools to explore the universe and artists have new opportunities to see the world in a new light and open people’s eyes to new realities.

Imaging technology enables filmmakers to explore this poetic vein, and it is this dimension which constitutes a central element of this thesis.

A film camera can see things that we can’t normally see. This includes techniques such as macro-photography and night photography, but also extends to the whole world of visual effects that can create images which have their own reality and yet were never recorded in a real-world setting. Film can also manipulate time, effortlessly jump from viewpoint to another, create dreamlike sequences that tap into our non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious.

Maya Deren likened film images to “fragments of a permanent incorruptible memory”.<sup>15</sup> This poetic faculty of the moving image excited the early filmmakers and formed part of a wider avant-garde movement that was committed to awakening a new consciousness in the masses.

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<sup>15</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.screeningthepast.com/2015/01/the-time-of-sculpture-film-photography-and-auguste-rodin/>



The French Nouvelle Vague reflected this historical movement. However, in the interim years a new approach to cinema has developed, partly shaped by film theory and film studies, in which there continues to be an interest in exploring the experimental dimension of film, but it has become commonplace to affirm that such exploration is restricted to a certain type of film, under the umbrella term of “auteur cinema”, which tends to have a low level of audience engagement. This development has coincided with the idea that films have to choose between one of two approaches. They should either be “commercial films” or “auteur films”, and if they are the latter they should use narrative conventions that differ from classic narrative structures. Implicitly the suggestion is that a commercial film cannot have a poetic dimension and that this faculty is restricted to a small group of films that have separate conventions, and ultimately are limited to a restricted audience. This constitutes a sea change in the way that film is seen compared to the early decades of cinema.

For example, a filmmaker such as George Méliès who created fantasy worlds in films such as *Voyage to the Moon (1902)* were clearly working within a poetic vein. However, North American filmmakers such as James Cameron making a film with a fantasy setting, such as *Avatar (2009)*, are not viewed as “auteurs” or “artists” by many commentators.

One way to approach these issues is to explore the writings of Joseph Campbell, whose idea on the hero myth, or monomyth, have had a major effect on Hollywood scriptwriting, from *Star Wars* onwards. Campbell’s ideas are often seen as being well-worn and perhaps worn out. But his writings are often simplistically identified as corresponding to commercial narrative approaches rather than poetic or artistic approaches.

If we analyse Campbell’s writings in depth, in particular his 4-volume *The Masks of God* his ideas provide a model for understanding the poetic dimension of art, which he links to aspects of shamanism, which demonstrate that the potential to achieve poetic resonance in a work of art is not dependent on non-linear narrative structures. His writings suggest that a high level of audience engagement of an artistic work, and its elevation to a mythic status, does not imply that a work lacks a poetic dimension and may imply the exact opposite.

By exploring these ideas, including in-depth analysis of the writings of Campbell, filmmakers who viewed themselves as film poets and other theorists in this field, I propose a general theory for an understanding of filmic communication that goes beyond the dichotomy between art vs commerce and I hope will play a positive contribution to debate on these issues.

## **What this thesis is not about**

To clarify the reading of this text, it is useful to emphasise what the thesis is not about, since these issues can be quickly understood.

Firstly, it is not an attack on auteur theory or art film. Auteur theory has been criticised on numerous fronts, including the fact that by focusing on the director it ignores the creative contribution of other collaborators such as the screenwriter, director of photography and actors. More recently it has been criticised as a movement that propagated a small group of primarily male directors.

Auteur cinema has also been criticised by some people as the wrong direction for public funding of cinema. In Portugal, for example, there has been what producer Luis Urbano recently described as a never-ending “civil war”<sup>16</sup> between defendants of “commercial cinema” and “auteur cinema”.

This thesis does not aim to try to discredit auteur films or discourage funding for “auteur cinema”.

The goal is to “move beyond” the dichotomy between auteur and commercial cinema because they can be misleading terms and fail to capture other nuances associated with understanding the role of moving images in the digital age. This thesis does not aim to produce a simple recipe of ingredients required for making films. The objective is to provide a model for understanding audiovisual communication, but such an understanding will not empower the reader to produce effective films. By contributing to understanding moving images it can play a relevant role in the creative process, but does not aim to provide any quick fixes.

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<sup>16</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2018/biz/festivals/cannes-film-festival-2018-portuguese-cinema-showcased-acid-trip-1202808171/#!>

## PART ONE – CINEMA IN CRISIS

Explains the importance of the subject matter addressed within the thesis, i.e. that the theoretical and practical dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema has undermined the power of cinema precisely at the moment when the moving image is more omnipresent in society than ever.

## CHAPTER ONE – CINEMA'S IDENTITY CRISIS

The European and American film industries have moved in opposite directions since the 1970s, partly as a result of the differences in the film theory paradigms dominant on both sides of the Atlantic and different institutionalisation structures.

Whereas Gutenberg's invention of the printing press has left a decisive mark on the modern era, the invention of recorded sound and images, which began in the nineteenth century, and whose use has mushroomed as a result of the digital revolution, is one of the key forces now shaping our consciousness of the world.

Just as philosophy began as an umbrella term for all fields of human knowledge and has been progressively reduced to a narrow field, cinema began as an umbrella term that encompassed all uses of the moving image, and has now been reduced to a small niche of communication media.

At a time when sound and images circulate more intensely than ever, the cinema seems to be suffering an identity crisis, leading many people to pronounce the medium as "dead" or in need of resuscitation. Enthusiasm for the moving image, both for audiences and creators, seems to have migrated to long-running television series, on the one hand, and to short social media videos on the other. Whereas twenty years ago European art films and Hollywood blockbusters made front page news, eyes are now primarily focused on series such as *Game of Thrones (2011)*, *Downton Abbey (2010)*, reality TV or viral videos. Cinema seems to have suddenly become a "vintage" medium.

This change is reflected at multiple levels, such as the Academy awards and film festivals. Whereas Oscar-winning films were once amongst the year's top selling films and the TV screening of the Awards ceremony was an international phenomenon, the Oscars are struggling to maintain their relevance.

Film festivals used to be a key focus of media coverage, but are increasingly viewed as events for a cinephile audience. Unlike music festivals, which continue to attract widespread audiences, most film festivals are aimed at a narrow erudite audience.

Cinema was once clearly a popular medium. European cinema has now been divided into two models and two groups of audiences. The core audience of film festivals is middle class spectators. The theatrical experience has also become "very gentrified to one specific kind of product"<sup>17</sup>, in the words of Mexican director, Alfonso Cuarón.

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<sup>17</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2019/film/news/alfonso-cuaron-blasts-journalist-backstage-golden-globes-1203100956/>

These developments are linked to the question of the meaning of “film art” and “art film”. One of the first theorists to describe cinema as an art form was Paris-based Italian intellectual Ricciotto Canudo in *La naissance du sixième art* (Birth of the Sixth Art, 1911)<sup>18</sup>. David Bordwell and Kristin Thomson’s classic work “Film Art: an Introduction” (Bordwell and Thomson, 2008) explores the nature of this artistic medium, which ranges from classic Hollywood films to experimental cinema. This broader definition of the “film art” can also be extended to TV fiction and Internet videos, especially those with a “cinematic feel”. By contrast, the term “art film” has a much narrower definition and excludes the vast majority of moving images and has a narrowing audience.

The use of the term “art” is of crucial significance for the curatorial systems that decide which films should be funded and exhibited, especially in Europe. Whereas in the early decades of cinema, the medium was viewed as a fairground attraction and a vital form of popular culture, from the 1960s onwards, state support for filmmaking in Europe rose dramatically, which led to institutionalisation of the sector and creation of a strong dichotomy between commercial and auteur films.

State funding was necessary to ensure the viability of European cinema after the rise of television and the drastic drop in cinema-going audiences. But it has also led powerful side effects. The rise in public funding has meant that a new set of rules have been developed concerning which films should be made in Europe, influenced by multiple considerations, including the nature of cinema as an art form, and political considerations related to issues such as identity politics.

European cinema has always included various types of filmmaking including popular genres, “quality” films and independent films.

Popular genres included the Italian peplums, British comedies and horror films and French crime dramas. “Quality” films, including the Film d’Art movement in France in the early 1900s, and the Quality Tradition in France in the 1950s. These films typically had classical linear narratives and included many historical period dramas and were often based on adaptation of literary classics .

Independent cinema is a vast field. It had its first period of strength during the silent cinema era, including titles such as Méliès’ fantasy films, Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and *Le Chien Andalou* by Buñuel and Dali.

In the sound era, the “golden age” of European cinema included traditions such as Italian neo-realism, the French Nouvelle Vague and other New Wave movements. This period of filmmaking had particular historical characteristics that are very different from the current period.

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<sup>18</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.ien-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La\\_naissance\\_d\\_un\\_art\\_Canudo.pdf](http://www.ien-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La_naissance_d_un_art_Canudo.pdf)

The New Wave films often combined genre elements with more authorial approaches and achieved comparatively large audiences at a trans-national level. For example, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Decameron* had over 10 million admissions in Italy and over 3 million admissions total in France and Germany. That would be unthinkable today.

For multiple reasons, including the radically different historical contexts, the “art cinema” of Europe’s “golden age” had very distinct characteristics from the present-day “cinema d’auteur”, including the fact that it was strong linked to youth culture and irreverence, included many popular culture references, was often profoundly romantic, had many comedy and genre elements, and ranged from slow cinema approaches to fast-paced rhythm and editing.

The auteur cinema that evolved in Europe from the early 1970s onwards is highly distinct from the New Wave cinemas and has a distinct theoretical basis, which is one of the issues to be explored in this thesis. This development is not exclusively the result of the creative urges of the directors. It is also the result of the curatorial system that has created a strong dichotomy within European production, and a vanishing middle ground.

The Italian directors who forged styles such as neo-realism and Italian comedies, were trained at the national film school during the Mussolini era, where one of the main goals was to use cinema to attract popular audiences. Their outlook was also nurtured by the *Cinema* magazine, edited by Benito Mussolini’s son, Vittorio, who worked with directors such as Federico Fellini, Roberto Rossellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni. Even directors with more complex creative styles, such as Antonioni, enjoyed major commercial hits with films such as *La Avventura (1960)*, *La Notte (1961)* and *Blow Up (1966)*.

The “Young Turks” of France’s *Cahiers du Cinéma* had a keen love of popular cinema. Truffaut’s ground-breaking text *A Certain Tendency of French Cinema* criticised the Quality Tradition and wanted to introduce a more visual approach to filmmaking, that he believed would also enjoy significant popular appeal. Truffaut was a great admirer of Hitchcock, who he interviewed and later befriended Spielberg. Godard, the eternal provocateur, was also committed during the 1960s to popular filmmaking. He radically shifted course after 1968, and publicly criticised Truffaut on this basis.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a new critical orthodoxy – described in this thesis as the second wave of auteur theory - began to dominate the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, which was committed to the “cinema moderne”.

The writings of André Bazin and the “Young Turks” helped make cinema a more respectable subject for academic study, but as film and culture studies expanded from the 1970s onwards, cinema was typically seen from the perspective of high theory, very distinct from the view defended by Truffaut.

A classic text in this context is Laura Mulvey's article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (Mulvey, 1975) published in the UK's *Screen* magazine in 1975 which argues that women have been traditionally portrayed in films via "male gaze" and called for a new type of cinema, that was less focused on voyeuristic pleasure.

The second wave of auteur theory, very different from the writings of the "Young Turks" and the ideas of filmmakers such as Bergman and Fellini became the dominant perspective on European auteur cinema and has shaped the types of auteur films made in Europe, in particular those that circulate in film festivals and win awards.

In America, the field of film studies also mushroomed but the ensuing generation of filmmakers, initially dubbed the movie brats, were very different from their European counterparts. Whereas European film criticism in the early 1970s began to move away from many aspects of the New Wave cinemas and popular cinema, the movie brats were lapping up these influences. This impact began in the late 1960s as the classic studio era came to an end and ushered in the era known as the "New Hollywood".

Arthur Penn's ground-breaking 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde* was directly influenced by European New Wave films, and the producers initially contacted François Truffaut who contributed to the script, and then Godard who declined the offer. There are parallels between *Bonnie and Clyde* and Godard's 1966 film *Pierrot le Fou*.

Many New Hollywood films of the early 1970s had an aesthetic clearly influenced by New Wave cinemas. They often had East Coast settings and explored the European roots of American culture. A classic example is Martin Scorsese who explored the Italian-American roots of New York and Francis Ford Coppola was born in Detroit and highlighted the Italian-American roots of New York in *Godfather I (1972)* and *Godfather II (1974)*.

The massive success of *Star Wars* in 1977, ushered in a new era for Hollywood, and gradually shifted the emphasis of blockbuster films to non-world/fantasy (often dystopian) settings.

A major influence that led Hollywood cinema to chart a significantly different course from European cinema was linked to the ideas of Jung, Joseph Campbell, animism, shamanism and New Age thinking. Whereas Laura Mulvey's 1975 article was rooted in the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan, American filmmakers such as George Lucas took their inspiration from the writings of theorists such as Joseph Campbell, who in turn was profoundly influenced by Jung.

Lucas' 1977 blockbuster *Star Wars* was the beginning of this new period which gradually saw the "New Hollywood" era fade and a new studio system emerged based on franchises of sci-fi films, superhero films and fantasy films.

The separate courses charted by European and American cinema are well known. This thesis focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of these two directions, which reflect different world views.

The ideas associated to these distinct views can be presented as dichotomies, but it's important to bear in mind that dichotomies often conceal more than they reveal.

Theorists have focused on the potential perils of the moving image because of what Guy Debord called the *Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1984). From this viewpoint, cinema can potentially enslave spectators since powerful "in-your-face" filmmaking can dampen people's intellectual and analytical capacities and usher in the dangers of populism, consumerism and general numbing of the mind.

Others embrace the power of the moving image precisely because it can "transport" viewers to another state of consciousness, portrayed as either a more intense awareness of the conscious world, from a phenomenological perspective, or a gateway to the dream world and non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" and the unconscious.

These competing views are linked to the dichotomy between the "rational path" and the "poetic path" as mentioned above. These two traditions also find parallels in the Apollonian and Dionysian traditions identified by Nietzsche and the diurnal and nocturnal, or solar and lunar traditions identified by Gilbert Durand in his *Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary* (Durand, 2016, 12<sup>th</sup> edition). They can also be related to the ancient myth of Apollo vs Marsyas, as discussed below.

These two traditions lie at the heart of much contemporary debate about the nature of language, human consciousness and cognition. For example, recent developments in the general study of human cognition and by cognitive film theory have focused on the importance of cognition based on emotional understanding, rather than purely rational interpretation of information.

Cognitive film theory defends the idea that we don't solely engage with recorded and edited sound and image at an intellectual level. Films engage audiences at a multi-sensorial level, as argued by Luis Rocha Antunes in *The Multisensory Film Experience – The Art(s) of Slow Cinema* (Antunes, 2016) and by Jon Boorstin in *The Hollywood Eye: What Makes Movies Work* (Boorstin, 1980) (re-issued as *Making Movies Work*).

Antunes states that the fact that films engage with our sensorimotor system means that they cannot be analysed solely as "texts" which are "decoded" by the intellect. At this level he challenges the psychoanalytic-semiotic paradigm which tries to create equivalences between written texts and other forms of communication.

Semioticians and other theorists have analysed whether film is a "language" and whether theories developed by language studies can also be applied to film. Formalist and neo-formalist film



theory has tried to identify what some term the “grammar” of the shot and the edit, and film students learn to identify and name the different types of shots – from extreme long shot to extreme close-up and types of edit, from continuity edit to jump cut. These approaches can clearly be illuminating but the basic idea of cognitive film theory is that they offer an incomplete understanding of cinema. Multi-sensory film theory, phenomenological approaches and narrational theory based on emotional engagement offer alternative theoretical models as will be explored herein.

## Summary

Moving images affect our cognitive processes in a different way from the written word, enabling a different kind of multi-sensorial engagement and new possibilities of creating different states of consciousness, heightened awareness of the experiential world and experiences that resemble a “waking dream” or “state of reverie”. This makes the moving image particularly effective in creating modern myths.

## Introduction

There is something magical about the film camera or photographic camera in terms of its capacity to record a specific moment in time and space, which can then be shared with others.

The image that we see is rooted in some sense of reality, inasmuch that a film image, in its materiality, has a living reality. This is the rationale underpinning Godard’s oft repeated statement that “cinema is truth 24 frames per second,” to which he added “and every cut is a lie.”<sup>19</sup> However, phantasmagorical the film image may be, it is always impregnated with a certain truth or reality, as a materialised thing. Even for animated, computerised or virtual reality images there is always a material dimension, an element of “truth” to such images.

At the same time, the image projects us outwards into the unknown. Certain images obviously achieve this effect more than others, but in all cases we will try to “interpret” the image i.e. attach meaning and try to construct a narrative for the image. This is conveyed by the popular expression, “every picture tells a story”.

The power of the image to both convey a sense of reality and to transport the viewer to another reality, and its ability to convey a sense of narrative is essential for understanding how filmic communication operates.

One approach to understanding film narrative is linked to the terms *syuzhet* and *fabula* i.e. the subject matter (content, story or “*fabula*”) and the manner in which it is told (form, plot or “*syuzhet*”)<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://filmistruth.com/faq.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Ian Christie provides a useful definition of these terms in his essay “Formalism and Neo-Formalism” (Christie, 1998) “Fabula, in the Formalist sense, is an imaginary sequence of events narrated by the syuzhet, which provides the actual narrative pattern of the work of “story-as-told”. Thus, in literature, Cervantes’ and Sterne’s numerous digressions, abrupt

Studies of filmic narrative have often focused on elements such as montage, narrative structure, character arc etc in order to explain *syuzhet*. However, it may be argued that the form and content of the individual image also conveys a sense of narrative in its own right, regardless of the overall plot.

This may be graphically represented as follows:

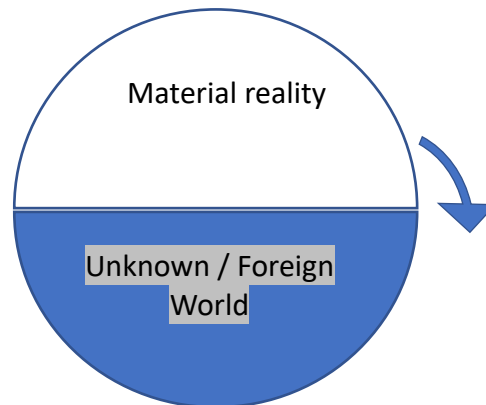


Figure 1 – Transportation from material reality to unknown world

When we see the image it has a material reality (“seeing is believing”) and yet also has the power to transport us towards an unknown or “foreign world”.

I use the word “foreign” here for a reason, because it can be linked to a term used later in this thesis of the “forest” whose etymological root is linked to the Indo-European root *dhwer-*, which means outside, and is also the origin of the word “door”.

As Alexander Porteous notes in “The Forest in Folklore and Mythology”:

Although the words “ forest ” and “ forestry ” are now generally understood to be connected with trees, yet the former does not necessarily mean wooded ground or natural woodland, but has been considered to have been derived from the Latin *foris*, meaning “ out-of-doors,” and thus the unenclosed open land. (Porteous, 1928, p. 34)

The image transports us beyond the threshold, towards an “out-of-doors” space, a realm of alterity. This transportation towards a “forest” may be towards a “dark forest”, associated with the darker sides of our unconscious, or to a magical “golden forest”.

For example, in the originally censored flight sequence in Disney’s 1937 animated film *Snow White*<sup>21</sup>, the protagonist flees into what is first a dark forest, which is then transformed into a magical “golden forest”. A similar transformation occurs in James Cameron’s 2009 3D film *Avatar*.

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shifts forward and backward in time, repetitions, and withholding of information are all devices which constitute the *syuzhet* or plot; and the Formalists regarded the relationship between the *syuzhet* and *fabula*, rather than one or the other, as the essence of literary art” (Hill 1998, p.59).

<sup>21</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/Z4zQ1txgD94>

Obviously certain images transport us in a more powerful way than others. There may also be connotative elements associated with certain images which mean that they are far more effective for some viewers than for others. This capacity to convey meaning and story via images is distinct from the way that written text conveys narrative.

The means by which word-based communication conveys meaning was one of the main themes explored by Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1962). McLuhan highlights the fact that print media is primarily based on decoding notational language, which is significantly different from communication in the age prior to print media, in which the spoken word and human representation played a core role. For example, he asks whether “the interiorisation of media such as *letters* alter the ratio among our senses and change mental processes?” (McLuhan, 1962, p.24). McLuhan emphasises the previous importance of the spoken word: “In Antiquity and the Middle Ages reading was necessarily reading aloud” (McLuhan, 1962, p.82). He adds that the print age separated poetry from music and performance, which were previously intimately linked.

Following this line of reason, McLuhan emphasises the importance of oral culture in Antiquity and says that this underlies Aquinas’ explanation of why Socrates, Christ and Pythagoras avoided the publication of their teachings. He says that these ideas underpinned his own motivation to write *The Gutenberg Galaxy*.

It was learning from Chaytor how literary conventions are affected by the oral, written, or the printed forms, that suggested to me the need for *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Medieval language and literature were somewhat in the state of the present movie or the TV show in that, in Chaytor’s words, it “Produced little formal criticism in our sense of the term. If an author wished to know whether his work was good or bad, he tried it on an audience; if it was approved, he was soon followed by imitators. But authors were not constrained by models or systems...the audience wanted a story with plenty of action and movement, the story as a rule, showed no great command of character drawing; this was left to the reciter for portrayal by change of voice and gesture”. (McLuhan, 1962, p.87)

McLuhan emphasises the role of the “Auctor” in Antiquity which is linked to the root of the words *auteur*, *author* and *authority*. The power of the *auctor* is intimately linked to the spoken word – he who has the final authority to speak.

The word *auctor* is also linked to the modern word – actor – i.e. the power to speak underpins action. *Auctor* and *Auctoritas*, are Latin terms related to the “power of command” and are linked to the English term “authority”. This power of command includes the authority/mastery of the spoken word. “Auctor” is also linked to words such as “oral”, “audition” and “auction”. There are also etymological links to words such as “august”, “auge”, “augment”. *Auctor* broadly corresponds to the modern word “author”, as originator or creator. *Auctor* is also used to refer to God as the ultimate Creator or Author.

In this regard it is significant that recorded sound and images can bring us closer to the orator, than can the written word.

Plato cited Socrates who stated that the masters of the written word may be called poets, orators or legislators, but masters of spoken arguments are “worthy of a higher name, befitting the serious pursuit of their life. Wise, I may not call them; for that is a great name which belongs to God alone, -lovers of wisdom or philosophers is their modest and befitting title.” (Phaedrus).

McLuhan differentiates between the tradition of speaking in maxims, or aphorisms as opposed to use of method. He quotes Aquinas: “The senses delight in things duly proportioned as in something akin to them, for the sense too, is a kind of reason as is every cognitive power” (McLuhan, 1962, p.107). He also emphasises the oral tradition in the scholastic world in which the main defence of a thesis was oral rather than via a written text and quotes Francis Bacon who considered that writing in aphorisms is “preferable to the Ciceronian method of explicit spelling out of information in the form of continuous prose” (McLuhan, 1962, p.102). McLuhan says that children continue to be attracted to oral communication rather than text-based communication: “The traditional lore of school children points to the gap between the scribal and typographic man” (McLuhan, 1962, p.90)

In *Understanding Media* (McLuhan, 1994) which includes his famous statement *The Medium is the Message*, McLuhan foresaw that what he calls the “all-at-onceness” of electronic media would move society away from a print-based culture back towards a culture that would once again be closer to oral culture, reviving some of the aspects of primitive society, but at a global level – thereby creating what he calls the “global village”.

For the purposes of this thesis, these ideas are relevant to the extent that the combination of sound and images engages with the senses in a distinct manner to text-based communication. The power of the image to convey a sense of reality is distinct from the way that written text conveys meaning.

## The Decisive Moment

In *The Decisive Moment* (included in Cartier Bresson, 2004) French photographer, Henri Cartier Bresson expressed the idea that a single moment can capture the essence of the identity of a person or place. He borrowed the expression from Cardinal Retz who said that "There is nothing in this world without a decisive moment"<sup>22</sup>.

Cartier Bresson analysed the individual image and its potential inclusion within a picture story, noting "Sometimes there is one unique picture whose composition possesses such vigour and richness, and whose content so radiates outward from it, that this single picture is a whole story in itself. But this rarely happens." (Cartier Bresson, 2004, p.23).

Tarkovsky advocated a similar idea: "The image is not a certain meaning, expressed by the director, but an entire world reflected as in a drop of water" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.110). "We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe, but the poetic image is able to express that totality" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.106).

Kurosawa expressed the same point saying, "The spirit of the age, the lifestyle of the people... can emerge from a single old food bowl" (Kurosawa, 1983. P. 110).

Dziga Vertov also emphasised how an image can convey a wider meaning: "The artist should be able to show forth all the beauty and uniqueness of individuality - while at the same time disclosing the general, characteristic features of a people, of an era, or life that lies within." (Vertov, 1985, p. 244).

Cartier Bresson emphasises the elusive nature of capturing the decisive moment: "The profession depends so much upon the relations the photographer establishes with the people he's photographing, that a false relationship, a wrong word or attitude, can ruin everything. When the subject is in any way uneasy, the personality goes away where the camera can't reach it" (Cartier Bresson, 2004, p. 28). He continues: "To me photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression" (Cartier Bresson, 2004, p. 42).

The artist/poet, through his or her sensibility and sensitivity, may be able to capture the essence of the identity of a person or place, which others may miss.

Mary Trainor-Brigham in her book *Deep Cinema* (Trainor-Brigham, 2008) suggests that this was the case for Maya Deren when shooting her documentary *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1954):

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<sup>22</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://studiofynn.com/journal/decisive-moment-understanding-convergence>

Deren herself claims that it was precisely her intuitive and respectful stance as an artist, vs. the more intellectual, analytical posture of anthropologists, that gained her entrée into the deeper dimensions of the Haitian Voudon community. She had a “deliberate discretion, a strong distaste for aggressive inquiry, staring or prying.” Rather than systematizing and categorising her findings objectively, as would a social scientist, Deren “could permit the culture and myth to emerge gradually on its own terms and in its own form (Trainor-Brigham, 2008, p.11).

This capacity to see identity that others may miss, and then be able to share it with others is also identified by Joseph Campbell, who suggests that it is the power of the “poets” that enables us to connect to the multiple levels: microcosm, mesocosm, macrocosm and infinite.

Campbell links this power to the power of the “shaman”, as described later in this thesis, who may share his/her vision with others even if others are unable to see it.

Tarkovsky expresses this idea in his film *Stalker* in which the main character leads others to the “room” of enlightenment but they are unable to grasp the wisdom that it holds: “What's most awful is that no one needs it. No one needs that room. And all my efforts are just in vain”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://theatre-notes.blogspot.com/2007/09/tarkovskys-stalker-poet-in-destitute.html>

## **Link between Film and non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious**

The power of the film image to transport the viewer to a “foreign/unknown world” excited filmmakers from the very birth of cinema.

“Escaping from reality” is often cited as one of the reasons for watching a film. But this does not mean that all films necessarily involve a fantasy dimension. Indeed a film can heighten our sense of reality and ability to see things that often go unperceived.

Nonetheless, from the very first frame of a film we are transported from our normal state of mind, that is necessary for interacting with the outer world, towards an almost dream-like state, or trance.

Amos Vogel in his book *Film as a subversive art* describes this as follows:

Removed from the real world, isolated even from fellow-viewers, the spectator falls to dream and reverie in the womb-like darkness of the theatre. Flooded by images, his unconscious is freed from customary constraints and his rational faculties are inhibited. Stephenson and Debrix point out that except for seeing and hearing, body and other senses are at rest in the cinema, thus allowing imagination, stimulated by the filmmaker's emotionally charged, expressly-selected material, to exert deeper and more lasting influence. Mauerhofer refers to the viewer's voluntary passivity and uncritical receptivity; and Kracauer emphasizes the dialectical wavering between self-absorption (leading the viewer away from the image, into personal associations triggered by it) and self-abandonment (the movement toward the image). Perhaps the state of the viewer (as Mauerhofer, the psychologist, and Breton, the surrealist, both agree) is closest to that between waking and sleeping, in which he abandons the rationality of daily life while not yet completely surrendering to his unconscious (Vogel, 1976, introduction).

Buñuel echoed these ideas: "Among all means of human expression, [cinema's] way of functioning is most reminiscent of the work of the mind during sleep." <sup>24</sup> He added - "A film is like an involuntary imitation of a dream...In the silence and darkness of the theatre it isolates him from what we might call his normal psychic habitat. For these reasons it can stimulate him more effectively than any other form of human expression...it can also more effectively stultify him." <sup>25</sup>

This question is obviously intimately linked to determining whether “a film” can be considered an art form. The subject also lay at the heart of the writings of the “Young Turks” of the Nouvelle Vague who sought to lay the grounds for defending cinema as an art form, at the same level as other arts, rather than a “minor art intended for minors” to paraphrase Serge Gainsbourg’s description of popular music<sup>26</sup>.

The fall into semi-darkness, followed by immersion into the performance (in the case of cinema a pre-recorded and edited “performance) also exists in the other performing arts, such as theatre, music

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<sup>24</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.stonesoferasmus.com/2010/07/luis-Buñuel-on-film-and-subconscious.html>

<sup>25</sup> From Buñuel’s essay “Cinema is an instrument of Poetry”. Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://filmschoolrejects.com/filmmaking-tips-luis-bunuel/>

<sup>26</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEs8-8Oo56s>



and ballet. It is important to remember this performance-related dimension of film, as one of the reasons why we watch a film – which is distinct from text-based communication, as explained by McLuhan.

But the characteristic that distinguishes cinema from live performing arts is its dimension of recorded images, montage, multiple perspectives etc, that enables it to draw close to the dream experience and which has been described as “prosthetic memories” (Landsberg, 2004). This characteristic has been highlighted in particular by filmmakers interested in exploring the unconscious, such as Buñuel, Cocteau and Maya Deren.

Chris Marker’s short film, *La Jetée* (1962), explores parallels with Plato’s allegory of the Cave. Other films that do this explicitly include *The Matrix* (1999) and *The Truman Show* (1998). Many films include a structure that challenges the characters’ previous perception of the world and extracts them from a cave of ignorance into a new light. Plato’s Allegory of The Cave has been used for millennia as a basic introduction to the study of philosophy, i.e. through philosophy we will reach a new understanding of the world, and has also been used as an allegory to explain processes of initiation into new knowledge – ranging from esoteric to mundane fields of knowledge. But a film is almost a reverse process of the allegory of the cave. The viewer lives in his daytime universe of quotidian reasoning, and through the filmic experience itself, and the story depicted on the screen, he departs from that “diurnal world”, towards a “nocturnal world” or “lunar world” of dreams and non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious. Therefore instead of departing from darkness into the light, as in the cave allegory, the spectator departs from light into darkness, but in the midst of the darkness, may find illumination/inspiration.

This return to the cave involves a primeval element, as suggested by Werner Herzog in his fascinating documentary, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010).

In the analysis of Joseph Campbell, to be discussed later in this thesis, this movement can be compared to the move from the “arid wasteland” of eternal day/summer to the “dark forest” of eternal night/winter, but in this journey through the unconscious/dark forest, the hero/protagonist encounters hope not just for himself/herself but also for the world.

Instead of leaving the cave and entering the light. The spectator enters a “cave” and watches a protagonist who in many cases departs from the known world and enters a “dark forest”.

### **Cinema’s capacity to create Modern Myths**

This idea that cinema has the power to create modern myths, fascinated many people, including political figures such as Lenin, who, according to Lunacharsky’s recollection of their conversation, stated:

“of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema.”<sup>27</sup> In the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, Russia was the first country to create a national film school VGIK - founded in 1919 by Russian cinematographers Vladimir Gardin and Lev Kuleshov. This was the model for the creation of other film schools in Europe, in particular in totalitarian regimes, such as the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia founded in 1935 in Mussolini’s Italy, which played a key role in nurturing the talent behind Italian post-war cinema.

Almost from the birth of the seventh art, cinema’s myth-making potential has been a major attraction for many filmmakers, integrated within the wider utopian goal of using the arts to change people’s consciousness and thereby usher in a “revolution”. Robert Sklar in *Movie-Made America* provides an in-depth analysis of how cinema shaped modern-day America through the creation of modern, universal myths, and states that awareness of this myth-making power first began to be widely talked about in the 1930s. I will include this extensive quote because it is extremely relevant to this thesis:

In the late 1930s, public discussion about Hollywood changed. Clergymen in backwater towns could still raise a crowd by railing against sin on the silver screen, and judges and reformers here and there continued to maintain that movies led impressionable youth to crime. Among academics and in literary circles, however, and in the principal newspapers and magazines, the moviemakers were regarded with considerably more respect, awe and even envy, as the possessors of the power to create the nation's myths and dreams.

"Dreams hung in fragments at the far end of the room," Scott Fitzgerald wrote, describing a producer's projection room in *The Last Tycoon*, "suffered analysis, passed-to be dreamed in crowds, or else discarded." This evocative image and its counterparts in other fiction and social science of the period were not simply imaginative or analytical efforts to grasp the nature of the Hollywood phenomenon. They were observations on the possession and use of cultural power. Whether they wrote in indignation or scholarly detachment, these writers were explicitly or implicitly acknowledging that movies had taken over cultural functions they themselves had exercised, or aspired to, in the past.

In traditional American society the task of describing the world and communicating that vision to its members had belonged, with different emphasis at different times, to the clergy, political statesmen, educators, businessmen, essayists, poets and novelists. There had never been a totally uniform cultural expression in the United States, there had always been schisms and struggles, alternatives and counterviews, but in general the combatants had come from similar ethnic and class backgrounds and had utilized the same means—the written and spoken word. Now for the first time power to influence the culture had been grasped by a group of men whose origins and whose means were different.

This is the principal reason why the message of the movie image was described as myth or dream. In ordinary language, myths and dreams are falsehoods—fantasies, fictions, imaginary tales. In the strict sense, this was a political choice of words. It implied that other forms of cultural communications spoke more truly about human experience than the movies.

What was different about the movies in the 1930s was not that they were beginning to communicate myths and dreams—they had done that from the beginning—but that the moviemakers were aware in a more sophisticated way of their mythmaking powers, responsibilities and opportunities. Among intellectuals and in centers of political power, the importance of cultural myths to social stability was

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1924-2/socialist-cinema/socialist-cinema-texts/lenin-on-the-most-important-of-the-arts/>

a seriously debated topic. The Depression had shaken some of the oldest and strongest of American cultural myths, particularly the middle-class homilies about the virtues of deferred gratification and the assurance that hard work and perseverance would bring success.

This loss of cultural certitudes had created a mood of shame and self-reproach in American society, as the historian Warren Susman has pointed out, and a sense of foreboding about the future. With the rise of Nazi Germany and the aggressive challenge to democratic ideals, the widespread doubt about traditional American myths threatened to become a dangerous political weakness. In politics, industry and the media there were men and women, as often of liberal as of conservative persuasion, who saw the necessity, almost as a patriotic duty, to revitalize and refashion a cultural mythology. The high priority the nation's leaders placed on recementing the foundations of public morale was not lost on those producers and directors whose goal was enhanced prestige, respectability and cultural power. Moreover, they were quickly gaining considerable skill at communicating their messages with subtle nuances beneath the surface of overt content. More and more effort in motion-picture production was given over to the service of cultural mythmaking. (Sklar, 1975, p. 195-196).

The use of cinema to raise public morale and create cultural myths was also highly evident in the totalitarian regimes. This was not focused solely on propaganda films, but in fact primarily on entertainment films, ranging from thrillers to comedies.

In democratic regimes, such as Great Britain, there was also awareness of how film could rally the masses. Film formed part of the propaganda approach adopted by the Ministry of Information established during the second world war, which incorporated the General Post Office Film Unit in 1940, renamed as the Crown Film Unit, that operated between 1940-52.

In the early post-war years the perceived importance of film was one of the reasons why support was given to J. Arthur Rank to create a major pan-European distribution structure, which it was felt would spread British cultural values to the world. The BBC became the main vehicle for using sound and images to consolidate British culture, but this was targeted primarily towards radio and television, whereas Rank was focused on film.

Sklar notes in his book that "It is important to begin with a recognition that movies have historically been and will remain vital components in the network of cultural communication, and the nature of their content and control helps to shape the character and direction of American culture as a whole" (Sklar, 1975, p. vi).

In Europe, as television use became widespread, public policy interest focused more on television than cinema, as the mass media that has the greatest power to shape society and create modern myths and institutions such as the BBC were entrusted with this mission. During the 1960s in continental Europe there was a perceived battlefield between cinema and television in many countries. In Italy, for example, several local filmmakers and producers claimed that consolidation of the state broadcaster RAI effectively destroyed Italian cinema (see Dale, 1997).

## Suspension of Disbelief

The capacity of the moving image to transport us towards a dream world has been linked to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's statement in *Biographia Literaria* that for his Lyrical Ballads it was agreed that "my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." (Coleridge, 1817, Ch. XIV)

The issue at stake is not just about whether what we are seeing is "believable" but above all a suspension of cognitive processes and entering into the dreamlike trance state.

The "make-believe" of cinema can be particularly powerful in transporting us to a different realm, which may be a "hyper-reality" or a "science fiction" vision, but which we embrace as a "present" while we are watching the film. This leap of "poetic faith" or the embracing of a "make-believe" world is central to the power of film drama to create modern myths. In this context, a "mythology", "myth" or "make-believe" world can be as powerful, and arguably more powerful, than "objective knowledge", in the shaping of society.

The aphorism "knowledge is power" ("scientia potentia est") often attributed to Francis Bacon, is linked to this idea. But the parallel affirmation that "belief is power" is also true. In other words, our beliefs, dreams and hopes that govern our inner world, have a key role in determining our motivations and our actions.

The principles of modern science help us understand the outer world, but our belief system, in part related to the world of modern myths, also plays a key role in shaping our actions and society as a whole, and the moving image has a particularly strong ability to shape beliefs and thus in this context, create power. This idea is central to the focus on the moving image in the world of advertising. It is also related to the idea that we are now living in a "society of the spectacle" rather than an "information society" or "knowledge society". For example, electoral campaigns and product campaigns are increasingly won and lost at the level of myths and "subjective knowledge" rather than scientific truths and "objective knowledge".

Guy Debord in his 1967 work, *La société du spectacle* (English translation: *Society of the Spectacle*) quotes Feuerbach:

"But for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, appearance to essence, ...truth is considered profane, and only illusion is sacred. Sacredness is in fact held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be seen as the highest degree of sacredness." (Feuerbach, 1881, p. xiii)

In his subsequent analysis, Debord argues that:

The spectacle cannot be understood as a mere visual excess produced by mass-media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialized, that has become an objective reality. Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the result and the project of the present mode of production. It is not a mere supplement or decoration added to the real world, it is the heart of this real society's unreality. In all of its particular manifestations – news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment – the spectacle is the model of the prevailing way of life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choices that have already been made in the sphere of production and in the consumption implied by that production. In both form and content the spectacle serves as a total justification of the conditions and goals of the existing system. The spectacle is also the constant presence of this justification since it monopolizes the majority of the time spent outside the modern production process<sup>28</sup>.

Regardless as to whether we accept Debord's Marxist-inspired analysis of modern society, including his comment that "The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes images" (Debord, 1984, ch.1), it is undeniable that the moving image plays a key role in shaping our beliefs about the world.

This capacity has often led to criticism of cinema from many quarters. For example at various moments in time, the Church has been severely critical of cinema's power to shape beliefs in society.

One of the most recent examples came at the time of the release of *Avatar*. The Vatican actually praised many of the elements of *Avatar*, in particular its visual prowess, but nonetheless criticized its embracing of ecology as the "religion of the millennium":

"Pandora is a planet which flashes before our eyes all the pseudo-doctrines which have made ecology the religion of the millennium. Nature is no longer a Creation to be defended, but a divinity to be adored, while transcendence is emptied by incarnating itself in a plant and in its white vines which nourish spirits, branching off into real pantheism. Avatar seems harmless, and certainly is not the first to propagate the eco-spiritualist tendencies shown through the beauty of the planet Pandora; tendencies born in the Age of Aquarius and seemingly confirmed only in 2154, the year in which the story takes place."<sup>29</sup>

### **Sounds and images as rallying points**

Certain sounds and images can acquire an iconic importance as rallying points, both within communities and within the structuring of our own consciousness. Classic examples of this phenomenon include the national flag and the national anthem. Most national flags constitute a simple combination of colours, which in certain cases may also include a symbol. Over time this image assumes a central importance as a rallying point for our emotions – particularly evident in times of war, sports events or certain political events or moments such as royal marriages, in the case of the UK. For those with patriotic

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<sup>28</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/1.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://decentfilms.com/blog/avatar-vatican>

sentiments a flag will stir positive emotions. The national anthem operates in a similar way, wherein the music plays a particularly powerful role complemented by the lyrics. Music is known for having this capacity to trigger and locate emotions, acting as a bridge between different moments in time. When we hear certain pieces of music it stirs a gamut of associated emotions.

A similar process occurs in the case of brands. A company logo, such as the Nike upward tick or the Mercedes tri-divided circle, also becomes a rallying point for emotions. People want to wear brand name clothing because of this phenomenon.

In the political sphere, certain images can also acquire this iconic value, often complemented by power words, such as Barack Obama's "Hope" image. A small set of key power words can also serve as rallying points for political, commercial or social movements, wherein the reach of these words is expanded through this capacity to bring people and emotions together. One example is the use of slogans such as Nike's "Just do it" or political slogans such as "Change". Recent examples include the #metoo campaign.

At the level of our individual consciousness, we latch on to certain images that anchor our view of the world. This idea is explored in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* in which a man has a single powerful image of a woman, from the time before a global Armageddon. This image serves as a bridging point to the past, which enables him to travel back into time and meet the woman.

*La Jetée* has certain links with Hitchcock's *Vertigo (1958)*. In the latter, the painting of Carlotta is a key anchor point for the narrative, wherein Kim Novak, as Madeleine, appears to be the spitting image of Carlotta.

Use of photos as rallying points include the widespread use of photos of political leaders in schools and public institutions, which is a classic characteristic of authoritarian regime, or of monarchs in certain monarchies.

In the Catholic Church images/statues, such as statues of the Virgin Mary, also serve as rallying points, used in processions and pilgrimages. Indeed, some religious traditions ban the use of images. In Muslim countries, especially Sunni countries, Aniconism means that the depiction of all humans and non-human animals is discouraged in the hadith and by the long tradition of Islamic authorities.

## **Cinema as a New Form of Writing**

The capacity to capture still and moving images and then reproduce them *en masse* has changed the modern world and been massively amplified by digital media.

Obviously this subject has been amply discussed over the decades, but in the context of this thesis I would like to focus on certain core aspects, beginning with analysis of the single image and then focusing on how montage creates meaning.

The capacity to communicate via moving images opened up a new world, ushering in a spirit of revolution that was seen as a threat by established powers and as a major opportunity for those who wished to forge significant social change.

Marx had written about how technological inventions can usher in social change, but died (in 1883) before the advent of key inventions that have shaped the modern world, starting with electricity and also including the mass circulation of photographs and the invention of the film camera.

Whereas during the print era, access to knowledge was essentially limited to those who could read, the “audiovisual era” suddenly unleashed a form of communication that could communicate to the masses including the illiterate.

In 1900, 78.6% of the world’s population was illiterate (compared to 14.7% today). In the most industrialised countries, such as the US and the UK, illiteracy had been largely eradicated, but even there, the moving images of the cinema cast an attraction on the mass population that the printed word couldn’t compete with. In many other countries, such as Russia, Italy, Spain and Portugal, illiteracy levels were well over half of the population in 1900.

In addition to the “shining” attraction of this new form of “writing”, based on light and movement, which continues to captivate us today, the ability to move beyond the barrier of text-based literacy, made the cinema a kind of “friend of the people” which was completely different from the printed word, which at the time was viewed as the domain of the elite.

Popular film stars such as Charlie Chaplin capitalised on this universal appeal and epitomised the dreams of the poor man who has just as much a right to “nobility” as anyone else.

From the early 1900s through to the middle of the twentieth century, the cinema assumed a central place in society and modern communication. Talking pictures further reinforced this power from 1927 onwards.

Radio and television broadcasting began experimentally in the 1920s. Radio became a mass medium in the 1930s and television began to be rolled out from the late 1940s. In the West, this occurred first in the United States and United Kingdom and then in continental Europe. Broadcasting enabled a far more extensive circulation of sound and images than had been possible solely through the film industry, thus amplifying the impact of this new form of “writing” based on light and movement.

The capacity to “write” with images, fascinated early filmmakers. One of the early examples was the film theorists working in Russia, many linked to the world’s first film school – VGIK, set up in Moscow in 1919.

Dziga Vertov demonstrated this fascination with the film camera, in his famous 1929 film *Man with a Movie Camera*, and in his writings, compiled in the book *Kino Eye* (Vertov, 1985). One of the key things that fascinated Vertov was precisely the capacity to communicate without the need for words, and in a manner that could access the worlds of reality and fantasy in a manner that had previously been impossible.

Film captured the imagination of filmmakers around the world, whether Chaplin in Hollywood, Abel Gance in France or Leni Riefenstahl in Nazi Germany. Perhaps ironically this same sense of enthusiasm is sensed today amongst “YouTubers” around the world who suddenly have the power to shoot and share photos and videos using digital technology they carry with them on a daily basis.

In the early decades of the twentieth century this new form of “writing” divided opinions and within both literary, artistic and educated circles it was unclear how such writing should be viewed.

One aspect of Alexandre’s Astruc’s theory of the Camera-Stylo was the identification of the “auteur” or author who originates the moving images, thus serving as a key text for auteur theory, which has divided opinions ever since. Astruc states that: “a Descartes of today would already have shut himself up in his bedroom with a 16mm camera and some film, and would be writing his philosophy on film: for his *Discours de la Méthode* would today be of such a kind that only the cinema could express it satisfactorily.” (Astruc, 1948, article)

Truffaut, in his seminal 1953 text, “A certain tendency of French cinema” built on these ideas. Once again, one of the main conclusions drawn from this text has been defence for the auteur theory and the idea that the director is the key creative force in any film. But equally important is Truffaut’s focus on this new form of writing, which is not fully understood by “men of letters”:

Aurenche and Bost are basically men of letters, and my criticism of them here is that they look down on the cinema because they undervalue it. They approach scripts the way people do when they think they can rehabilitate a delinquent by finding him or her a job; they always believe they have done 'all they can' for a script by embellishing it with subtleties, with the art of nuance that is the tenuous merit of the modern novel. One of the major failings of those who attempt to explain what the cinema is about is that they believe they are doing it a service by using literary jargon. (Truffaut, 1954, article)

It is even possible to embrace this idea of a new form of writing without necessarily adopting the idea that the director is the key creative force in any film. For example, one could assume that filmmaking



is a collective endeavour, i.e. a form of collective “writing”, but which is distinct from communication based on the written word, which is the classic form of “authorship”.

Truffaut argued against the idea that the scriptwriters were the authors of a film, and emphasised the role of the director. But these ideas could be pushed much further. In the case of the written word, it is far more obvious that there is a single author who produces the “text”. In the case of a compilation of texts there are multiple authors, but each author is responsible for his portion of the text.

However, in this new form of “writing” - writing with sound and image – there are very valid arguments for claiming that the authorship is shared, in a manner that is inconceivable with the written word.

The resulting “text” or film, is a shared creative work, that is written in a manner which is completely different from word-based texts.

The role of a director as a central coordinator may still be vital for production of the final text, but there are clear grounds for shared authorship at multiple levels, starting with the fact that a film is typically a fusion of music and performance and therefore inevitably involves multiple creative inputs that is simply not the case in texts based on the written word. This new form of writing also raises questions on how such expertise can be taught and also evaluated.

In the case of film education this has typically meant a far greater emphasis on practical understanding of the medium, rather than purely academic knowledge of the field. For example, a traditional PhD is essentially a word-based text, but if possession of a PhD is defined as the principal prerequisite for being able to teach film, this constrains teaching about this form of writing using sound and image, to people who have produced word-based texts which may well have missed some critical dimensions of the original “writing”.

## **Visual Literacy**

Theorists have analysed the extent to which we can identify visual communication as a language, with its own grammar. This requires analysis of how single shots – whether fixed or moving images – achieve their communication power, which is one of the building blocks of this visual language, and then how montage then shapes the final meaning conveyed by these elements. Ultimately this is related to questions of “literacy” and “reading” and “writing” via visual communication.

It has become commonplace to talk about digital literacy, which is related to the capacity to use digital tools. But there is a distinct form of literacy related to sound and images. Modern viewers actually have a high level of literacy in terms of being able to “read” sound and images, in terms of understanding

the visual and aural codes underpinning photos, films, music, sound or videos. However, few people have a conscious understanding of these codes or can verbalise them, and in this sense the level of literacy has significant limitations – our awareness of the world is impacted by sound and image but most people don't have the capacity to filter this impact or understand how it is exercising its influence.

In terms of being able to “write” with sound and images, our level of proficiency is fairly low, especially when it comes to video. Although most people can distinguish between an amateur or professional video, for example, few people know how to produce professional videos and therefore their communication capacity is limited in this vital field of modern communication.

In the case of fixed images, most people can take at least a reasonable photo and share it with families and friends. This is typically achieved instinctively, without understanding of any visual codes, but the basic literacy requirements of being able to “write” using fixed images is satisfied. One of the issues at stake is how to learn to be a “good writer” using sound and images. There are no easy guarantees to achieve this.

Given that western societies have achieved virtually 100% levels of text-based literacy, the vast majority of people can read and write. Only a small number of people are what we might call “great writers” but many people have a high level of writing proficiency in terms of text-based communication. When it comes to audiovisual literacy, the situation is very different. It is fair to say that the majority of people with academic qualifications, whether at an undergraduate, master's or doctoral level, are unable to “write” with sound and image. Even in the field of visual studies it is perfectly possible to have a PhD without necessarily being able to “write” effectively or elegantly using these media.

The skillset associated with sound-and-image literacy is distinct from text-based literacy and needs to be analysed using a different approach.

### **New Opportunities offered by the Internet**

In the midst of talk about the demise of cinema it is easy to overlook the enthusiasm that this new medium generated when it was invented at the end of the nineteenth century and also the enthusiasm that it is currently creating as a result of democratisation of filmmaking techniques and the possibility that anyone can distribute their films to a worldwide audience via the Internet.

While certain areas have become more institutionalised and formulaic, for the reasons explained above, the Internet offers an outlet for original, edgy films. Newcomers to the business such as Netflix have also focused on new original content because they have found that audiences like it and also because they have sometimes encountered obstacles in accessing content from the incumbent players.

This situation has certain parallels with the music business in the 1960s when they took chances on new talents and in the 1970s when punk bands and garage bands carved out a new market in defiance of the super rock bands installed at the time.

Frank Zappa recalls this adventuring spirit which has parallels with the Internet world in particular:

“They really weren't that great those years but one thing that did happen during the 1960s was some music of an unusual or experimental nature did get recorded it did get released. Now look at who the executives were in those companies at those times. Not hip young guys. These were cigar-chomping old guys who looked at the product that came and said “I don't know. Who knows what it is. Record it stick it out. We were better off with those guys than we are now with the supposedly hip young executives you know who are making the decisions of what people should see and hear in the marketplace. The young guys are more conservative and more dangerous to the art form than the old guys with the cigars ever were (...) The day you get rid of that attitude and get back to who knows? Take a chance, let the entrepreneurial spirit work even if you don't like or understand what the record is. The person who is in the executive chair may not be the final arbiter of taste of the entire population you know.”<sup>30</sup>

The spirit of excitement generated by the moving images in the early years of cinema is evident in the films of Lumière and Méliès and is particularly well captured by Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera* which shows the excitement and innovation of both the filmmaker and the audience, who enter the cinema as if entering a palace of dreams.

This excitement with filmmaking is also found in the Nouvelle Vague films and in a film such as Jim McBride's *David Holzman's Diary*. The same excitement is evident in many YouTubers, and in general people enjoy sharing still photos and videos online, in particular via platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.

A filmmaker like Casey Neistat epitomises that enthusiasm and captures it in a video such as *Do what you can't*<sup>31</sup>. This phrase was also the slogan adopted by Samsung, and he was being paid as their brand ambassador.

The same concept was used in Samsung's Oscar commercial<sup>32</sup> and in Samsung's promotional video<sup>33</sup>. It also inspired the Mexican video: *Cuando te digan que no puedes, hazlo!*<sup>34</sup>.

Cinema immediately caught people's imagination precisely for this reason –because films give people the chance to see (and hear) things that would otherwise be unavailable and due to the sensorial dimension of film give the impression of “doing things” that people otherwise couldn't do.

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<sup>30</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M\\_91\\_HWK8o&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M_91_HWK8o&feature=youtu.be)

<sup>31</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG7dSXcfVqE&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>32</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX5mtNHRiA0&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>33</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/L3N1jeBp7H8>

<sup>34</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://youtu.be/hliYoE3CU\\_s](https://youtu.be/hliYoE3CU_s)

One of the main criticisms of the film experience is that creates fake sensations which can distance people from the real world, but the line of reasoning defended by Hanaway-Oakley (2017) that compares cinema to the blind man's stick, suggests the opposite idea. This is all the more important given the decisive impact of the invention of recorded sound and images, that began in the nineteenth century, and which has now been democratised as a result of the digital revolution.

This invention is having as profound consequences on society as the invention of the printing press and even the invention of writing itself, which I will consider before continuing the discussion on how cinema was perceived following its invention.

Discussion of the criticism of cinema as a form of fake experience will be addressed later in this thesis, in which I will refer to the foundations for this question provided by Plato. But at this stage it's interesting to recall what Plato had to say about the original invention of writing and how it changed human experience. He says in the *Phaedrus*:

At the Egyptian city of Naucratis, there was a famous old god, whose name was Theuth; the bird which is called the Ibis is sacred to him, and he was the inventor of many arts, such as arithmetic and calculation and geometry and astronomy and draughts and dice, but his great discovery was the use of letters. Now in those days the god Thamus was the king of the whole country of Egypt; and he dwelt in that great city of Upper Egypt which the Hellenes call Egyptian Thebes, and the god himself is called by them Ammon. To him came Theuth and showed his inventions, desiring that the other Egyptians might be allowed to have the benefit of them; he enumerated them, and Thamus enquired about their several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online text)

In relation to recorded images there are certain parallels that may be drawn in terms of the risks of "forgetfulness in the learner's souls", indeed Socrates continues by comparing the written word to the images produced by a painter: "if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer." (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online text).

However given that the recorded image is closer to direct sensory experience than writing the reverse conclusion, using the blind man's stick metaphor can also be drawn.

Socrates defended the power of the spoken word rather than the written word, as Marshall McLuhan notes in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. To be recognised as an “Auctor” or a figure of authority in society, such as a doctor in a university, depends on the spoken word rather than the drier “written word”:

McLuhan refers to the term “*auctor*” quoting Huizinga, before adding his own observations:

In the Middle Ages everyone liked to base a serious argument on a text, so as to give it a foundation”. But the “text” was felt to be the immediate voice of an *auctor*, and was authoritative in an oral way. We shall see that with the advent of printing the feeling of authority is completely confused by the intermingling of the old oral and the new visual organisation of knowledge. (McLuhan, 1962, p.104)

### **Sensorial impact of communication technologies**

McLuhan devoted much of his writing to the theme of understanding how communication techniques and technologies can shape society. Firstly he analyses how the invention of writing and the alphabet radically transformed cultures, creating the scribal man or alphabetic man, and then how the invention of the printing press created what he calls the “typographic man”. One of McLuhan’s main interests is how technology extends and alters the senses. He begins by focusing on the impact of the invention of the alphabet. Referring to the ideas of Carothers he states that:

His great contribution has been to point to the breaking apart of the magical world of the ear and the neutral world of the eye, and to the emergence of the detribalized individual from this split. It follows, of course, that literate man, when we meet him in the Greek world, is a split man, a schizophrenic, as all literate men have been since the invention of the phonetic alphabet. Mere writing, however, has not the peculiar power of the phonetic technology to detribalize man. Given the phonetic alphabet with its abstraction of meaning from sound and the translation of sound into a visual code, and men were at grips with an experience that transformed them. No pictographic or ideogrammic or hieroglyphic mode of writing has the detribalizing power of the phonetic alphabet. No other kind of writing save the phonetic has ever translated man out of the possessive world of total interdependence and interrelation that is the auditory network. From that magical resonating world of simultaneous relations that is the oral and acoustic space there is only one route to the freedom and independence of detribalized man. That route is via the phonetic alphabet, which lands men at once in varying degrees of dualistic schizophrenia. (McLuhan, 1962, p.22).

This is directly linked to the idea of the two traditions of the rational path and the poetic path defended in this thesis.

McLuhan emphasised the reluctance during Antiquity to relinquish the power of oral culture: “Socrates stood on the border between that oral world and the visual and literate culture. But he wrote nothing. The Middle Ages regarded Plato as the mere scribe or amanuensis of Socrates. And Aquinas considered that neither Socrates nor Our Lord committed their teaching to writing because the kind of interplay of minds that is in teaching is not possible by means of writing” (McLuhan, 1962, p.23).

McLuhan emphasises how first writing and then invention of the printing press created the new typographic man which formed the basis for emergence of a powerful middle class, which evolved from the scribe class and used the discourse of Reason to leverage its power.

He argues that the invention of recorded sound and image, linked to electromagnetic forms of communication, coincided with the movements of Romanticism that challenged this world view based on the power of Reason:

“What began as a "Romantic reaction" towards organic wholeness may or may not have hastened the discovery of electromagnetic waves. But certainly the electro-magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous "field" in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a "global village." We live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums. So that concern with the "primitive" today is as banal as nineteenth-century concern with "progress," and as irrelevant to our problems” (McLuhan, 1962, p.31).

McLuhan states that although the new electromagnetic media have the possibility of recovering for the Western world “a unity of sensibility and of thought and feeling we have no more been prepared to accept the tribal consequences of such unity than we were ready for the fragmentation of the human psyche by print culture.” (McLuhan, 1962, p.63). He then suggests that the Greeks were alienated from primitive art but that the electronic age has now reinvented this link “after interiorizing the unified field of electric all-at-onceness” (McLuhan, 1962, p.63). McLuhan adds that oral speech uses all our senses at once and that electronic communication can recover this all-at-onceness. But cautions that Hollywood tends to turn the spectacle of the external world into a consumer commodity or package, just as typography tends to alter language “from a means of perception and exploration to a portable commodity” (McLuhan, 1962, p.161).

Elizabeth Eisenstein in her two-volume work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, re-issued with a new essay as *The printing revolution in early modern Europe* (Eisenstein, 2005), furthered McLuhan’s analysis of the impact of the print revolution in the fifteenth-century.

One of the initial consequences of the print revolution was to alter the relationship based on scribal culture between the small literate elite, whose culture and thoughts were recorded in writing, and the vast majority of the people of Western Europe, whose world-view remained within the realm of unwritten “popular culture.”

Over time the print culture disseminated knowledge, and consequently power, beyond the small literate elite, initially towards the middle classes. Literacy, i.e. reading and writing, made possible by the more widespread circulation of printed documents provided new power to the rising middle classes.

Eisenstein suggests that both the lay aristocrats and commoners shared a distaste for Latin pedantry, and that the growing middle classes used print culture to reinforce their position in society.

She nonetheless emphasises caution in interpreting these broad trends. In particular she challenges the idea that print media led to a migration away from images towards words:

If we accept the idea of a movement from image to word, furthermore, we will be somewhat at a loss to account for the work of Northern artists, such as Durer or Cranach or Holbein, who were affiliated with Protestantism and yet owed much to print. As Durer's career may suggest, the new arts of printing and engraving, far from reducing the importance of images, increased opportunities for image makers and helped to launch art history down its present path. (Eisenstein, 2005, p.40).

She continues:

the ancient memory images reentered the imagination of Protestant children, ultimately supplying Jung and his followers with evidence that suggested the hypothesis of a collective unconscious. Surely the new vogue for image-packed emblem books was no less a product of sixteenth-century print culture than was the imageless "Ramist" textbook.

Furthermore, in certain fields of learning, such as architecture, geometry, or geography, and many of the life sciences as well, print culture was not merely incompatible with the formula offered above; it actually increased the functions performed by images while reducing those performed by words. Many fundamental texts of Ptolemy, Vitruvius, Galen, and other ancients had lost their illustrations in the course of being copied for centuries and regained them only after script was replaced by print. To think in terms of a movement going from image to word points technical literature in the wrong direction. It was not the "printed word" but the "printed image" which acted as a "savior for Western science" in George Sarton's view...After the advent of printing, visual aids multiplied; signs and symbols were codified; different kinds of iconographic and nonphonetic communication were rapidly developed (Eisenstein, 2005, p.42).

Eisenstein underlines the fact that the impact of the invention of the printing press on social change had tended to be underestimated.

Marx mentioned the importance of the printing press, in a letter to Friedrich Engels in which he said that "the discoveries of gunpowder, the compass, and the printing press" were the "necessary preconditions of bourgeois development"<sup>35</sup>. However he did not expand on this issue.

Engels wrote a poem, "On the Invention of Printing"<sup>36</sup> in 1840. He begins by emphasising the importance of the invention of writing:

“Were you not a God, you who once found  
Body for Thought, for Word,  
Fixing in signs the life of speech that would  
Have otherwise flown off, by no ties bound?  
Without you, Time had gone,  
Still self-consuming, sinking, dying, down,  
Buried forever in oblivion.”

He concludes:

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<sup>35</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/time/miscellany/karl-marx-clock-and-mill>

<sup>36</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1840/04/printing.htm>

the whole Earth gives thanks to Gutenberg.  
For such beneficence, a modest prize!  
Hail to the one who broke the insensate power  
Of battering violence; raised the might of Reason,  
The strength of soul, high o'er the world to fly!

This utopian value of the printing press, to which writers such as McLuhan provide certain caveats, were repeated in the early years after the invention of cinema and have now been amplified in the digital era.

Stephen Apkon addresses these issues in *The Age of the Image* (Apkon, 2014) which includes a preface by Martin Scorsese. The latter writes about the “strange antagonism between literature and film” (Apkon, 2014, xii) which is linked to the tension between the print culture and visual culture. “Movies were dismissed and vilified within the world of high culture – theatre and the novel were superior art forms, while cinema was a toy, a diversion that “left nothing to the imagination” It was “frivolous” while all the other arts were “serious” – in fact it wasn’t an art at all because it was “collaborative”. The image was ephemeral but the word was forever.” (Apkon, 2014, xii).

Scorsese underlines the importance of filmmakers such as Bergman, Pasolini, Antonioni and recognising Hollywood masters such as John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock in creating a new legitimacy for cinema: “We take this for granted now, but half a century ago it was brand new – not to mention extremely threatening to the people who didn’t get it.” (Apkon, 2014, xiii).

Given the omnipresent nature of moving images in today’s world, often shot by nonprofessionals with mobile phones means that the “need for visual literacy has only become more urgent. In fact it has become necessary”.

Peter Wollen already made this point in 1969 in “Signs and Meaning in the Cinema” where he wrote:

“we all believe that the mass media play a crucial role in our society. We all believe that it is important to understand the operation of visual images. All of these things have been reiterated time and time again (...) At the root of the trouble, I think, is the strange disproportion that there is between the arts throughout the education system. Literature has an overwhelming preponderance. Painting is quite strong. Music is weak. Cinema is almost non-existent. Moreover, literary criticism as well as being privileged is also parochial. Very few literary critics see the problem of “literariness” as part of the broader problem of “art-ness” or conceive of novels and poems as being of the same order as sculptures or symphonies.” (Wollen, 2013, pp 200-201)

Of course this outlook dates back to Plato’s *The Republic*, as has been mentioned and will be discussed later herein.

The education system is the largest single force in terms of determining cultural hegemony of ideas and is highly focused on the power of the number and the word, to the detriment of the image.



Even “media literacy” courses focus primarily on information-related issues rather than visual literacy.

## **Visual Storytelling**

Beyond questions of lighting, composition, types of montage cuts etc, there is a basic question of the visual style of the film and the extent to which the film can communicate without the need for dialogue, voiceover or text. For example, Godard emphasised the admiration felt by many auteurs of the power of silent cinema to communicate without the need for dialogue. He said that actress Anna Karina “is like one of the great actresses from the silent cinema era, that is to say someone who knows how to speak without us understanding, and yet we understand everything”<sup>37</sup>.

Many current forms of audiovisual communication actually depend on text-based devices. For example, TV news bulletins are essentially structured around the voiceover and the images are used to illustrate the text, which has been described as wallpapering. In certain cases there may be an inner tension between the text and the images and other sounds. Soap operas, telenovelas and the majority of sit-coms are primarily dialogue-driven. They are shot with multi-camera with high-key lighting and typically highly standardised shots, a kind of simplified version of the Hollywood canon (see Bordwell and Thomson, 2008). These forms of dialogue-driven fiction find it very difficult to travel beyond their linguistic zones.

American dialogue-driven fiction is perhaps better able to travel than that in other languages, but even then the shows that tend to travel involve strong elements of visual drama or visual humour, which complements the core dialogue.

The capacity to convey the narrative without the need for dialogue is one of the main characteristics of the cinematic spirit and is conveyed through the Hollywood adage: “show don’t tell”. This is a challenge when it comes to screenwriting, since writers often tend to focus on the dialogue rather than the visual action, and people reading scripts also often latch onto the dialogue rather than the rest.

Film sequences which are often cited as great examples of visual storytelling include *Psycho’s* (1960) shower scene, *The Godfather’s* baptism sequence, the opening scene to *City of God* (2002) or *Dressed to Kill’s* (1980) museum scene. TV series often cited as great examples of visual storytelling techniques include *Breaking Bad* and *Game of Thrones*. Many short videos that are viral hits on YouTube or Vimeo are excellent examples of visual storytelling. Videos that come to mind include Matty Brown’s

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<sup>37</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzR\\_t9kxgmE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzR_t9kxgmE)

*Look up at the Stars!*<sup>38</sup> and Leonardo Dalessandri's *Watchtower of Turkey*<sup>39</sup>. YouTubers such as Casey Neistat and Devin Graham (aka Devin Supertramp) are also excellent visual storytellers.

### **First-person view and moving camera**

If we view film as an out-of-body-experience (see below), the sequence of shots that the director shows us is a core element of the narration of the film. In a novel we can have first-person or third-person narration or jump between the two.

In a film, the choice of shots and their sequence is the vision of the filmmaker/narrator and carries us through the story. One moment we are next to a character, looking over their shoulder, in the next moment we may see their point-of-view.

We have become so accustomed to the classical canon of filmmaking (Bordwell and Thomson, 2008) and which continues to be used in many feature films and TV fiction, that it has almost become invisible and is taken for granted when we watch a film. For this reason, approaches that diverge from the classical canon may awaken our perceptions and make us more aware of the action and also the artifice of the filmic construction. The New Wave movements achieved this to great effect.

Certain TV series are also more inventive in terms of their filmmaking style, including examples of quadrant framing and framing in violation of the rule-of-thirds in series such as *Mr. Robot (2015)*. Linked to the desire to create a visceral impact in the audience is increasing use of moving camera and first-person view shots.

The Hollywood canon was based primarily on fixed camera positions, mounted on tripods, and continuity editing to move around the scene. Today's feature films are heavily dependent upon steadycam, crane shots, helicopter and drone shots, and special effects, which give us the sensation of constantly flying through the film. The classic Hollywood canon is now found more in TV series than in many feature films, which feature constant movement.

Constant camera movement creates a sensation of first-person view, which is distinct from point-of-view shots. Video games have also fostered the desire for first-person view. In many video games we may see our character in front of us, for example the shapely curves of Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider*, but we move with him or her, we have a first-person view by following the character. The same technique is used in modern feature films.

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<sup>38</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN-ealgiZKo>

<sup>39</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7yqtW4Isec>

Point-of-view shots and mind's eye shots and sequences are also used more frequently in feature films, as part of the director's attempt to such the audience into the film. Given that audiences have become used to these techniques watching films using more fixed camera positions is immediately associated with television.

## Visual Effects

The visual effects business has transformed the film industry over recent decades. As part of the thrill of out-of-body experiences, visual effects can create visual journeys that audiences normally would not be able to experience. We can travel into outer space, see worlds being destroyed, or have a first-person view of a car crash.

The shift in Hollywood production away from genres such as romance and drama to fantasy, superhero and science fiction has been partly driven by the visual effects business and the audience's desire for new visual sensations. 3D and Imax have further powered these developments.

But visual effects can also be used in drama films – such as *Titanic (1997)* or *The Life of Pi (2012)* and inclusively in auteur films, including examples such as Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac (2013)*, Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void (2009)* and Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone (2012)*.

The capacity of visual effects to extend the audience's experiences is one of the key attractions of modern cinema. High-end TV drama also uses visual effects but at a more limited level due to budget constraints.

Visual effects have been criticised by some as creating superficial spectacles, but many visual effects creators believe that it opens up new possibilities to explore non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious – notable examples include Pierre Buffin of Buf Filmes and Julien Meesters of Mikros Images, both of whom I interviewed for *Variety*.

Buffin talked about his project based on Georges Bataille's 1928 erotic tale *The Story of the Eye*: “I loved the book as a child, because it explores the domain of dreams. It's an opportunity to produce images that will take viewers by surprise and generate emotional shock.”<sup>40</sup> Buffin concluded: “I'm an explorer of images. I built the boats that enabled us to sail into uncharted waters.”<sup>41</sup>

Meesters says that he's particularly interested in using VFX to explore dream sequences and the workings of the human mind, and cited his work on the “crazy sequence” inside Charlie Kaufman's mind

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<sup>40</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2014/film/features/buf-at-30-raising-new-sails-for-a-bold-voyage-1201136914/>

<sup>41</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2014/film/features/buf-at-30-raising-new-sails-for-a-bold-voyage-1201136914/>

in Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (2002): "Some of our directors are exploring new kinds of movies. We are delivering more and more distinctive feature film projects and working with new clients who want to explore new territories"<sup>42</sup>.

### **Aspirational stories**

In addition to the possibility of visiting unknown worlds and accessing unknown experiences, another key attraction of film is the aspirational dimension – i.e. the possibility to mingle in universes that are otherwise inaccessible. This possibility also triggers visceral and unconscious pleasures and has been one of the hallmarks of audiovisual communication since the birth of cinema.

Films with an aspirational dimension typically involve at least one character from an "ordinary" background and this may help us empathise with the universe we are being shown. Alternatively, the main characters may be shown as prisoners within their own worlds – so constrained by social convention that we can empathise with their plight.

Portuguese - and Spanish - language telenovelas typically involve an aspirational dimension, frequently featuring large houses used by some of the main characters, which are often contrasted with more humble dwellings of some of the other characters.

Many TV series also feature universes that are unavailable to most viewers – whether rural or aristocratic worlds in series such as *The Crown* (2016) or *Downton Abbey* or the worlds of rich, bright, young things in series such as *Gossip Girl* (2007) or *90210* (2008). Even more "humble" settings, in series such as *How I Met Your Mother* (2005), *Big Bang Theory* (2007) or *Friends* (1994) end up being aspirational for many viewers.

### **Iconic images**

It is precisely the power of images which has led them to be used as the basis for myths. The image may be interpreted as a copy of the world, but it may also serve as a gateway to a wider understanding of the world.

Images that are used in religious systems to portray this wider understanding of the world are known as icons, whose etymology derives from the Greek eikōn ("likeness, image, portrait") from eikenai, to be like, seem. The depiction via an icon, of a/the deity, has been viewed from different perspectives in different belief systems, being prohibited by some and permitted by others.

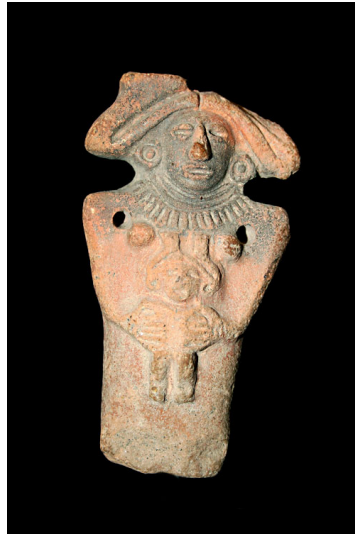
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<sup>42</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2016/film/global/mikros-image-developing-asterix-movie-1201690722/>

Icons have been found throughout history, including religious icons, cultural icons and fashion icons. In the case of a religious icon, the image itself is considered to be sacred and to have an aura. Examples include paintings and statues, both known as images.

Religion is one of the oldest sources of certain recurrent icons that correspond to certain archetypes. One of the most classic archetypes is the mother and child icon/archetype which is linked to the principle of the caregiver.

This visual archetype is found in multiple context, from pre-history to the contemporary era:



*Figure 2 Mayan Terracotta figure of Mother with Child*<sup>43</sup>



*Figure 3 Pottery sculpture – breastfeeding*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.antiques.com/vendor\\_item\\_images/ori\\_1805345207\\_1097631\\_Mayan\\_Terracotta\\_Figure\\_of\\_a\\_Mother\\_and\\_Child\\_-\\_GDC.038.jpg](http://www.antiques.com/vendor_item_images/ori_1805345207_1097631_Mayan_Terracotta_Figure_of_a_Mother_and_Child_-_GDC.038.jpg)

<sup>44</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/1d/a4/0c/1da40c2a8b42f49b1d3b1e51d5d412f6-pottery-sculpture-breastfeeding.jpg>



Figure 4 Life Magazine Times Square Kiss <sup>45</sup>



Figure 5 Robert Doisneau – Kiss in Paris <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2016/09/10/22/times-square-kiss.jpg>

<sup>46</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/04/14/article-2129634-0038BFA400000258-59\\_964x868.jpg](https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/04/14/article-2129634-0038BFA400000258-59_964x868.jpg)

Certain images have power because they are related to key moments in the human journey, such as passing through thresholds, that can be classified as “Paradise Found”, “Paradise Lost”, “Paradise Betrayed”, and “In Search of Paradise”. The key moments of passing thresholds within life journeys can be particularly propitious for images that we retain as constituting decisive, defining moments. Given that images such as photographs, paintings or sculptures are manmade we interpret them as being seen through human eyes, we “humanise” the image in this sense.

We can divide moving images, photographs and paintings into broad categories such as landscapes, portraits and still lifes. But even in the event of a landscape without any human presence, we tend to interpret it as something that we could see, we humanise it in this sense.

Portraits may be of people, but also of animals and of objects that seem to be endowed with character. Once again we “humanise” all these images. If we look at certain classic or iconic images for example, we can see how these are related to crossing thresholds, journeys and the search for paradise. For example, there are images of finding/expressing love/tenderness/support in the midst of the hustle and bustle of everyday life (Paradise Found), for example:

*Figure 6 – Vancouver riot – kiss<sup>47</sup>*



This basic idea has also been used in advertising campaigns such as the Benetton “Unhate” campaign:

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<sup>47</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/commercial/2011/6/17/1308266116195/Vancouver-riot-kiss-coupl-001.jpg>



Figure 7 – Benetton UnHate campaign <sup>48</sup>

Another set of images are related to a different type of journey, escaping from the horror of war, conflict, disaster or emergencies, often featuring children to reinforce the power of this moment, which can be simplified for the purposes of this argument as “Paradise Lost”.



Figure 8 – Vietnam – Napalm bombing <sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://images3.naharnet.com/images/20128/w460.jpg?1321461479>

<sup>49</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-cEvCQjIESQA/T-bsTEyaTil/AAAAAAAAARE/9vjao8P2iQs/s1600/Napalm+girl++Pulitzer+Prize++Kim+Phuc.png>





Figure 9 – Syria – boy in ambulance<sup>50</sup>

In fiction films we also find similar images, such as the girl in a red coat in *Schindler's List* (1993):



Figure 10 – Girl in red coat in *Schindler's List*<sup>51</sup>

A more intense form of Paradise Lost is where we see death in the middle of life's journey, contrasted with the apparent oblivion, or callousness of others. The impact is greater when children or young people appear in the image.

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<sup>50</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://media4.s-nbcnews.com/i/newscms/2016\\_33/1151721/omran-dagneesh-syrian-boy-rescued-today-160818-tease\\_5e473fa6ca86912cc7ef9596844cb6ca.jpg](https://media4.s-nbcnews.com/i/newscms/2016_33/1151721/omran-dagneesh-syrian-boy-rescued-today-160818-tease_5e473fa6ca86912cc7ef9596844cb6ca.jpg)

<sup>51</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://i.huffpost.com/gen/1021359/images/o-SCHINDLERS-LIST-RED-COAT-GIRL-facebook.jpg>



*Figure 11 – Girl at US border<sup>52</sup>*



*Figure12 – Syrian migrant boy drowned<sup>53</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://imgix.bustle.com/uploads/getty/2018/6/16/9a58e0a6-e4ce-4c8e-bc5d-fad53af213d9-getty-973077510.jpg?w=1200&h=630&q=70&fit=crop&crop=faces&fm=jpg>

<sup>53</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/styles/story\\_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2015/09/02/13/syrian-migrant-boy-turkey.jpg](http://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/styles/story_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2015/09/02/13/syrian-migrant-boy-turkey.jpg)



*Figure 13 – Lynching mob<sup>54</sup>*

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<sup>54</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://cdn-images-1.medium.com/max/1200/0\\*4RRy9AEz34wtiNCK](https://cdn-images-1.medium.com/max/1200/0*4RRy9AEz34wtiNCK).

At the other end of the spectrum we can find landscape images that convey the idea of “paradise found”, such as photos by Ansel Adams



*Figure 14 Ansel Adams – Snaking river against mountains*<sup>55</sup>



*Figure 15 Sebastião Salgado – The Genesis Project*<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.archives.gov/files/press/press-kits/picturing-the-century-photos/tetons-snake-river.jpg>

<sup>56</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://s3.amazonaws.com/bwcolor/article\\_photos/large/184/1%29\\_Macaroni\\_Penguins\\_on\\_Zavodovski\\_Island\\_The\\_Sandwich\\_Islands\\_2009.jpg?1381878050](https://s3.amazonaws.com/bwcolor/article_photos/large/184/1%29_Macaroni_Penguins_on_Zavodovski_Island_The_Sandwich_Islands_2009.jpg?1381878050)

Brazilian photographer, Sebastião Salgado produces landscape photos both with and without presence of humans or animals. The human/animal presence often intensifies the humanised dimension of the picture and its respective impact.

The human presence within the landscape can also produce images of a different type of “Paradise Lost” or apparent Inferno:



*Figure 16 – Sebastião Salgado – Gold Mine<sup>57</sup>*

## **Conclusion**

Still and moving images engage with our cognitive processes in a different manner from either the spoken word or the written word, and their increasing circulation is fundamentally changing society. One of the key dimensions of the power of the image is to engage with viewers at a multi-sensorial level and with non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious. This theme will be further analysed below,

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<sup>57</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/7e/fc/96/7efc9612225f3bf71c02e1d7369f9d4f.jpg>

## CHAPTER THREE – IS THE CINEMA DEAD?

### **Summary**

The moving image is more powerful than ever but theatrical exhibition of films is suffering a decline in admissions, amongst a wider perception that cinema has lost its centrality in modern society. TV series and social media videos seem to have gained relevance, whereas both auteur and genre films are often viewed as being formulaic. The number of film festivals has grown dramatically over the last ten years creating a parallel circuit, primarily for auteur films. At the same time there is a risk that auteur cinema becomes “ghettoised”, unable to cross over into the theatrical circuit, or even secure significant television screenings. There is a marked trend, even amongst the major film festivals, to move away from films that enjoy strong theatrical success. At the level of the Best Picture Oscar, there has also been an increasing divergence between the top films at the box office and the films selected for this award.

### **Introduction**

The digital era offers exciting new opportunities for filmmakers and is also changing the paradigm for understanding moving images.

When the film camera was invented in 1895, the term “cinema” was applied to all forms of moving images.

Cinema began as single takes, without any editing. In terms of viewing, early films were primarily viewed individually, on devices such as the Kinetoscope and Mutoscope, which predated the first public theatrical screening in 1895. The development of film projectors enabled films to be seen in theatres, but the word “cinema” was a generic term - not restricted to theatrical films.

The earliest films were all shorts. The Edison Trust even tried to impose the short film format in the US, which the Hollywood studios succeeded in circumventing, establishing the theatrical feature film as the gold standard of cinema.

However, the term cinema continued to be applied to other formats, including short films, documentaries, animation, and experimental films.

During the first half of the twentieth century the terms “cinema” and “moving images” essentially referred to these categories.

With the invention of television, whose commercial roll-out began in the post-war era, a new category of moving images was established, but was initially distinguished from cinema primarily on the basis of whether film or video was used to record the moving images. Moving images recorded on film

continued to fall under the term “cinema”, whereas moving images recorded using video, including live transmissions, were referred to as video, television or sometimes the more generic term, audiovisual.

Television fiction was initially divided between soap operas and series shot on video, using multi-camera systems, and some higher-budgeted series, shot on a single camera, and typically shot on film.

The main categories of television production, seen as a distinct category from the world of cinema included sports, live entertainment, game shows, talk shows, news, soap operas and sit-coms.

The world of video also included wedding videos and home videos.

This panorama began to change from the 1970s onwards, as a result of the advent of home video and pay TV, including the possibility of commercialising other types of video, in addition to cinema productions, producing more higher-budgeted series on platforms such as MTV, and the massive growth of music videos broadcast via channels such as MTV.

This introduced more grey areas between the worlds of cinema, television and video.

But the real sea change has resulted from the current digital environment, which means that the paradigm for understanding the world of moving images is now radically different from the “analogue” era.

Even with the advent of television, the cinema continued to be viewed as the “premium” form of moving images, occupying a pivotal position in the value chain of visual communications.

But in the digital world cinema no longer assumes the centrality that it once occupied, and feature films have almost gained a “vintage” or “retro” feel, as if they belonged to a past era.

For example, the US summer box office in 2019 had a \$4.5 billion gross and the lowest level of admissions since 1992<sup>58</sup>. According to analysis by *Indiewire*, over 80% of the gross came from franchise and sequels, and 50% of the total gross derived from films produced by Disney, including the top two titles, *The Avengers (2012)* and *The Lion King (2019)*.

The main arena for high-end film and TV content is now streaming services. Following Disney \$71.3 billion acquisition of Fox, including its 30% stake in streaming service Hulu, the new Disney/Fox conglomerate will attempt to dominate the streaming business, in competition with Netflix, Amazon and other players.

The factors underlying the new paradigm for cinema include the following:

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<sup>58</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.indiewire.com/2019/08/summer-box-office-wrap-disney-the-lion-king-once-upon-a-time-in-hollywood-1202167015/#!>

- 1) The digital revolution is powered by new forms of viewing moving images that are more interactive than the one-to-many model underpinning traditional cinema and television. These new forms of interactive viewing include browsing for videos on the Internet, watching video games, enhanced videos, virtual reality, immersive viewing experiences and augmented reality. Even the traditional television experience has become more interactive through viewer participation mechanisms.
- 2) The collapse of the video rental business reflected the fact that customers began to access films online, including through video piracy. Whereas DVDs primarily offered feature films, online viewing offers a huge range of other content, in particular series and documentaries. Memories of the video rental phenomenon are part of the “retro” or “vintage” feel of contemporary cinema.
- 3) Online viewing of filmed entertainment content has been accompanied by a significant rise in viewing of content other than feature films and reduced viewing of the latter.
- 4) The shift to streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon and Hulu, has eroded traditional television services and cinema. Consumers are progressively switching from traditional television to streaming platforms. A Deloitte survey found that whereas in 2011, 18-24-year-old Americans viewed about 24 hours a week of traditional television—broadcast or cable TV, whether live or time-shifted with a DVR - by 2016, the number had dropped to 15 hours a week. Younger people are now spending more time watching streaming video than TV<sup>59</sup>.
- 5) BCG’s 2016 report *The Future of Television: The Impact of OTT on Video Production Around the World*<sup>60</sup> highlighted that over-the-top (OTT) video platforms are making increasing inroads into viewing habits (see below) and creating opportunities for new content creators, including pro-am and amateur producers.
- 6) The initial growth of OTT video platforms has increased demand for short-form content but long-form content has begun to outstrip the former,<sup>61</sup> however mobile platforms, that are increasingly used to watch video content, tend to privilege short-form content.
- 7) Due to these changes, traditional cinema, based on long-form content, is losing its appeal amongst younger audiences, especially in the key 16-24 year old group, and its demographic is shifting towards older audiences, which makes it likely that the erosion of cinema audiences will further increase over time.

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<sup>59</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/what-s-the-future-of-television>

<sup>60</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

<sup>61</sup> [idem](#)



- 8) Hollywood cinema, which continues to dominate box offices around the world has shifted towards specific genres over recent years, such as the sci-fi, fantasy, superhero and kids animation genres, which are highly dependent on visual effects (VFX).
- 9) One of the revenue saviours of the Hollywood studios has been 3D films, which further intensifies this dependence on VFX. Many other previously core genres, such as contemporary and historical fiction, romance, crime and even musicals, have migrated to television fiction, which means that audiences looking for these genres seek out television fiction rather than theatrical films.
- 10) Television series are now seen by many directors, screenwriters and actors as more stimulating than cinema, offering a broader canvas upon which to explore character and tell stories. Hit series such as *Breaking Bad* arguably create a bigger cultural impact than superhero sequels. This tendency has been driven by higher budgets, higher production values and began with pay TV operators such as HBO and Showtime and has been further leveraged by streaming operators such as Netflix.
- 11) There has been a significant increase in the volume of documentary film production, which has been leveraged and stimulated by operators such as Netflix, further intensifying the impression that theatrical cinema is no longer necessarily the premium outlet for challenging film production.
- 12) Distribution of moving images via the Internet, including platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and Facebook not only has the advantage of being a more interactive form of viewing it also radically alters the gatekeeping of access to film content and fulfils the democratisation goals espoused in the past by filmmakers such as Francis Ford Coppola.
- 13) New digital filmmaking tools are affordable and constantly changing, which means that new talent increasingly focuses on producing short digital films and distributing them via the Internet.
- 14) The shift of Hollywood cinema towards a narrow range of dominant genres, such as superhero films and kids animation, has been countered by explosion of the film festival circuit, and independent cinema is part of the new paradigm for cinema. However, there is a risk that this circuit creates a “musealisation” phenomenon for what is sometimes described as “auteur cinema”. Festival films often have difficulty in achieving “crossover” hits, i.e. films that can engage with audiences beyond their festival career, in the theatrical market, on television or via Internet viewing. This particular area of festival films is an important subset of the world of moving images, but does not have the centrality that was formerly occupied by the art house cinema circuit or periods of film history such as the New Wave movements, in terms of engaging with wide audiences.

15) There is increasing use of film and video in other fields of artistic endeavour, especially in the visual arts, which has also contributed to the creation of a new paradigm for cinema, that extends well beyond mainstream theatrical cinema.

In the context of this new paradigm, cinema and the moving image must be viewed from a fundamentally different perspective.

### **Loss of Centrality of Auteur Cinema**

During the “golden age” of European art cinema, there was widespread media and audience interest in the latest films directed by the likes of Godard, Fellini, Buñuel and Bergman (see Annex 2).

The works by these directors did not have the mainstream appeal of popular comedies etc, but nonetheless had a centrality that is very different from the current situation.

A film such as Godard's *Le Mépris* was seen as a moment of encounter between the two worlds – mainstream and auteur. But Godard's other films also garnered significant media interest.

In an interview in 1965 Godard was asked whether he was a “provocateur”<sup>62</sup>. He replied:

Interviewer: You can also provoke admiration and astonishment, as well as anger.

Godard: Yes I try to provoke an event, but I'm not a provocateur in the political sense.

The belief that cinema could create events and awaken people's consciousness was one of the core ideas of poetic cinema, as explained later in this thesis – i.e. it could “open people's eyes.”

But European auteur films, notwithstanding the boom in the number of film festivals, have lost their centrality and capacity to create events. This is obviously due to multiple factors and has been extensively discussed in the literature.

European auteur cinema in particular has lost its centrality. American independent films have been more successful in creating “events” that can raise public awareness, one recent example being 2017 Academy-award winner *Moonlight (2016)*.

European auteur cinema enjoyed its “golden era” - including Italian neo-realism, and the New Waves and New Cinema movements - in the interval between the collapse of more rigid social structures, including authoritarian regimes in countries such as Italy, and the mass roll-out of television.

A similar phenomenon has occurred in other parts of the world. For example, South Korean cinema flourished in the wake of democratisation of the country from 1987 onwards, Arab cinema has

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<sup>62</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yuU2D8-kGs>

benefited from more open regimes in countries such as Morocco and some of the changes triggered by the Arab Spring. Latin American cinema has benefited from the end of dictatorial regimes.

For example, over recent years Central America – one of the last regions to enjoy greater democratisation and internal stability - has been a particularly vibrant source of new filmmaking talent.

The idea that “cinema is dead” was first floated at around May 1968 and has been repeated with increasing force since the late 1990s. There have been prophets foreseeing the death of traditional cinema from the 1950s onwards, including Jean-Luc Godard famous remark, “I await the end of cinema with optimism.”<sup>63</sup>

Susan Sontag in an essay written in 1966 (Sontag, 1966) already noted the decline of the social significance of cinema, which she suggested was linked to a decline in cinephilia. This sentiment involves various elements.

On the first hand, the golden age of cinema, when people flocked on a weekly or even daily basis to picture palaces, as depicted in *Cinema Paradiso* is long gone. Since the mass rollout of television, cinema has fought a constant battle to survive. New technologies, in particular home video (first VHS and then DVD), complemented by the early years of pay TV provided vital new revenue sources for the Hollywood majors, as a constantly expanding world of exploitation windows seemed to be opening up.

The streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon and Hulu quickly realised that not only did they not have easy access to blockbuster films, they could build their subscriber base and earn more revenues by funding original TV series.

For both financial and creative reasons there has been a major shift towards TV fiction rather than films as a key creative area for the moving images sector.

At a creative level, there has also been a major transformation of the type of Hollywood films that are being made and that are popular with audiences, as will be demonstrated below.

This trend began with the *Star Wars* franchise, that was not only a massive box office hit but also unlocked major ancillary revenues such as merchandising, video games and theme park rides.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Hollywood studios progressively focused on packageable locomotive titles that would appeal to younger audiences – either kids or the 14-24 age group – and could generate ancillary revenues.

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<sup>63</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://thesimplecinephile.com/2019/03/19/the-image-book-wandering-the-post-apocalyptic-landscape-of-the-image-in-jean-luc-godards-latest-freak-out/>

This trend was also driven by the advancement of digital technologies which made it easier to produce effects-driven films, such as superhero films and fantasy films which also appealed to audiences because they offered a bigger spectacle than watching TV fiction.

The home video business provided complementary revenues for these films, but also significantly, provided revenues for independent producers and distributors who focused on a wide variety of films not produced by the majors, including horror and thriller films, and films aimed at more mature audiences.

As the home video market collapsed the viability of independent filmmaking suffered a major setback, in many cases obliging the respective filmmakers to shift into TV fiction, where precisely there was room for genre-based fiction, and fiction aimed at more mature audiences.

The mid-sized operators were squeezed out leaving the major studios focusing primarily on blockbuster titles, with a few complementary titles able to win Academy awards etc, and with independents forced into a more marginal existence.

In Europe, as explained in the introduction, there was a major shift towards the “cinéma d’auteur” starting in the early 1970s, complemented by a small number of titles, in particular comedies, aimed at attracting primarily national audiences.

The phenomenon of European arthouse titles that could attract significant admissions across Europe rapidly disappeared, due to the squeeze on independent theatrical exhibition.

Some European producers and distributors managed to survive from the home video business, primarily through English-language titles and in certain cases genre films, such as Spain which had a boom in horror films until the home video market collapsed.

In the larger European countries – essentially the “Big 5” of UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain – there continued to be a small number of productions aimed at a wide national audience. In the case of the UK this was often achieved through UK/US coproductions or incoming investment titles funded by the Hollywood majors, a classic example being the *Harry Potter* franchise.

At the same time, funding for European films has increased and total production levels increased over time. As a result, there are a small number of European films aimed at a broad national audience, typically funded with automatic subsidy schemes and involving coproduction financing from a national broadcaster, and the vast majority of European films are aimed at the “cinéma d’auteur” niche.

In order to cater to this large number of “auteur films” the number of film festivals in Europe has mushroomed, thereby creating a parallel circuit to the theatrical circuit, which has become the main home turf for many European films.

These developments have led people to lament the “death of cinema” at multiple levels – both in terms of the types of films that are made and also the very viability of the sector which has become dependent on youth audiences in the commercial sector and on subsidies in the arthouse sector.

The power of cinema to bring people together, to create communities or congregations has altered dramatically during this process.

Martin Scorsese wrote to his daughter in 2014, stating that he believes the future of cinema is nonetheless bright but will exist in a new context:

“For the last few years, I’ve realized that the idea of cinema that I grew up with, that’s there in the movies I’ve been showing you since you were a child, and that was thriving when I started making pictures, is coming to a close. I’m not referring to the films that have already been made. I’m referring to the ones that are to come. I don’t mean to be despairing. I’m not writing these words in a spirit of defeat. On the contrary, I think the future is bright.”<sup>64</sup>

Several commentators believe that European cinema has lost some of the energy that it had in previous decades. By contrast, certain parts of the world, such as Latin America are creating films that are engaging local audiences and achieving critical acclaim.

The most high profile example is Mexico and the three Mexican directors “los tres amigos”, Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo del Toro who have won 5 out of 6 Best Director Academy Awards over the last 6 years.

Mexican actor Gael Garcia Bernal said in an interview with me during the 2018 Marrakech film festival:

There are urgent questions and urgent issues and films in Latin America still have relevance. They act as levers on society. It still has incredible relevance and it’s really nice that cinema still has that. We can remember when we starting watching films as kids. We knew how these films opened up a new spectrum or a new paradigm. For example dystopian futures. You could read about these questions in literature but it was really through film that we started to wonder about the burning questions in the 1980s.

I think that U.S. mainstream films are not so relevant any more on these issues. They can be about something very specific and very important. But for some reason they don’t bounce. They don’t connect. Films in Latin America and I’m sure in other countries as well still have that relevance. I think that it’s important that it exists. It reinforces my desire to make films in Latin America, inclusively on a very deep level of transcendence. At the end of the day we know that it’s the films and it’s not the industry or the awards. These things are nice. But it’s not what survives. It’s the film.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.indiewire.com/2014/01/martin-scorsese-explains-why-future-of-film-is-bright-in-open-letter-to-daughter-31642/>

<sup>65</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2018/film/global/gael-garcia-bernal-museo-chicuarotes-z-wasp-network-1203085009/>

James Gray, while speaking to *Variety* as jury president of the 2018 Marrakech film festival, offered major criticisms of the current state of world cinema in particular the critical establishment that operates film festivals, that are relevant for this thesis and I will quote at some length:

The critical establishment is stuck in 1968. If its handheld camera you know the tropes. You can see it from a mile away. Now that doesn't mean every movie with a handheld camera is bad. I think the Dardenne brothers are great but there is a language that is accepted in Cannes, that is a fact and when you see a movie."

He says that screening *The Immigrant* (2013) at Cannes made him feel out of place and led his film to be incorrectly classified as "conservative" in terms of film form.

"It was me trying to do Puccini in a field where they were all trying to still do 1968 (...)

I think there's a misreading of classicism. I think people mistake form for content they see that it's a story that they can track and they mistake it for conservative. I don't think that's what makes a film modern or not now that doesn't mean every movie that's a fractured narrative is not modern obviously there are some but I think you have to look at the what the film is actually trying to express before you proclaim it conservative or not that's and that is a much trickier thing to do (...) that is a problem in these festivals because they want something that is on the surface taking big risks and to me you know once I saw Derek Jarman's movie *Blue* I knew at least I think that there's nothing else you can do formally in cinema there really isn't you know once Jackson Pollack dripped his paint on the canvas that was it. There is the form of cinema and he kind of broke the mould and I could try to do that over and over but to me it would be tired.

Do you know what I mean being stuck in 1968 it's like trying to make a political statement with the movies in a form that seems really tired to me (...) I think that if you're trying to reinvent the medium it's usually a problem because there's a sincerity that needs to be there and if you're trying to reinvent the medium it means you're already putting yourself in front of the material.

The place of cinema in our culture is very different. Now the medium is dying. In the United States it doesn't have the same position of prominence and importance that it used to have. The work isn't coming from American filmmakers like it used to."<sup>66</sup>

French filmmaker, Jean-Pierre Jeunet who I interviewed at Marrakech in 2015 was also critical of the critical establishment in France:

I love directors who have a strong vision of the world, people like Tim Burton, David Lynch and Martin Scorsese. By contrast, I don't like films that are excessively realist, although I do enjoy this quality in documentaries(...) It's a bit like contemporary art. Critics like works that are abstract or conceptual. If a work is figurative and well done, they disdain it. You find the same attitude towards contemporary cinema. Many critics will prefer a film with bad lighting and technical flaws, than something that's well done.<sup>67</sup>

Jeunet said that he belongs to the French filmmaking tradition, which dates back to George Méliès and includes the oeuvre of Carné and Prévert, e.g. the 1945 classic *Les Enfants du Paradis* (Children of Paradise) but that this approach was no longer appreciated in France.

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<sup>66</sup> Audio recording of round table interview on December 7 during the 2018 Marrakech film festival.

<sup>67</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2015/film/global/marrakech-jean-pierre-jeunet-amelie-spirit-1201659864/>

Bertrand Tavernier, inspired by Martin Scorsese's personal journey documentaries to American and Italian cinema, produced his documentary series *My Journey Through French Cinema* in which he pays tribute to former French cinema classics and also emphasises what has been lost in terms of filmmaking traditions.

## **New Generation of Image-Makers**

Whereas in the early decades of the cinema, moving images were primarily consumed via exhibition of films in cinemas, i.e. a theatrical experience, this has now become a more marginal (and above all expensive) form of consuming images, which are now primarily consumed via the “small screen” of a TV set or the slightly smaller screen of a computer monitor or the even smaller screen of a mobile phone or tablet.

In terms of the production of images, digital technology has enabled a democratisation of the production and circulation of images.

This possibility has excited many filmmakers. Many years ago Francis Ford Coppola said that one day his daughter would be able to use a home video camera and make films that would win film awards, which has essentially come true.

This transition also concerns filmmakers. British filmmaker Peter Greenaway remarked: “Thirty five years of silent cinema is gone, no one looks at it anymore. This will happen to the rest of cinema. Cinema is dead.”<sup>68</sup>

*The End of Cinema?: A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age* by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015) explores how cinema as an essentially theatrical phenomenon may diminish over time but the spirit of cinema is alive and kicking in other forms – whether TV series or Internet videos.

The authors quote Will Self who suggests that film is no longer the dominant narrative medium, and has been superseded by other media.

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<sup>68</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://books.google.es/books?id=sYlyBgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=end+of+cinema&hl=pt-BR&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiJofyh8sLcAhWmxlUKHcmLB\\_0Q6AEILjAB#v=onepage&q=end%20of%20cinema&f=false](https://books.google.es/books?id=sYlyBgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=end+of+cinema&hl=pt-BR&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiJofyh8sLcAhWmxlUKHcmLB_0Q6AEILjAB#v=onepage&q=end%20of%20cinema&f=false)



## **The Challenge for Film Studies and Communication Sciences**

The rising power of visual communication poses stimulating challenges to the field of academic research in this field, requiring evolution in various disciplines given the increasing osmosis between different fields of audiovisual communication.

In the early decades of cinema, the main fields of research into visual communication were cinema and photography.

In terms of analysis of this new form of “writing” (see later chapter), an extensive body of research was developed into the power of the fixed and moving image, and communication via single images and through editing/montage.

In the post-war period there was major expansion of academic enquiry into this field and from the 1960s onwards, cinema was increasingly embraced as a legitimate field of academic enquiry.

The advent of television spawned multiple media studies and communications science programmes, but cinema continued to maintain pride of place in terms of analysis of visual “language” and narrative codes.

However, this has all been changed by the digital revolution and analysis of visual communication strategies based on social media have often been provided in research and courses on digital media rather than film studies.

To understand key trends in current visual communication, key themes addressed in film studies can be adapted to other forms of visual communication.

Film theory itself has advanced due to technological advances. For example, video annotation tools now make it possible to produce more empirical data in relation to films and videos.

Theories concerning the construction of meaning through a single shot or montage, developed in the context of film theory can also be extended to all fields of visual communication.

Courses within the field of communication science tend to be text-based and have often found it difficult to incorporate theories related to cinema studies or visual communication theory, as noted by Michael Griffin in his chapter “Visual Communication”, published in *The Handbook of Communication History* (Simonson, 2012), states:

However, despite the fact that cinema studies more closely shares the social-theoretical concerns of communication and mass communication studies, the impact of film history on visual communication studies and visual communication history has remained limited, indirect, and too often unrecognised. In departments of communication and mass communication studies, cinema is frequently viewed as a medium belonging to (or already claimed by) other disciplines and departments. This may be at least partly due to the fact that the literature of cinema studies predates the academic field of mass communication research. Many consider film studies to be an interpretive enterprise better suited to scholarship in the arts and humanities, others as a form of

popular entertainment that does not merit serious scholarly consideration. Although television, a medium even more closely identified with popular (and frivolous?) entertainment, has more often been embraced within academic departments of communication. In certain communication programs, some attention has been given to the visual aspects of television and TV news, or even news documentary, although anything having to do with film or video has customarily been situated in sequences of "broadcasting" study where, in my experience, the greatest attention has usually been given to scripting and delivering verbal reports, with film and video images considered secondarily, as illustrative vehicles for the spoken word or as pleasing background fill, what working television broadcast journalists have referred to as "wallpapering." (Simonson, 2012, p. 142)

Nonetheless film theory can be a vital area for providing insights into modern visual communication as noted by the same author, Michael Griffin, in his chapter "Camera as witness, image as sign: The study of visual communication in communication research" published in *The Communication Yearbook 24* (Gudykunst, 2001) quotes Mitchell (1994) who identified a "pictorial turn" in communication studies:

The problem of pictorial representation has always been with us, it presses inescapably now, and with an unprecedented force, on every level of culture, from the most refined philosophical speculations to the most vulgar productions of the mass media" (p. 16). The simplest way to put this is to say that, in what is often characterized as an age of "spectacle" (Debord), "surveillance" (Foucault), and all-pervasive image-making. we still do not know exactly what pictures are, what their relation to language is, how they operate on observers and on the world, how their history is to be understood, and what is to be done with or about them. (Gudykunst, 2001, p. 13)

Kim Marriott, Bernd Meyer in their book *Visual Language Theory* (Marriott and Meyer, 1998) identify the need to develop new research into the field of visual language, which has become a key component of human-computer interaction. However, in this case the approach is far removed from research into visual communication in the world of film studies.

## **Key Trends that are forcing cinema into a more marginal position**

This loss of centrality and marginalization of the classic style of cinema, and to a certain extent of cinema as a whole, began with the roll-out of free-to-air television, and was further challenged by the advent of home video and pay TV channels.

But until recently the film industry was able to withstand these changes and still appeared to be the defining form of moving images, able to command a premium price and profoundly shaping other forms of visual communication.

The factors underlying the new paradigm for cinema include the following:

- a) The digital revolution is powered by new forms of viewing moving images that are more interactive than the one-to-many model underpinning traditional cinema and television. These new forms of interactive viewing include browsing for videos on the Internet, watching video games, enhanced videos, virtual reality, immersive viewing experiences and augmented reality. Even the traditional television experience has become more interactive through viewer participation mechanisms.
- b) The collapse of the video rental business reflected the fact that customers began to access films online, including through video piracy. Whereas DVDs primarily offered feature films, online viewing offers a huge range of other content, in particular series and documentaries. Memories of the video rental phenomenon are part of the “retro” or “vintage” feel of contemporary cinema.
- c) Online viewing of filmed entertainment content has been accompanied by a significant rise in viewing of content other than feature films and reduced viewing of the latter (see section below on streaming channels).
- d) The shift to streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon and Hulu, has eroded traditional television services and cinema. Consumers are progressively switching from traditional television to streaming platforms. Whereas in 2011, 18-24-year-old Americans viewed about 24 hours a week of traditional television—broadcast or cable TV, whether live or time-shifted with a DVR - by 2016, the number had dropped to 15 hours a week. A Deloitte survey found that younger people are now spending more time watching streaming video than TV<sup>69</sup>.
- e) BCG's 2016 report *The Future of Television: The Impact of OTT on Video Production Around the World* highlighted that over-the-top (OTT) video platforms are making increasing inroads into

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<sup>69</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://insights.yale.edu/insights/what-s-the-future-of-television>

viewing habits (see below) and creating opportunities for new content creators, including pro-am and amateur producers.

- f) The initial growth of OTT video platforms has increased demand for short-form content but long-form content has begun to outstrip the former,<sup>70</sup> however mobile platforms, that are increasingly used to watch video content, tend to privilege short-form content.
- g) Due to these changes, traditional cinema, based on long-form content, is losing its appeal amongst younger audiences, especially in the key 16-24 year old group, and its demographic is shifting towards older audiences, which makes it likely that the erosion of cinema audiences will further increase over time.
- h) Hollywood cinema, which continues to dominate box offices around the world has shifted towards specific genres over recent years, such as the sci-fi, fantasy, superhero and kids animation genres, which are highly dependent on visual effects (VFX). One of the revenue saviours of the Hollywood studios has been 3D films, which further intensifies this dependence on VFX. Many other previously core genres, such as contemporary and historical fiction, romance, crime and even musicals, have migrated to television fiction, which means that audiences looking for these genres seek out television fiction rather than theatrical films.
- i) Television series are now seen by many directors, screenwriters and actors as more stimulating than cinema, offering a broader canvas upon which to explore character and tell stories. Hit series such as *Breaking Bad* arguably create a bigger cultural impact than superhero sequels. This tendency has been driven by higher budgets, higher production values and began with pay TV operators such as HBO and Showtime and has been further leveraged by streaming operators such as Netflix.
- j) There has been a significant increase in the volume of documentary film production, which has been leveraged and stimulated by operators such as Netflix, thus further intensifying the impression that theatrical cinema is no longer necessarily the premium outlet for challenging film production.
- k) Distribution of moving images via the Internet, including platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and Facebook not only has the advantage of being a more interactive form of viewing it also radically alters the gatekeeping of access to film content and fulfils the democratisation goals espoused by filmmakers such as Francis Ford Coppola.

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<sup>70</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

- l) New digital filmmaking tools are affordable and constantly changing, which means that new talent increasingly focuses on producing short digital films and distributing them via the Internet.
- m) The shift of Hollywood cinema towards a narrow range of dominant genres, such as superhero films and kids animation, has been countered by explosion of the film festival circuit, and independent cinema is part of the new paradigm for cinema. However, there is a risk that this circuit creates a “musealisation” phenomenon for what is sometimes described as “auteur cinema”.

Festival films often have difficulty in achieving “crossover” hits, i.e. films that can engage with audiences beyond their festival career, in the theatrical market, on television or via Internet viewing. This particular area of festival films is an important subset of the world of moving images, but does not have the centrality that was formerly occupied by the art house cinema circuit or periods of film history such as the New Wave movements, in terms of engaging with wide audiences. Nonetheless it continues to be a vibrant source of new ideas, and will be discussed in greater detail later in this text.

- n) There is increasing use of film and video in other fields of artistic endeavour, especially in the visual arts, which has also contributed to the creation of a new paradigm for cinema, that extends well beyond mainstream theatrical cinema.

In the context of this new paradigm, cinema and the moving image must be viewed from a fundamentally different perspective.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with a question: Is Cinema Dead? Although cinema is clearly at a crossroads it is too early to pronounce its obituary. In terms of theatrical audiences, cinemagoing remains an important social activity and continues to grow in some markets, while plateauing or declining in others. When a popular film catches people’s attention it can generate very significant admissions. One of the most notable recent examples was the French hit *The Intouchables (2011)* which is the highest-grossing film in a language other than English with almost 20 million admissions in France and over 31 million admissions outside France.

Cinema is a spectator-driven activity – people have to invest time, effort and money to go to the cinema and need to feel motivated to do so. Other spectator activities, including soccer for example, have experienced periods of decline followed by periods of growth.

Alongside the theatrical dimension of cinema the massive expansion of the festival circuit has also generated new opportunities for more auteur-driven projects and links to institutions such as art museums and galleries that previously weren't involved in film. This also opens promising avenues.

Thirdly, the very meaning of "cinema" perhaps should be broadened back towards its original meaning of moving images. There is a cinematic spirit in many other fields of audiovisual activity, including television fiction, some music videos and some Internet videos.

I will return to this question in part two, that provides the theoretical framework for the thesis.

## PART TWO – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Part Two establishes the theoretical framework for analysing the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema, based on establishing the definition of poetic cinema, the contributions to the subject that may be drawn from cognitive film theory, exploration of the ideas of Joseph Campbell which have had a pivotal effect on contemporary Hollywood cinema, and analysis of theoretical foundations for moving beyond this great divide.

## CHAPTER FOUR – WHAT IS POETIC CINEMA?

### Summary

Understanding the multiple meanings of “poetic cinema” is crucially important for this thesis, because it is linked to the difference between auteur and genre cinema. Some commentators, such as Truffaut and Maya Deren, have identified poetic cinema with films that have alternative narratives, contrasted to those with a classic linear narrative. This creates a clear dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema on the basis of poetry and provides support for the idea that genre cinema is essentially less artistic. However if we analyse theories of the poetic image and of poetic cinema and the ideas expressed by filmmakers themselves, we can see that there can be “poetry” within classic narrative structures. This is a core dimension of the thesis.

### Introduction

One of the key issues for addressing the perceived dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema is the question of “poetic cinema”. In particular what makes a film poetic and whether a genre film with commercial potential can also be poetic, or whether this is restricted to films that have a niche audience.

The issues at stake include the following:

- 1) In order to move beyond the dichotomy between genre cinema and auteur cinema, it is extremely important to understand the potential poetic force of all kinds of cinema.
- 2) Questions related to poetic cinema are not linked solely to questions of form. A neo-formalist approach to cinema distinguishes between genre cinema and auteur cinema primarily on the basis of form. However, although there may be formal differences between different kinds of film, there is no single form which determines the poetic dimension of a film.
- 3) In the context of the new paradigm of the moving image, the poetic force of film may be found in many different types of film and video production, including music videos, TV series, YouTube videos and even commercials.
- 4) The enthusiasm and thinking of the early “poetic filmmakers” serve as a key source of inspiration for many modern filmmakers and needs to be fully understood.
- 5) These same ideas have influenced the practical application of the theoretical framework of this thesis, discussed in section two.



The key ideas identified in this chapter include the following:

- 1) The primacy of the image within cinema (obviously complemented by sound, in the case of sound cinema) establishes a natural bridge to the world of poetry, given that many theorists consider that one of the key building blocks of poetry is the poetic image.
- 2) The central importance of rhythm and montage structure within cinema also establishes a further bridge to poetry, given that many theorists consider that one of the defining characteristics of poetry is its rigorous use of metrics and form.
- 3) On this basis, all cinema may be viewed as being potentially poetic, even though only a small number of films fully achieve their poetic potential.
- 4) In this context, one of the defining characteristics of poetry is its capacity to transport the reader/viewer from the world of the everyday consciousness, into the world of non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, which according to one branch of psychoanalytic theory (e.g. Jung) is peopled by universal archetypes.
- 5) From this perspective, poetry casts a spell on the reader/viewer, removing him from everyday concerns and entering a dreamlike or heightened state of consciousness, which offers a sensation of completeness.
- 6) The artist’s capacity to produce poetic images and a “sea voyage” that will stir the poetic faculty requires that the artist move beyond his personal consciousness. It is possible to argue that this may be linked to what Jung defines as the collective unconscious, which transcends personal, local, regional and national boundaries. In this process the artist loses himself, in the production of his art and the creative force underpinning his art seems to come from outside him.

### **The Poetic Image**

One of the central ideas associated to European cinema is that it places emphasis on “poetic cinema” and “slow cinema” in contrast to the “fast-food” commodification adopted by Hollywood.

But the issue is much more complex as I have argued herein.

Nonetheless it is useful to explore the question of poetic cinema because it can offer further insights into this topic.

C. Day-Lewis, in his book *Poetic Image* considers that images are central to the understanding of poetry, saying that "imagery is at the core of the poem", and that "a poem may itself be an image

composed from a multiplicity of images" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.18). He cites Dryden, who asserted that, "Imaging is itself the very height and life of poetry" (Day-Lewis, 1961, pp.17-18), and Aristotle -"The greatest thing by far is to have command of the metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is a mark of genius" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.17).

Lewis extends this argument to assert that imagery is not only at the heart of poetry, but also its defining characteristic. "The image is the constant in all poetry, and every poem is itself an image. Trends come and go, diction alters, metrical fashions change, even the elemental subject-matter may change out of recognition: but metaphor remains, the life-principle of poetry, the poet's chief test and glory" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.17).

Images are central to human experience and understanding, Day-Lewis believes. He quotes Yeats, "wisdom speaks first in images" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.25), and Vico, "Poetry ... is the primary activity of the mind. Man before he has arrived at the stage of forming universals, forms imaginary ideas" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.26).

The role of the poet, Day-Lewis says, is to "see things as they really are" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.28). This is a special role reserved to the poet, since "the ordinary man is too busy to see straight or look deep; his perceptions are clouded by his preoccupations" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.24). The poet must train himself to a level of concentration that gives him a level of mastery over what he sees, and enables him to communicate it in the most effective manner. For this, the poet needs new epithets and metaphors, since the old ones become clichéd and no longer communicate the physical thing described. "Seeing things "as they really are", doesn't represent a scientific precision, but rather a precision of how an object affects the reader/viewer, including the effect on his emotions and non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" and the unconscious. "It is this need for expressing the relationship between things and the relationship between things and feelings, which compels the poet to metaphor; and it is the same need, I suggest, which demands that within the poem the images should be linked by some internal necessity stronger than the mere tendency of words to congregate in patterns." (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.25).

Day-Lewis emphasises the inter-dependence of images, and states that no image stands by itself. He claims that it is the relationship between things and feelings which separates scientific vision from poetic vision, and scientific truth from poetic truth. Day-Lewis expands upon this distinction, to assert the existence of a "poetic world" as against a "real world" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.28) - reminiscent of Plato's allegory of the cave. He believes that the poetic world is based upon Blake's phrase, "Every thing possible to be believed is an image of truth" (quoted in Day-Lewis, 1961, p.27). In this world, any pattern set up by the imagination has a certain reality. This reality, or "image-pattern" is dependent for its content and

importance on its relation to the empirical world, and it is here where metaphor is essential; it forms a bridge between the poetic world and the real world. But metaphor does more than just this. It also demonstrates that the real world has patterns too, and that these relate in some way to the patterns of the poetic world. This is the origin of Blake's statement, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite" (quoted in Day-Lewis, 1961, p.28), and also that of Yeats, "The man wipes his breath from the window pane and laughs in his delight at all the varied scene" (quoted in Day-Lewis, 1961, p.28).

Day-Lewis believes that poetry operates in the domain of "unverifiable truths" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.35). It ties two images together, through an "emotional logic" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.35) rather than an empirical logic. However, he suggests that this logic has a very strong attraction, since it reveals a pattern, which satisfies the human yearning for order and completeness. "The poetic image is the human mind claiming kinship with everything that lives or has lived, and making good its claim" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.35). It is also, through metaphor, claiming a kinship between external objects, and suggesting that everything in the universe is somehow linked together.

This idea is echoed in the writings of filmmakers (see below) and has also been expressed by several poets such as Hardy - "The human race to be shown as one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched" (quoted in Day-Lewis, 1961, p.33); and Wordsworth:

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together In one society. "(quoted in Day-Lewis, 1961, p.33)

According to Day-Lewis, the poet must observe pattern, and express it through his own patterns, so that it becomes pattern for us too. "The poet's task .. is to recognize pattern wherever he sees it, and to build his perceptions into a poetic form which by its urgency and coherence will persuade us of their truth" (Day-Lewis, 1961, p.36).

A similar idea was expressed by the Russian Formalist, Shklovsky in his essay, *Art as Device* (1917):

Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone, *stonny*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object, the object is not important (quoted in Lee and Reis, 1965, p.12).

## Rhythm, metre and form

Alongside the power of the poetic image, other theorists have also written extensively on the importance of rhythm, metre and form within poetry, which once again naturally lends links to the world of cinema.

Paul Fussell in his book, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (Fussell, 1979) provides an interesting analysis of the structure of poems. He first analyses meter, which he defines as the rhythm or texture of a poem. He suggests that the functions of meter, (i.e. the rhythm of the poem), are to focus attention, to hypnotise, to tap physiological processes in the reader, such as the pulse of the heart, and to make associations between objects through rhythm and rhyme. He quotes Ezra Pound "Rhythm must have meaning" (Fussell, 1979, p.3) and I.A. Richards, "Pattern itself is a vast cyclic agitation spreading all over the body, a tide of excitement powering through the channels of the mind" (Fussell, 1979, p.5), and finally Coleridge, "The poet brings the whole soul into activity" (Fussell, 1979, p.5).

Fussell also views rhythm as a subject of communication in itself and quotes Ezra Pound: "I believe in an absolute rhythm, a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly with the emotion or shade emotion to be expressed" (Fussell, 1979, p.15).

F. C. Prescott in his book *The Poetic Mind* (Prescott, 1922) discusses the logical dimension of poetry. He distinguishes two types of thought: logical, scientific thought, and poetic thought. The former deals with everyday problems, and needs to be rigorous, unambiguous and practical. The latter comes from the imagination and the unconscious and deals with man's dreams and his hopes and fears. This dichotomy is linked to the rational path and poetic path mentioned above. Prescott suggests that the objective of the first is truth and of the latter is beauty. He also suggests that the two are inter-related, and that judgement of beauty will also reveal truth and vice-versa. He says, "Truth in the sphere of reason becomes in the sphere of the imagination, beauty: the two are analogous" (Prescott, 1922, p.83).

The key to Prescott's argument is that he locates poetry in the world of dreams and the unconscious. This has been suggested by many different thinkers, as argued within this thesis, including that of the "film poets" as we shall see below. Shelley, for example, said of poetry, it "acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness" (Shelley, 1821, article). Aristotle called a poem, "a thing inspired", which "implies either a strain of madness or a happy gift of nature". Poe defined poetry as "pleasurable ecstasy" and a "glimpse of the spirit's outer world"<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.eapoe.org/pstudies/ps1970/p1972210.htm>

Many poets have emphasised the importance of their dreams. Shelley said of his childhood:

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped  
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,  
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing  
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.<sup>72</sup>

Lowell in his poem *Columbus*, said:

And I believed the poets;  
it is they Who utter wisdom from the central deep,  
And listening to the inner flow of things  
Speak to the age out of eternity <sup>73</sup>

## HOW TO DEFINE POETIC CINEMA

“Poetics of cinema” has constituted one of the central issues of film theory almost since the birth of cinema. At the same time, it’s also one of the most difficult to define.

Two key currents should be identified in this regard.

The dominant tradition in terms of defining the poetics of cinema has been that associated with the Formalists (in particular the Russian Formalists in the 1920s) and to the “neo-formalists” (such as the writings of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson).

From a formalist perspective, the poetics of cinema are identified primarily with questions of form, i.e. the relationship between the manner in which the subject is told (i.e. the form, plot or “*syuzhet*”) and the subject itself (i.e. the content, story or “*fabula*”) <sup>74</sup>.

The emphasis on form is also rooted in the distinction between prose and poetry in literature, where questions of form, metre and rhythm are often viewed as the defining characteristics of written poetry – whether traditional or modern poetry. From this perspective, prose is defined as having a more freeform narrative structure, whereas poetry is viewed as involving greater formal considerations, including non-linear structures and innovative exploration of language.

However, an alternative tradition within the “poetics of cinema” considers all cinema to be an *essentially* poetic medium.

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<sup>72</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45123/hymn-to-intellectual-beauty>

<sup>73</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8546529-Columbus-by-James-Russell-Lowell>

<sup>74</sup> Ian Christie provides a useful definition of these terms in his essay *Formalism and Neo-Formalism* (Hill 1998: 59): “Fabula, in the Formalist sense, is an imaginary sequence of events narrated by the syuzhet, which provides the actual narrative pattern of the work of “story-as-told”. Thus, in literature, Cervantes’ and Sterne’s numerous digressions, abrupt shifts forward and backward in time, repetitions, and withholding of information are all devices which constitute the syuzhet or plot; and the Formalists regarded the relationship between the syuzhet and fibula, rather than one or the other, as the essence of literary art.”

In this case, the poetic force of a film is related not only to the form but also the content (i.e. the narrative journey or “fabula”). The form (or “*syuzhet*”) should be that which best conveys the poetic force of the *fabula*. From this perspective a linear narrative film is also perfectly capable of being a poetic film.

Whether focusing more on aspects of form or content, both traditions link back to Aristotle’s *Poetics* in which he explored the organic connections between both elements, and how each should be structured to serve the work’s overall aesthetic form and narrative function” (*Poetics*, Section 1, Part VIII: 7).

Viktor Shklovsky noted in his 1927 essay, *Poetry and Prose in Cinema*, that these two outlooks (i.e. a primary emphasis on form or on narrative) were creating two distinct visions of film art: “In cinema at present we are children. We have barely begun to consider the subjects of our work, but already we can speak of the existence of two poles of cinema, each of which will have its own laws” (quoted in Hill, 1998, p.66)

These different perspectives should also be understood from their historical perspective. The Formalist tradition was rooted in a revolutionary outlook, which, in the case of its analysis of cinema, viewed traditional Hollywood drama as the expression of capitalist ideology and therefore believed that innovative “poetic” forms were necessary in order to convey revolutionary content. Echoes of these ideas were found in the New Wave movements.

In recent years, a greater willingness for European filmmakers to embrace traditional narrative genres reflects new trends and outlooks. This objective is particularly evident when it comes to TV series.

The danger of excessive emphasis on questions of form is that critics and viewers may actually miss the wood for the trees. The late John Berger in his book, *Ways of Seeing* (Berger, 1972), alerted to the danger of mystification and missing the historical context and objectives of art, when he quoted from Seymour Slive’s analysis of one of Franz Hals’ paintings. He commented thereof:

“The compositional unity of a painting contributes fundamentally to the power of its image. It is reasonable to consider a painting’s composition. But here the composition is written about as though it were itself the emotional charge of the painting. Terms like *harmonious fusion*, *unforgettable contrast*, reaching a *peak of breadth and strength* transfer the emotion provoked by the image from the plane of lived experience, to that of disinterested “art appreciation”. All conflict disappears” (Berger, 1972, p.13).

## The seventh art

The concept of “poetic cinema” first emerged during the 1910s-20s, amongst the French avant-garde. For example, the description of film as the “seventh art” was first used by Paris-based Italian intellectual Ricciotto Canudo in his text *La naissance d'un art*<sup>75</sup>

Canudo suggested that film was the synthesis of the 3 classic spatial arts (architecture, sculpture, painting) and 3 temporal arts (music, dance, poetry).

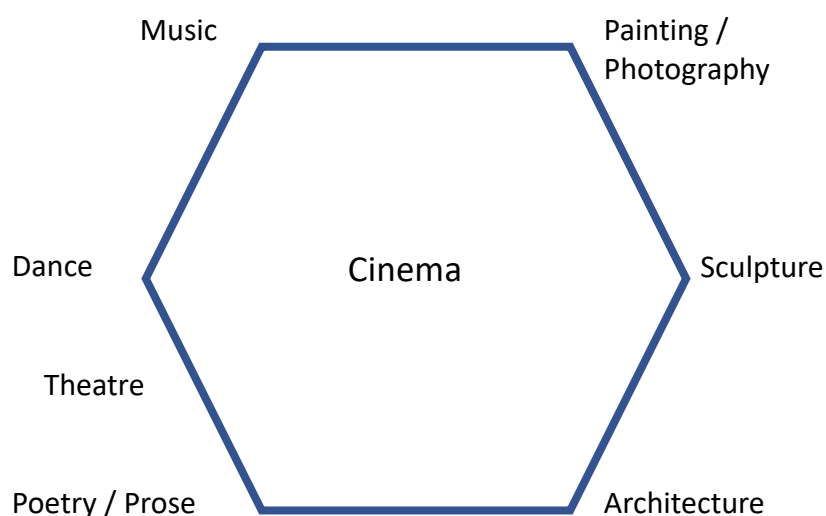


Figure 17 – Cinema as the seventh art

Theatre is placed in the above figure in an interim position, since it involves a combination of literature (dramaturgy) and the performing arts.

We can analyse a film in function of each of these other dimensions, for example:

- 1) Visual dimension – Visual theory applied to painting, drawing, photography, graphic design can also be applied to film. We can analyse each film in terms of its composition (e.g. the rule of thirds), lighting (high key/low key) colour palette and depth of field. Two films with very different narrative structures may have a similar visual style and vice versa.
- 2) Production design – elements related to sculpture and built architecture are linked to the structural and architectural dimensions of any film
- 3) Story world – elements related to built architecture, landscapes etc are linked to the structural and architectural dimensions of any film

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<sup>75</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.ien-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La\\_naissance\\_d\\_un\\_art\\_Canudo.pdf](http://www.ien-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La_naissance_d_un_art_Canudo.pdf)

- 4) Narrative structure – elements found in common with literature and poetry in terms of structure, dialogue etc can also be found in film.
- 5) Music – music is a core element of most films, as will be discussed later in this thesis.
- 6) Choreography and dance – the importance of choreography applies to all films and not just those with an evident musical dimension, such as musicals.
- 7) Theatre – in the case of fiction film there are obvious multiple links between theatre and film.

This broad division of the different artistic elements that may be linked to film may be divided into various sub-categories. For example, theorists such as Joseph Bloom<sup>76</sup> have distinguished between the *spatial arts* (painting, sculpture and architecture) and the *temporal arts* (poetry/literature, music and dance/theatre). Canudo made a similar statement: "Cinema is a superb conciliation of the Rhythms of Space (the Plastic Arts) and the Rhythms of Time (Music and Poetry)" <sup>77</sup>.

These ideas were developed in greater detail by the Russian Formalists (in particular in the compilation of essays, *The Poetics of Cinema*, also known as *Poetika Kino* (Eikhenbaum, 1927)<sup>78</sup>.

In one of these essays, Viktor Shklovsky contrasted poetic cinema with prose cinema, as follows:

"They are distinguished from one another not by rhythm, or not by rhythm alone, but by the prevalence in poetic cinema of technical and formal over semantic features, where formal features displace semantic and resolve the composition. Plotless cinema is "verse" cinema." (quoted in Hill, 1998, p. 66 and Shklovsky 1982, p.89<sup>79</sup>).

In this manner, Shklovsky offered one of the first definitions of film poetry – defining it in contrast to film prose, i.e. kino-poetry is dominated by visual logic, whereas kino-prose is dominated by a narrative logic.

Kathryn Margaret McVeigh in her 2008 PhD thesis, *Mosaic Narrative: A Poetics of Cinematic New Media Narrative* (McVeigh, 2008) summarises this outlook as follows: "The Formalists' concentration on the stylistic techniques of cinema – montage, cinematography and mise-en-scene - as an important part of the film process, was a result of their adoption of Shklovsky's view that the aesthetic function of the elements of an artwork is dominant in art (Eagle, 1981, p.4)" (McVeigh, 2008, p.114).

McVeigh suggests that "poetics" focuses more on questions of form (*syuzhet*), whereas

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<sup>76</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.ajourneythroughthearts.com/>

<sup>77</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.iem-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La\\_naissance\\_d\\_un\\_art\\_Canudo.pdf](http://www.iem-sarcelles.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/La_naissance_d_un_art_Canudo.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> The essays of *Poetika Kino* (1927) include Eichenbaum's "Problems of Cine-Stylistics"; Tynjanov's "The Fundamentals of Cinema"; Kazansky's "The Nature of Cinema"; Piotrovsky's "Towards a Theory of Film Genres"; Shklovsky's "Poetry and Prose in the Cinema" and Mikhailov and Moskvina's "The Cameraman's Part in Making a Film".

<sup>79</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/first.shtml>



“semiotics” focuses more on elements of meaning (*fabula*):

Overall both Poetics and Semiotics deal with the codes of a text and the “fundamental principles” of how a work creates meaning in a representational setting.

However, the key difference is that Poetics may apply to the craft decisions that are made by the creator of the work – what Bordwell in his generally non-semiotic work (Stam, 1992, p.11) deems the “craft component” (Bordwell, 1989b, p.2) - while Semiotics deals with the decisions that can be made about the codes, systems and meaning of the work once it has been constructed. (McVeigh, 2008, p.18).

David Bordwell identifies “poetics” primarily, but not exclusively, with formal aspects of filmmaking. He explains how the way the story is told (i.e. the plot or *syuzhet*) determines how the audience interprets the film: “The viewer builds the *fabula* on the basis of prototype schemata (identifiable types of persons, actions, locales, etc), template schemata (principally the “canonic” story), and procedural schemata (a search for appropriate motivations and relations of causality, time and space)” (Bordwell, 1985, p.49).

Two of Bordwell’s best-known books on the subject are *Poetics of Cinema* and *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*. In the former, Bordwell provides a series of essays drawn from 30 years of writing on the subject. He focuses on aspects of form and style and concentrates on links with prevailing norms in the respective country and epoch. For this reason he describes his approach as “historical poetics of cinema”. He begins the book by stating:

These efforts might be characterized as pushing a doctrine—most will call it formalist—but I think I’m doing something else. Granted, these essays put the film as an artwork at the center of study; they analyse form and style. But they also try to mount explanations of how films work, and why under certain circumstances they came to look the way they do. Those explanations invoke a wide range of factors: artistic intentions, craft guidelines, institutional constraints, peer norms, social influences, and cross-cultural regularities and disparities of human conduct” (Bordwell, 2007, p.1).

In a separate essay, *Historical Poetics of Cinema* (From The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches, ed. R. Barton Palmer <sup>80</sup>), Bordwell defines poetics as follows:

The poetics of any medium, studies the finished work as the result of a process of construction - a process which includes a craft component (e.g., rules of thumb), the more general principles according to which the work is composed, and its functions, effects, and uses. Any inquiry into the fundamental principles by which a work in any representational medium is constructed can fall within the domain of poetics. (Barton Palmer, 1989, pp. 369-398).

Bordwell thus defines “historical poetics” as a historically-rooted study of form and style, based on functional objectives that prevailed at the time. He links this process to his wider enquiries into film theory, in collaboration with Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger.

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<sup>80</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://davidbordwell.org/articles/Bordwell\\_Cinematic%20Text\\_no3\\_1989\\_369.pdf](http://davidbordwell.org/articles/Bordwell_Cinematic%20Text_no3_1989_369.pdf)

Bordwell considers that poetics is an empirical discipline, but instead of focusing on social or economic issues, it should primarily explore aesthetic currents, explained against their historical background.

He defines three key areas of concern: themes, compositional principles and stylistic principles – all of which should be understood from a historical perspective.

Establishing a bridge with linguistics, he considers that film poetics involves what he calls semantics, syntactics and pragmatics. He defines these as follows:

- a) Semantics - the study of how meaning is produced
- b) Syntactics - the study of rules for selecting and combining units (e.g. with respect to style, Raymond Bellour's micro-analyses; with respect to compositional form, Thierry Kuntzel's study of openings, Peter Wollen's applications of Propp, or Rick Altman's "dual-focus" narrative)
- c) Pragmatics - the study of how relations between viewer and text develop in the process of the film's unfolding (e.g., accounts of narration or of filmic "enunciation")

Bordwell's writing provides fascinating insights into how films have been produced and their different impacts on audiences over time, but does not provide (and does not aim to provide) a comprehensive definition of film poetry *per se* – i.e. does not attempt to define criteria for determining a subset of films that may be classified as "poetic films".

In his book, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Bordwell, 1988), he identifies the "poetics of cinema" as a mixture of innovation and transgression of classic filmmaking norms. This outlook stands in line with the view of the Russian Formalists, as explained above. He links poetics to innovation and the deviation between the artist's individual work and the traditional canon. "The poetics of cinema which I am proposing differs from an "intrinsic" critical theory in assuming that only against historically significant backgrounds do particular works achieve salience, for audiences or analysts" (Bordwell, 1988, p. 17).

Bordwell explores the work of Japanese filmmaker Ozu in terms of the mode of film production and consumption of Japanese cinema, the formal norms available to him and the cultural norms associated with Zen Buddhism and traditional Japanese aesthetics.

In this context, Bordwell claims that Japanese film production in the 1920s and 1930s was solidly based on Hollywood dramaturgy and style. He defines the "historical poetics" of certain Japanese films as the manner in which they "deviated, in isolated and controlled ways, from classical norms" (Bordwell, 1988, p. 21). For example, in relation to Tomotaka Tasaka's *Ai no machi* (*Town on Love*,

1928) he states: “Within the bounds of orthodox framing and editing, we find fast and intricate camera movements, steep high and low angles, handheld shots, soft focus, rack focus, whip pans, split screen and moving inter-titles” (Bordwell, 1988, p 22).

Bordwell defines the “poetics” of Ozu’s oeuvre as being based on:

- motifs – recurrent images, that define his work
- modules – classic scenes that recur in his films<sup>81</sup>
- narrative ellipses
- recurring “opaque” central characters – e.g. the outsider/student and the salary-man
- overt narrative gestures (e.g. inter-titles)
- specific technical norms – e.g. frequent use of low camera angles.

Source: (Bordwell, 1988)

Summing up, Bordwell suggests that Ozu’s oeuvre is simultaneously classic and eccentric and based on a mixture of “playful deviation” and “unreasonable style”: “Ozu’s editing procedures are at once “legible” (being functional equivalents for the procedures of ordinary cinema) and eccentric (being arbitrarily systematic in all manner of details)” (Bordwell, 1988, p. 89).

One example cited by Bordwell of Ozu’s “eccentricity” is his habit of breaching the 180° rule. Bordwell links this playful breaching of norms to processes that occur within Japanese poetry, citing the haiku tradition: “The stringency of Japanese poetic conventions itself points to a gamelike conception of art” (Bordwell, 1988, p. 144). He provides examples of cross-breeding between Japanese poetry and Ozu’s approach: “His self-imposed constraints could be seen as like those rigid codes of the poetic tradition... Even his overt but elusive narration has an analogue in linguistic resources which Japanese poetry exploits” (Bordwell, 1988, p. 144). Nonetheless, Bordwell positions “poetics of cinema” as essentially a deviation vis-à-vis classic norms of film form. Whereas he provides a comprehensive description of these norms, by the very nature of the “exceptional” character of the norms associated with the poetics of cinema, he does not provide any overall general theory of film poetics.

A recent contribution to this topic has been made by David Paul Foster in his PhD thesis *Kino-Poiêsis: Towards a Poetics of Poetic Film* (Foster, 2009). Foster explains that “While critics often apply the term “poetic” as a placeholder for words such as difficult, beautiful or inchoate in relation to film, this dissertation argues that there are discernible qualities in certain films that warrant the name poetic” (Foster, 2009, abstract).

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<sup>81</sup> For example, he states: “Ozu’s scenes can be imagined as detached units, members of a small paradigmatic class available for re-use in later combinations”(Bordwell, 1988, p. 63)

Foster follows in the footsteps of the Formalists and neo-formalists. He suggests that poetic cinema is “a mode of filmmaking that is reflexive, lyrical and challenges narrativity” and should be ultimately understood as a “mode of direct expression whose metaphoric structure and lyric orientation challenge the limits of other filmic modes and maps a discursive space between fiction and non-fiction film” (Foster, 2009, abstract).

In this context Foster explores this issue at four levels: the direct connection between poetry and film, via adaptations of poems into short films; the manner in which film style disrupts narrative discourse; the role of reflexivity and visual metaphors; and theories of lyricism.

On this basis Foster provides a theoretical basis for identifying certain poetic filmmakers and films and in his thesis he studies four main film poets: Chris Marker, Stan Brakhage, Andrei Tarkovsky and Guy Maddin.

### **Classification of Poetic Filmmakers and Poetic Films**

On the basis of the above analysis, we can distinguish between two main trends for defining film poetry and film poets.

Formalist and neo-formalist analysis distinguish between film poetry and film prose in terms of use of form and narrative conventions. Film prose is identified with films that have strong linear narratives and that use “classic” storytelling devices.

From this perspective, a classic Hollywood feature-length narrative film would be defined as the archetypal form of “film prose”, whereas a film that breaches the classical norms stands a good chance of being defined as “film poetry”. In particular, a film with a linear horizontal narrative would be equated with prose, whereas a film with a non-narrative structure, or “vertical structure” would be classified in the field of poetry.

An alternative approach, focuses on the “fabula” and defines film poetry in terms of the capacity of a film to stir the viewer’s “poetic faculty”, through use of the poetic image, poetic journey and archetypes. From this perspective, it is possible to distinguish between a “film poem” and a “film with poetic force”.

A film poem would be defined as a film that has strong poetic force but an essentially non-narrative structure – such as Maya Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera*, Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin* (1927), *The Symphony of a Great City* (1927) or Norman McLaren’s *Pas de Deux* (1968).

By contrast, a film with poetic force would be defined as a film that has a narrative structure (which may be a tight structure or a looser structure) and which transports the viewer towards what has been described as the realm of the unconscious. An obvious example of a film with poetic force that has a clear narrative structure would be Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. This category may also be potentially extended to mainstream narrative films.

A formalist definition of poetic cinema may appear to be easier to define empirically, but this may be misleading. The mere fact that a film has a non-narrative or alternative structure obviously does not make it "poetic" and ultimately inclusion of any film within the pantheon of poetic cinema will always be dependent upon subjective factors (and "gatekeepers") in addition to any formal (measurable) characteristics of the film.

Ultimately, most theorists apply a combination of both definitions, however whether a specific film or filmmaker will be classified as "poetic" will depend upon specific criteria.

Most film theorists would include as poetic filmmakers, directors such as Tarkovsky, Marker, Brakhage, Deren, Maddin, Pasolini, McLaren, Cocteau, Vertov, Eisenstein, Dovshenko, Buñuel, Ruiz, Bertolucci, Ozu, and Fellini. This list includes filmmakers who focus primarily on non-narrative films, whereas others work primarily within the field of more classical narratives.

An inevitable question is raised in relation to Hollywood filmmakers, working within the studio system, who some theorists would consider to be poetic filmmakers whereas others may consider, almost by definition, that their work lies within the field of prose rather than poetry. Obvious examples include directors such as François Truffaut, Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch, Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam, Stanley Kubrick and Terence Malick.

However, this list could also be extended to include many other filmmakers whose work could be described as including at least some poetic elements, including the likes of Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Paul Schrader, Ridley Scott, David Fincher, the Wachowski brothers, George Romero, Wes Craven, Steven Spielberg, Kathryn Bigelow and even James Cameron... the list is potentially endless. For example, Warren Buckland in his book, *Directed by Steven Spielberg: Poetics of the Contemporary Hollywood Blockbuster* (Buckland, 2006) uses shot-by-shot analysis and statistical methods to analyse the filmmaking style of mainstream filmmaker Steven Spielberg. He states in the preface: "In the process of analysing [Spielberg's] blockbusters, I became attuned to his novel treatment of conventional and routine film techniques. Spielberg does not invent a new film language, but manipulates the existing language in a distinct and completely effective manner to create a quality specific to his films." (Buckland, 2006, p.1) He later embellishes upon this idea:

The main aim of this book is to examine Spielberg's poetics, the choices he makes in filming his blockbusters. Spielberg's poetics is based on his internalization of a series of highly ritualized skills and habits, which constitute his tacit knowledge. This tacit knowledge enables Spielberg to make a series of (usually consistent) choices in the construction of his blockbuster films (Buckland, 2006, p. 4).

This approach is reminiscent of David Bordwell's analysis of the "poetics" of Japanese filmmaker Ozu. However, whereas most critics would have no problem accepting Ozu as a poetic filmmaker there would be greater debate in relation to a mainstream filmmaker such as Spielberg. Buckland cites Peter Kramer in this regard: "The conceptual debate about Old Hollywood and New Hollywood, modernism and postmodernism, classicism and post-classicism is perhaps less urgent and productive than the kind of careful, systematic and complex stylistic analysis which historical poetics demands (Kramer, 1998, p.307)" (quoted in Buckland, 2006, p.4).

Buckland concludes:

If Spielberg's films consistently achieve (at least in some of their scenes) the elusive status of organic unity, or what Stefan Sharff (1982) calls a "higher level of visual meaning", it becomes possible to think of him as a "magician" – not the shaman or witch who conjures up the spiritual world, but the conjurer who has mastered the art of entertaining via technical virtuosity...through his deft manipulation of film form, he creates enchantment, wonder and amazement (Buckland, 2006, p. 224).

Similar remarks could be made about other filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese or James Cameron. But should their works be described as "poetic"?

Martin Scorsese, for example, grew up watching classic Italian neo-realism films and works by a long list of directors who would be considered by most commentators as "poetic filmmakers". In his documentary *My Voyage to Italy* (1999) he demonstrates his in-depth understanding of the "magic" associated with these films and explains how films such as *I Vitelloni* (1953) by Fellini influenced his own early films such as *Mean Streets*. Scorsese's *Hugo* (2011) is about the magic of cinema and portrays George Méliès. The film is clearly about poetic cinema, but can it be classified as also being a poetic film itself?

In the case of James Cameron, he is clearly a master of the "magic of cinema" and films such as *Avatar* transport viewers to fantastic universes, perhaps in a comparable manner to Méliès in his *Voyage to the Moon*. For example, in an interview talking about *Avatar* he stated: "A little like the surrealist artists who attempted to remain connected with their dream state, my work involves trying to remain in contact with my imagination, in order to convey it to the viewer."<sup>82</sup> Louise Keller, film critic of Urban

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<sup>82</sup> Interview in HD Vision mag, May 2011. Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.hdvision-mag.com/2011/05/avatar-james-cameron-interview.html>

Cinefile also felt comfortable describing *Titanic* as being “poetic”: “Extravagant, exhilarating, devastating, poetic, romantic and totally unforgettable, *Titanic* is an extraordinary achievement in film making, where technology astounds, yet the human story shines even brighter.”<sup>83</sup> Once again this demonstrates how ultimately the issue of whether we consider a filmmaker to be “poetic” is subjective.

Most classifications of “film poets”, however, exclude the vast majority of Hollywood filmmakers. For example, the online film library, Mubi.com, has listed the following directors in the thread, “Poets of Cinema: Filmmakers who use Film as a Poetic Medium”<sup>84</sup>: Parajanov, Ruiz, Fellini, Buñuel, Tarkovsky, Angelopoulos, Erice, Rocha, Pasolini, Cocteau, Svankmajer, Greenaway, Jodorowsky, Tarr, Vlacil, Antonioni, Malick, Kieslowski, Bergman, Satyajit Ray, Rabinranath Tagore, Aleksei German and Anna Akhmatova, Eisenstein, Takeshi Kitano, Bresson, Kaurismaki, Jarmusch, Peckinpah, Hawks, Lubitsch, Pialat, Marker, Vertov, Lynch, Bertolucci, Tsai, Hou, Guerin, Bartas, Alonso, Renoir, Kubrick, Wenders, Dovzhenko, Pudovkin.

Another thread at Mubi.com lists the following Poetic Films (abridged selection)<sup>85</sup>:

*The Fountain (2006)* by Darren Aronofsky, *Persona (1996)* by Bergman, *Sex & Lucia (2001)* by Julio Medem, films by Tarkovsky, particularly *Mirror (1957)*, Antonioni, Jia Zhangke, like *Still Life (2006)*, Bela Tarr’s *Satantango (1994)*, Jean Epstein, like his version of *Fall of the House of Usher (1928)*... poetic horror such as *Eyes Without a Face (1960)*, some of Jean Rollin’s work, some of Jess Franco’s, Vigo’s *L’Atalante (1934)* and *Zero for Conduct (1933)*, Godard’s *Hail Mary (1985)*, *Band of Outsiders (1964)*, *My Life to Live (1962)* and *Contempt (1963)*, Wenders’ *Wings of Desire (1987)*, Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows (1959)*, Tsai’s *What Time is it There (2001)* and *I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone (2006)*.

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<sup>83</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://drafthouse.com/movies/titanic\\_3d/austin](http://drafthouse.com/movies/titanic_3d/austin)

<sup>84</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://mubi.com/topics/poets-of-cinema-filmmakers-who-use-film-as-a-poetic-medium?page=1>

<sup>85</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://mubi.com/topics/poetic-films>

## **Sub-conclusion**

The two principal approaches to the issue of the “poetics of cinema” - one focusing more on issues of form, plot (“syuzhet”) and the other on the subject of the film (i.e. the content, story or “fabula”) - have had a decisive impact on the history of Western cinema and the strategies adopted towards cinema in different countries. These issues will be developed in the following chapters.

## **POETICS OF CINEMA AND PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY**

Given the link between cinema, poetry and non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious - which is one of the core themes explored in this thesis - this subject has inevitably captured the interest of psychoanalytic theory.

Freud initially had greater impact on filmmaking movements and has arguably had the greatest impact on film theory. The Surrealist movement in the 1920s and 1930s drew heavily on his theories of the unconscious, and filmmakers such as Hitchcock drew on Freudian concepts.

In more recent years, the theories of Jung have had a greater impact on film theory, especially in the United States, in particular in terms of screenwriting theory, via authors such as Christopher Vogler who have been inspired by the writings of Jung and subsequently by Joseph Campbell.

Barbara Creed points out in her essay *Film and Psychoanalysis* (Hill, 1998) the ideas of Jung have had much less impact on film theory than those of Freud:

Not all theorists used Freud. Others drew on the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung and particularly his theory of archetypes, to understand film...But generally Jungian theory has never been widely applied to the cinema... Writers of the 1970s who turned to Freud and Lacan – the two most influential psychoanalysts – were critical, however, of what they perceived to be an underlying essentialism in Jungian theory, that is a tendency to explain subjectivity in unchanging, universal terms. (Hill, 1998, p.78).

Creed summarises some of the applications of Freud’s ideas to film theory as follows: the return of the repressed, Oedipal drama, narcissism, castration, hysteria and in particular the unconscious, subjectivity and sexuality.

Freud’s ideas have influenced the writings of Lacan, Metz, Baudry, Mulvey and many other theorists.

One of the main applications of Freud’s theories to film analysis has been linked to the relations that he drew between art and neuroses that result from early childhood traumas. He considered a work of art to be a symptom of the unique personality and unconscious of the individual.

The artist is different from ordinary people in that he cannot live a normal life and needs to use his art to come to terms with certain obsessions he has. Freud traced these obsessions or neuroses back



to psychological complexes which stem from childhood development. In other words, each artist will be obsessed with certain themes, rooted in his childhood, that will recur in all his works, and will indicate certain aspects of his personal development. In turn expression of these neuroses will trigger responses in viewers who have also been affected by these same neuroses.

Jung's analysis, although it may be argued to have had less impact on film theory is of significant relevance for this thesis, due to Jung's extensive writing on the topic of poetry and the fact that his analysis has fuelled subsequent research by writers such as Joseph Campbell, which in turn has had a major influence on screenwriting theory.

Jung placed much less emphasis on the question of neuroses and believed that the work of the artist may reveal something about the author, but if it is true art, it rises above the level of the individual and touches the collective. "The essence of a work of art is not to be found in the personal idiosyncracies that creep into it - indeed the more there are of them, the less it is a work of art - but in its rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the mind and heart of mankind" (quoted in Tacey, 2012, p.268). In this sense, Jung considered that the work of art may be viewed as "objective". The artist, "is in the highest degree objective, impersonal and even inhuman - or superhuman - for as an artist he is nothing but his work, and not a human being" (quoted in Tacey, 2012, p.268).

Jung shared with Freud the idea that art springs from the unconscious, but he delineates two levels of the unconscious. The first level is the "relatively thin layer immediately below the threshold of consciousness" (which Jung calls the Personal Unconscious). He defines this as the "sum-total of all those psychic processes and contents which are capable of becoming conscious and often do but are then suppressed because of their incompatibility and remain subliminal" (quoted in Tacey, 2012, p.338). This is the part of the unconscious that produces neuroses, and for which Freud's analysis is most appropriate. Below this layer Jung identified the "Collective Unconscious".

In his paper, "On the relation of analytical psychology to poetic art" (Jung, 1922), Jung emphasised the relation of poetry to the unconscious. He defines the collective unconscious as: "potentiality handed down to us from primordial times in the specific form of mnemonic images or invested in the anatomical structure of the brain" (Jung, 1922, article).

He claims that the collective unconscious is the basis upon which the artist can communicate with other people. By exploring his own unconscious, the artist comes upon ideas that may strike a strong chord with others. Jung believed that especially for a written medium, this is the only basis upon which poetic communication is possible, because the effectiveness of reference to different ideas depends upon

the reader's experience of those ideas. If the ideas come from the unconscious, then communication is only possible if there is a collective unconscious.

Jung believed that the collective unconscious is inhabited by "archetypes" or "primordial images" which are expressed through art. "They appear only in the shaped material of art as the regulative principles that shape it" (Jung, 1922, article).

Jung believed that the artist must struggle to express these archetypes, and very often uses mythological figures to do this. The language in which this is done, is:

sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from the timeless depths; glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form, a terrifying tangle of eternal chaos, a crimen laesae majestatis humanae" (Jung, 1966, p. 90).

It uses images that "are true symbols because they are the best possible expressions for something unknown - bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore" <sup>86</sup>.

Jung believed that the same archetypes recur throughout human history, expressed via art. "The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure - be it a daemon, a human being, or a process - that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed." <sup>87</sup>

Expression of primordial images is very difficult. The artist will try to use everything in his experience to convey the vividness of his vision. The artist struggles with:

a tremendous intuition striving for expression. It is like a whirlwind that seizes everything within reach and assumes visible form as it swirls around" (Jung, 1966, para 151). "Since the expression can never match the richness of the vision and can never exhaust its possibilities, the poet must have at his disposal a huge store of material if he is to communicate even a fraction of what he has glimpsed, and must make use of difficult and contradictory images in order to express the strange paradoxes of his vision.(Jung, 1966, para 151).

The poet will often resort to mythological figures to express his visions, and this has been their great importance over the ages. In modern times, when these mythologies are no longer well known, the artist must make use of different mythologies. The cinema is one possible source of such myths – inclusively the universe of fantasy and science fiction film might be interpreted as one means of tapping into universal archetypes. This issue will be discussed later in relation to superhero films.

Jung believed that art springs from the unconscious and its images always have dual nature. They are morally neutral and have the "ambiguity of the dream". They can suggest both "good" and "evil" qualities. Art is forged in the unconscious he suggested and the "divine frenzy of the artist comes perilously close to a pathological state" (Jung 1922, article).

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<sup>86</sup> Quoted in [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://frithluton.com/lectures-and-publications/](https://frithluton.com/lectures-and-publications/)

<sup>87</sup> [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://www.azquotes.com/quote/652303](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/652303)

Jung suggests that a great work of art is like a dream. For all its apparent obviousness, it does not explain itself and is always ambiguous.

Jung believed that there are two distinct types of poetic creation, which he called the "psychological" and the "visionary". This is very similar to the earlier distinction made between heightened consciousness and deep unconscious images. "Psychological" poetry is drawn from a man's life but is seen with such sensitivity and clarity that it is raised from the commonplace to the poetic. Jung believed that this is the nature of the majority of works of art and that this is the basis on which most people approach art. "Visionary poetry" is that which draws directly from the unconscious - from dreams and visions. He suggested that this comes from " hinterlands of man's mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness."<sup>88</sup> This is the field of poetry which most explicitly recognises forces of the unconscious, and so for Jung was the most interesting.

This distinction has also been analysed by filmmakers such as Cocteau, Tarkovsky or Pasolini (see below).

Jung provided examples of the different types of poetry. He claims that Faust is divided between the two types. He stated that Part I is "psychological", while Part II is "visionary". He considered that other examples of visionary art include Dante, Nietzsche's Dionysian experiences, Wagner's Ring and William Blake's poetry and painting.

Jung considers that artistic creation is not a voluntary process. He describes the artist as a demon possessed, as someone within whom the call of the unconscious is so strong that he has to follow it, even if this is at the cost of his personal health and happiness. He is "overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could never have brought into being". (Dyer, 1991 <sup>89</sup>) "He can only obey the apparently alien impulse within him and follow it where it leads, seeing that his work is greater than himself, and wields a power which is not his and which he cannot command"!! He is caught in the "magic circle of an alien will" (quoted in Jacoby, 1992, p. 70). Jung compared artistic creation to a child growing in the womb. "The creative process has a feminine quality, and the creative work arises from unconscious depths - we might truly say from the 'realm of the Mothers'" <sup>90</sup>. Since creative inspiration has a divine quality, this creates strong parallels with the myth of divine conception and virgin birth.

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<sup>88</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://visionaryfictionalliance.com/carl-jung-and-visionary-fiction-part-1/>

<sup>89</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.cjungpage.org/learn/resources/cross-currents/757-cross-currents-chapter-10>

<sup>90</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://carljungdepthpsychologysite.blog/2019/09/21/the-creative-process-has-feminine-quality/#.XbG6TJNKjys>

Jung therefore believed that every artist finds it difficult to fit into society and has a duality within which two forces are at war: 'a longing for happiness, satisfaction and security,' and a 'ruthless passion for creation'. This will force the artist to move away from the paths of the normal man. "A person must pay dearly for the divine gift of creative life"<sup>91</sup>. But this moving away will also enable the artist to explore the unconscious. "The normal man can follow the general trend without injury to himself; but the man who takes to the back streets and alleys because he cannot endure the broad highway will be the first to discover the psychic elements that are waiting to play. (Jung, 1922, p. 322).

The fact that, according to Jung, art draws from the collective unconscious means that it can speak to all peoples and all times. "Whoever speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices"/' 'At such moments we are no longer individuals but the race; the voice of all mankind resounds in us" (Jung, 1966, p 122). According to Jung the creative process consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking.

The idea that art delves in that area of society where it is most deficient is important to Jung. He says of the primordial image:

This image has lain buried and dormant in the unconscious since the dawn of history: it is awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a great error deflects society from the right path". He adds to this, "whenever conscious life becomes one sided or adopts a false attitude, these images "instinctively" rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seems to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or of the epoch (Jung, 1966, p. 104).

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<sup>91</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://jungcurrents.com/jung-creative-fire-artist>

## **Journey to the other world**

The transportation from the everyday world to the “other world” of the unconscious is important for the cinema, since it can be argued that the visual medium represents a new powerful form of literacy as argued above, that it is particularly well suited to forging a dialogue with the unconscious.

From this perspective, scientific communication enables people to share the ideas springing from their logical and analytical powers, whereas poetic communication allows them to share glimpses of their unconscious.

From a theoretical perspective the possibility of both forms of communication depends upon the existence of conscious and unconscious faculties, i.e. it requires the existence of collective conscious and a collective unconscious.

Art can be seen as being linked, at least in part, to exploration of the unconscious of both the creator and of the society of which he forms part. This is a journey into the dark, attempting to reveal what normally lies hidden.

This "hidden self" has also been compared to the soul, and the hidden force that guides our conscious actions. Emerson stated:

All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect, or the will, but master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie - an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. (Emerson, 1841, article)

If poetry may be linked to the unconscious, this poses two problems. Firstly, how can the poet achieve perception of the unconscious, and secondly, how can s/he communicate that perception with others.

If one accepts the dichotomy between consciousness and the unconscious, then this suggests that one needs to remove oneself from the conscious world and enter the unconscious world. The most obvious way is through dreaming - sleep and day dreams – or via trance states, caused by a wide range of stimuli – varying from yoga to chemicals.

The filmic experience, especially the total concentration associated with immersion in a film theatre, may also enable such a “voyage” as described herein.

These processes remove one from the immediate environment, and allows the mind to roam freely. This identifies poetic thought with meditation/trance and temporary removal from the external world. F.C. Prescott said of this, “the poetic life, like the religious one, requires a renunciation of the life of the sense - a temporary renunciation at any rate, for the vision comes only when the senses are in

abeyance" (Prescott, 1922, p.52). He admits that the poet cannot remain in such seclusion, for he must live in order to build up a fund of images which his mind can play upon. However, he will need periods of renunciation. This ties in with Cocteau's argument that all poets suffer from a fear or sclerosis of action (see below).

There is another view of the poet however. This defines poetic vision as heightened vision, as a heightened consciousness – like the power of the shaman - but does not establish a dichotomy between the conscious and the unconscious. This produces a very different form of poetry, and is closer to Pasolini's expression of his love for reality and direct experience (see below). Removal from reality is necessary for writing and collecting one's thoughts, however the source of ideas comes from a heightened consciousness rather than contemplation of dreams and day-dreams.

If one accepts that poetry springs from the unconscious, then it follows that the dominant themes of poetry will correspond to strong psychological patterns of thought. Maud Bodkin in *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (Bodkin, 1965) : outlines a central theme for many poems: that of a voyage or journey. This establishes a natural link to storytelling and cinema, which can also often be portrayed as a journey.

Bodkin compares this process to psychological development, through which an individual moves through cycles of expansion and growth, followed by periods of withdrawal and depression. The conscious mind, or ego, develops, and expands, and then contracts and returns to the unconscious mind, or the id. There is a continuous series of cycles of death and rebirth.

Jung describes the purging of the will followed by reconciliation with itself as "the night sea journey"<sup>92</sup>. It is often a very harrowing voyage, and Bodkin claims that many classic poems use this journey as the basis of their inspiration. In particular, Bodkin cites Dante's *Inferno* and T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. These poems describe a voyage which is often unbearable in its intensity, but nonetheless holds the reader's attention through the process of movement, and the hope of rebirth and escape.

In this perspective, the reference world underlying poems is the inner state suffered by the poet. Expression of this inner state is achieved by attention to detail, and very often details that would normally appear trivial can have great psychological significance. The poet attempts to find motifs that will capture and express the emotions he is feeling. Bodkin outlines some of the main motifs that recur in poetry, and are used for this effect: the wind, storm-clouds, slime, deep colours, raging seas, calm waters, rain, fire, mountain peaks, deep valleys, chasms, deep pits, fountains, streams, monsters, barren shores,

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<sup>92</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/transcending-the-past/201608/the-night-sea-journey-lunar-consciousness-and-the-hero>

forests, darkness, trees, vegetation. These elements suggest many different impressions, and are used by the poet to weave together the complex of different emotions he wishes to convey.

## **POETICS OF CINEMA THROUGH THE EYES OF THE FILMMAKERS**

From the early years of cinema, certain filmmakers viewed themselves as “film poets”. If we explore their writings we find further references to corroborate the ideas cited above.

Many filmmakers working within the field of “art cinema” – including Vertov, Cocteau, Pasolini, Buñuel, Tarkovsky and Raul Ruiz <sup>93</sup> - explicitly refer to their work as “poetic cinema” and several wrote about poetry and film, and their interconnections. Others have had strong personal ties with poets, such as Bertolucci and Tarkovsky who were both sons of very famous poets. This potentially gives them a privileged insight into the relation between poetry and film.

What distinguishes the writings of the filmmakers from the film theorists is their passionate description of their own art. Theorists often focus on more formal aspects of the poetics of cinema, whereas the filmmakers emphasise that their main concern is to communicate with the audience and open their eyes.

Many film-makers describe film as an essentially poetic medium. Buñuel claimed that: "In all films, good or bad, cinematic poetry struggles to come to the surface and reveal itself" <sup>94</sup>. Pasolini said, "To make films is to be a poet" <sup>95</sup> whereas Cocteau compared film to a collection of poems, stating that a film can be compared to a poet's book (Cocteau, 1972).

Film has been compared to poetry on two levels: image and montage. In the former case, many filmmakers consider that all film has a poetic element. Pasolini wrote that "A tree photographed is poetic, a human face photographed is poetic...Straight away you are close to the mystery and ambiguity of reality...The cinema is a language which expresses reality with reality" <sup>96</sup>.

Maya Deren spoke of the shot's "innocent arrogance" - suggesting "the objective authority of reality" <sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> The list is endless. We could also include Rossellini, Fellini, Bertolucci, Bergman, Godard, early Soviet filmmakers such as Dovshenko, Eisenstein, English directors who moved to "Hollywood" such as Chaplin and Hitchcock, Japanese filmmakers such as Ozu and Kurosawa and American independent filmmakers such as Welles, Deren, Brakhage, Lynch etc... (see below)

<sup>94</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://parallax-view.org/2015/06/24/subida-al-cielo-mexican-busride/>

<sup>95</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/brightonline/issue-number-seven/how-do-women-writers-challenge-male-centred-language3>

<sup>96</sup> All 3 quotes: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/2018/02/07/interview-pier-paolo-pasolini-oswald-stack/>

<sup>97</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://makeitthink.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/cinematography-the-creative-use-of-reality.pdf>

Pasolini noted, "When I make a film I am always in reality, among the trees and among people... there is no symbolic or conventional filter between me and reality, as there is in literature." <sup>98</sup>

Tarkovsky stated: "No other art form can compare with cinema in the force, precision and starkness with which it conveys awareness of facts and aesthetic structures existing amid changing with time" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p. 68). He added that "The poet thinks in images with which...he can express his vision of the world" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.50). He noted that "isolated impressions of the day have set off impulses within us, evoked associations; objects and circumstances have stayed in our memory, but with no sharply defined contours, incomplete, apparently fortuitous" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.23). Tarkovsky believed that the image has its own internal unity, and establishes inner connections between elements. "The image makes palpable a unity in which manifold different elements are contiguous and reach over into each other" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.38) The image also reaches into infinity. "The image stretches out into infinity, and leads to the absolute" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.104). "The great function of the artistic image is to be a kind of detector of infinity...towards which our reason and our feelings go soaring with joyful, thrilling haste" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.109).

Buñuel shared the same view saying that film can capture the mischievous, surrealist nature of an object and thereby convey "the poetry, the mystery, and all that completes and enlarges tangible realities"<sup>99</sup>. "Mysteries and the fantastic", he says, are the only things which are characteristically cinematic, adding that: "The most worthwhile contribution, is the raising of a humdrum act to the level of dramatic action." <sup>100</sup>

Vertov located the ability of cinema to capture the detail and mystery of the world with the power of the "cinema-eye", which he believed was superior to the human eye. He stated that the Kino-eye is the possibility to "make the invisible visible, the unclear clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt" (Vertov, 1985, p. 120), He summed this up as "life caught unawares" (Vertov, 1985, p. 123) which is reminiscent of Cocteau's statement that he tries to "catch his live beasts unawares" <sup>101</sup>.

Vertov viewed the film poet as a hunter or "kinok":

He's a scout. An observer. A marksman. A path finder. An explorer. But he's a poet as well. He penetrates life for artistic purposes...He does not shut himself up in an office. He leaves the cage of his room. Paints from nature. Observes. Experiments, takes his bearings in strange surroundings. Makes instant decisions. Camouflages, making use of natural resources. And at the vital moment, fires accurately. A film sniper. Calmness, bravery, coolness, initiative, self-control. No clerical or other procedures. Simultaneous decision and implementation. (Vertov, 1985, p. 223).

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<sup>98</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.azquotes.com/author/31432-Pier\\_Paolo\\_Pasolini](https://www.azquotes.com/author/31432-Pier_Paolo_Pasolini)

<sup>99</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/Buñuel-luis/life-and-legacy/>

<sup>100</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.oocities.org/tlverburg/bicycle.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theartsdesk.com/film/jean-cocteau-poet-can-never-die>



Tarkovsky referred to "the original sin of [cinema's] genesis in the market place" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.125) and added that "the true cinema image is built upon destruction of genre, upon conflict with it" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.150). By contrast, Fellini believed that the link to the market endows cinema a unique quality. "The movie business is macabre. Grotesque. It is a combination of a football game and a brothel."<sup>102</sup>

Other filmmakers, such as Hitchcock attempted to innovate while working within commercial cinema. Fairly early in his career Hitchcock remarked, "On the whole nowadays, I try to tell a story in the simplest possible way, so that I can feel sure it will hold the attention of any audience and won't puzzle them"<sup>103</sup> "I have learnt from experience how easily small touches are overlooked"<sup>104</sup> he added, "I have become commercially minded, afraid that anything at all subtle may be missed"<sup>105</sup> - "The art of directing for the commercial market is knowing just how far you can go"<sup>106</sup>.

French filmmaker Cocteau delineated two camps of filmmakers - brotherly works, or poetic cinema, that he characterised by "malaise, inopportuneness, lameness and discomfort" and commercial cinema, where "everything flows too fast and walks too straight" (Cocteau, 1927, article)

Pasolini also distinguished films into two families: "poetry" and "prose". "The cinema of poetry...is the cinema which adopts a particular technique just as a poet adopts a particular technique when he writes verse" (quoted in Stack, 1969, p. 153).

Godard identified two types of film - straight line and circular - and two types of film-maker. The first, like Eisenstein, Hitchcock and Resnais prepare the film fully beforehand, and shooting is merely a practical application. The second, like Rouch and Godard himself, use film-making as a search, saying that they know they will arrive, but don't know where and depend much more on improvisation.<sup>107</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, the possibility of using film to awaken the consciousness of the masses appealed in the context of modernism and avant-garde ideas, due to the prevailing optimism that a new world was about to be unleashed that would "liberate" the ordinary man.

Fellini saw one of the main roles of cinema as breaking down "monadism" and the atomisation of society, and providing contact between people. "Our trouble as modern men" says Fellini, "is loneliness, and this begins in the very depths of our being"<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://onvideo.org/killers-anonymous-gets-together-on-digital-disc-aug-27/>

<sup>103</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight\\_and\\_Sound\\_\(1937\)\\_-My\\_Own\\_Methods](https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight_and_Sound_(1937)_-My_Own_Methods)

<sup>104</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight\\_and\\_Sound\\_\(1937\)\\_-My\\_Own\\_Methods](https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight_and_Sound_(1937)_-My_Own_Methods)

<sup>105</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight\\_and\\_Sound\\_\(1937\)\\_-My\\_Own\\_Methods](https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight_and_Sound_(1937)_-My_Own_Methods)

<sup>106</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight\\_and\\_Sound\\_\(1937\)\\_-My\\_Own\\_Methods](https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Sight_and_Sound_(1937)_-My_Own_Methods)

<sup>107</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2015/16-legendary-filmmakers-praised-by-other-great-directors/>

<sup>108</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.academia.edu/7423070/La\\_Strada\\_and\\_Soul\\_Murder](https://www.academia.edu/7423070/La_Strada_and_Soul_Murder)

Vertov had a very similar role in mind, linked to the agenda prevailing after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia: "Our basic, programmatic objective is to aid each oppressed individual and the proletariat as a whole in their effort to understand the phenomena of life around them" (Vertov, 1985, p.49). "The establishing of a class bond that is visual (kino-eye) and auditory (radio-ear) between the proletarians of all nations and all lands" (Vertov, 1985, p.50). He added "Everyone has something of the poet, artist, musician. Or else there are no poets, artists or musicians" (Vertov, 1985, p.162). Vertov emphasised how film, although direct a form communication, may have different effects on different people. "Thoughts must be transmitted from the screen directly, without translation into words. It's a living communication with the screen, a transmission from brain to brain. Each person grabs that which corresponds to his capabilities and knowledge. Each penetrates into the sphere of ideas, the germ of which stirs in his own consciousness" (Vertov, 1985, p.260).

Until the late 1960s, poetic cinema was viewed as a revolutionary force that could transform society and this perspective was tied into broader political and ideological views of how art could forge a better world - "In a world so badly made as ours" said Buñuel "there is only one road - rebellion".<sup>109</sup>

Buñuel criticised the way that film often limits itself to copying the novel or the stage, which are "less richly endowed with the means of psychological expression". He believed that most cinema takes "great pains not to disturb our peace of mind" and thus the authorities "keep the marvellous window of the screen closed to the liberating world of poetry"<sup>110</sup>.

### **A new international language**

Pasolini described the new international language of cinema as being trans-national and trans-class, that owes nothing, and bears no relationship, to any other art form (Stack, 1969).

This background context also fostered ties between filmmakers of different countries, who considered that they belonged to a single community and movement.

Cinema was seen as a very powerful and potentially revolutionary tool. Vertov described the camera as a divine force – "the all-seeing, unmasking eye" (Vertov, 1985, p. 251).

Buñuel added, "The white eye of the screen need only reflect the light that is properly its own to blow up the universe"<sup>111</sup>, echoing the view of Cocteau who thought that cinema is "a powerful weapon for projection of thought, even into a crowd unwilling to accept it"<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.academia.edu/35996870/The\\_Surrealist\\_Cinema\\_of\\_Luis\\_Buñuel](https://www.academia.edu/35996870/The_Surrealist_Cinema_of_Luis_Buñuel)

<sup>110</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.ubu.com/papers/Buñuel\\_luis-statement.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/Buñuel_luis-statement.html)

<sup>111</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.ubu.com/papers/Buñuel\\_luis-statement.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/Buñuel_luis-statement.html)

<sup>112</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.terramedia.co.uk/quotations/Quotes\\_C.htm](http://www.terramedia.co.uk/quotations/Quotes_C.htm)

Several film-makers suggested that the new language of film is peculiarly able to deal with the problems of the modern age. Tarkovsky suggested that "it was the instrument which humanity had to have, in order to increase its mastery over the real world" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.82). He believed that cinema is able to do this because the rhythm of cinema "most closely corresponds with the rhythm of modern life" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.83).

Maya Deren identified the cinema with the New World. She contrasted the old static art forms, which were appropriate to the Old World, with the dynamic characteristics of film, which are appropriate to the modern world of movement, energy and dynamism.<sup>113</sup>

Buñuel shared a similar perception and saw this as the reason why America was the home of the cinema. He considered that Latin countries are overburdened with tradition, mysticism, culture and imagination while America is forever forging ahead to something new.

Several film-makers have advocated the idea that film should shock its audience, and reveal the most disturbing side of phenomena. Buñuel made a series of statements in favour of challenging the audience's sensibilities. His desire to "open the eyes" of the audience is evident in the famous eye-slitting shot of *Le Chien Andalou*. "For me it is natural - to see from the sadistic, not the neo-realist or mystical point of view. In the end I always choose whatever is the most disturbing"<sup>114</sup>. He said that he wanted to evoke "a more profound, devouring and terrible sensuality...akin to female perversity and the vision of "a sensual, virginal, demotic little girl"<sup>115</sup>.

Buñuel deliberately chose images which would both attract and repel audiences. He said of *Le Chien Andalou*, that he aimed to provoke in the spectator instinctive reactions of attraction and repulsion. It uses "its "ideology", its psychic motivation and the systematic use of the poetic image as an arm to overthrow accepted notions"<sup>116</sup>. This is specifically intended to attack the spectator, who has been socialized by mainstream norms, "it attacks him...to the degree that he belongs to a society with which surrealism is at war"<sup>117</sup>.

Fellini, in his own manner, aimed to challenge the "ideal". "The ideal, the idealised life, the idealised concepts can be extremely dangerous for our mental health"<sup>118</sup>. Fellini considered belief in the "ideal" to result from "educational conditioning" and he believed that man required a "backward walk"

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<sup>113</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from

[https://monoskop.org/images/3/31/Deren\\_Maya\\_An\\_Anagram\\_of\\_Ideas\\_on\\_Art\\_Form\\_and\\_Film.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/3/31/Deren_Maya_An_Anagram_of_Ideas_on_Art_Form_and_Film.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://tarnmoor.com/2018/06/13/v-that-obscure-object-of-desire/>

<sup>115</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/reviews/obscure-desire-review/>

<sup>116</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://trinitycollegestage3media.wordpress.com/2014/02/11/un-chien-andalou/>

<sup>117</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://jahsonic.com/Andalou.html>

<sup>118</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://normanbuckley.com/blog/cinema/fellini-considering-the-ideal/>

in order to escape from it. "I want to suggest to modern man a road of inner liberation, to accept and love life the way it is without idealising it, without projecting oneself into idealised images on a moral or ethical plane."<sup>119</sup>

Cocteau considered several devices for winning over the audience, such as pictures, stars, decors, that will sugar the pill he wants them to swallow in order to cure what he calls the malady of stupidity (Cocteau, 1972).

One of the main challenges identified by the film poets was to be able to advance this radical agenda which was increasingly at odds with capitalist society, where people are caught up in constant fast-paced change. Cocteau stated that society doesn't suffer from a conspiracy of noise but rather a conspiracy of silence. There is an attraction for stories that are "falsier than falsehood" produced by journalists who disfigure facts' to please audiences. He claimed that this outweighs the attraction of film poetry, which is "truer than truth". (Cocteau, 1988, p.152) According to Cocteau, the bustle of modern day life makes it very difficult for audiences to develop the mode of contemplation and muse which is necessary to art. This is true for both critic and untrained viewer. He added, "Every time one slips into the picturesque, the spectators grab hold of it as though it were a lifebelt in a shipwreck. They have no eyes for anything else."<sup>120</sup>

Another challenge to poetic filmmakers was the staid vision of the arts of the bourgeois elite. Cocteau suggests that the elite pinches itself to remain awake, but considers that the greatest civilisations are ones in which elites are confident to succumb to the power of art and dreams. (Cocteau, 1972).

Fellini pointed to the materialism and empiricism of the modern world as a major obstacle to film art. "We live in an age that has made a cult of methodology, that makes us weakly believe that scientific or ideological ideas have the edge over reality, and that is suspicious of fantasy, of individual originality, in other words of personality"<sup>121</sup> (quoted in Mendelowitz, undated, p.5)

Vertov also noted this, "Truth is not pleasing to everyone. You speak an unpleasant truth; they smile and conceal their malice" (Vertov, 1985, p. 209). He said that when his goal is finally reached: "The liars and the hypocrites will fare badly. Their masks will be torn off. No one will be able to hide from the all-seeing, unmasking eye" (Vertov, 1985, p. 251).

Tarkovsky emphasised how difficult it is to appreciate a great work. He quoted Goethe who said, "It is as hard to read a great book as it is to write it" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.46). Artistic communication rests on the ability of the audience to identify with the creative process undergone by the artist, which

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<sup>119</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/nholland/8andhalf.htm>

<sup>120</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.reddit.com/r/TrueFilm/comments/4bakyx/my\\_history\\_of\\_film\\_in\\_quotes/](https://www.reddit.com/r/TrueFilm/comments/4bakyx/my_history_of_film_in_quotes/)

<sup>121</sup> La Strada and Soul Murder, Ed Mendelowitz, p. 5

Tarkovsky believed is being destroyed by modern society. "One of the saddest aspects of our time is the total destruction in people's awareness of all that goes with a conscious sense of the beautiful" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.42). "Modern mass culture, is crippling people's souls, setting up barriers between man and the crucial questions of his existence, his consciousness of himself as a spiritual being" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.42). The majority are "deaf to the pain undergone by the artists in order to share with others the truth he has reached" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.42).

### **Vertical cinema**

Several filmmakers, such as Pasolini, have stated that poetic films must have a different formal structure to "prose" films. Maya Deren, for example, distinguished between two alternative strategies of development for any work of art: horizontal or vertical. She identified horizontal development as relating to narrative progression, which follows a "causal logic". Vertical development, by contrast, is based on poetic development, which follows an "emotional logic". Deren stated that horizontal development moves "from feeling to feeling" with "one action leading to another", following a "logic of actions" or "causal logic of events" (Maas, 1963, article).

Vertical development "probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth." The different elements are "held together by an emotion or a meaning that they have in common, rather than by the logical action". They are "brought to a centre, gathered up, and collected by the fact that they all refer to a common emotion, although the incidents themselves may be quite disparate" (Maas, 1963, article).

Deren suggested that vertical development can occur throughout the entire work, which makes it a poem, or it can occur as episodes within an overall narrative framework – i.e. as elements of poetry within prose. Deren cites Shakespeare as using both. Horizontal development moves the action from moment to moment, while vertical development explores the individual moment. Deren cites Hamlet's soliloquy as an example of vertical development. If there had been purely, horizontal development, she says Hamlet would just have stated "I can't make up my mind" (Maas, 1963, article).

Tarkovsky held a very similar view of "poetic development" and believed that exploration of such "poetry" was the proper role of cinema. "In my view, poetic reasoning is closer to the laws by which thought develops, and thus to life itself, than is the logic of traditional drama" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.20). He added, "I find poetic links, the logic of poetry in cinema, extraordinarily pleasing" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.18). He felt that there should be "associative linking" between images, that requires the audience to join them together. "The artist obliges the audience to build the separate parts into a whole" (Tarkovsky,

1989, p.21). "Through poetic connections, feeling is heightened and the spectator is made more active" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.20).

This idea was also explored by Buñuel and Pasolini, who linked vertical development to the pattern of dreams. The latter suggested that the very nature of cinematic art made it a strong parallel to dreams: "Every attempt at memorisation is...primarily a cinema sequence...All dreams are a series of image-signs which have all the characteristics of the cinematic-sequence: close-ups, long shots, etc."<sup>122</sup> Buñuel stated "Among all means of human expression, [cinema's] way of functioning is most reminiscent of the work of the mind during sleep."<sup>123</sup> He added - "A film is like an involuntary imitation of a dream"<sup>124</sup> - "the darkness that slowly settles over a movie theater is equivalent to the act of closing the eyes. Then, on the screen, as within the human being, the nocturnal voyage into the unconscious begins"<sup>125</sup> "The film acts directly upon the spectator presenting him with concrete people and things and creating a hypnotic state. "In the silence and darkness of the theatre it isolates him from what we might call his normal psychic habitat. For these reasons it can stimulate him more effectively than any other form of human expression...it can also more effectively stultify him."<sup>126</sup>

As in the theatre, the audience views the spectacle in the dark, but the darkness of the cinema is at times total. Indeed as Amos Vogel has pointed out, the audience in fact spends half of the film's length in complete darkness. The ability of the cinema to imitate thoughts and dreams is considered by many to be the essence of its poetry. Buñuel stated, "The cinema seems to have been invented to explore the life of the subconscious, the roots of which punctuate deeply"<sup>127</sup>.

Hitchcock also believed that editing should be organic, linked to the psychological exploration of the scene: "The screen ought to speak its own language, fully coined. It can't do that unless it treats an acted scene as a piece raw material, which must be broken up, taken to bits, before can be woven into an expressive visual pattern"<sup>128</sup>. He added that it is necessary to "build up the psychological situation piece by piece, using the camera to emphasise first one then the other"<sup>129</sup>. "Each detail is forced in turn on the audience to reveal its psychological necessity."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://dilupshakya.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/pasolini1976-cinema-n-poetry.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.stonesoferasmus.com/2010/07/luis-Buñuel-on-film-and-subconscious.html>

<sup>124</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.stonesoferasmus.com/2010/07/luis-Buñuel-on-film-and-subconscious.html>

<sup>125</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ontheboards.org/blog/in-dream-dances>

<sup>126</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.stills.org/sites/default/files/Buñuel%20Cinema%20Instrument%20of%20Poetry.pdf>

<sup>127</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.academia.edu/37148194/Gender\\_as\\_trauma\\_in\\_Bu%C3%B1uel\\_s\\_Un\\_chien\\_andalou.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/37148194/Gender_as_trauma_in_Bu%C3%B1uel_s_Un_chien_andalou.pdf)

<sup>128</sup> "Direction," a chapter in Footnotes to the Film, edited by Charles Davy (New York, Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 6.

<sup>129</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.jukolart.us/narrative-film-technique/hitchcocks-style-pure-cinema.html>

<sup>130</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://filmeducation.org/pdf/film/Psycho.pdf>

## **Metre and rhythm are essential to film**

Just as metre and rhythm are essential to written poetry, filmmakers identify similar importance within their work.

Tarkovsky wrote extensively about the importance of rhythm. He believed that the crucial element of the shot, vital to the editing, is its rhythm. "The dominant all-powerful factor of the film image is rhythm expressing the course of time within the frame" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.113). "Editing brings together shots which are already filled with time, and organizes the unified, living structure inherent in the film; and the time that pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive, is of varying rhythmic pressure" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.114). Thus, Tarkovsky believed that it is rhythm, and not editing which is the foundation of a film's overall structure. "I am convinced that it is rhythm, and not editing, as people tend to think, that is the main formative element of cinema" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.119).

Furthermore, Tarkovsky distinguished rhythm from the length of each shot. "The distinctive time running through the shots makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of the detailed pieces, but by the pressure of time that runs through them" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.117). "Rhythm then is not the metrical sequence of pieces; what makes it is the time-thrust within the frames" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.119).

Rhythm expresses both external movement, but also internal rhythm. The character's facial and bodily movements are expressions of their inner rhythm. They may be sitting delivering a monologue, but their expressions may be very agitated, suggesting a very nervous and rapid pace of thought and inner movement. It is through rhythm that the director conveys the inner life of his characters, and also indirectly his own inner life. Tarkovsky stated that "Just as from the quivering of a reed you can tell what sort of current, what pressure, there is in a river, in the same way we know the movement of time from the flow of the life-process reproduced in the shot" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.120). "It is above all through sense of time, through rhythm, that the director reveals his individuality" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.120).

Other film-makers have focused upon the importance of rhythm. Welles stated, "I seek the exact rhythm between one frame and the next. It's a question of the ear"<sup>131</sup>.

Several directors compare film rhythm and structure with music. Kurosawa compared film structure to that of a symphony. "A good structure for a screenplay is that of the symphony, with its three or four movements and differing tempos...the easiest for people of today to understand."<sup>132</sup> (Kurosawa,

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<sup>131</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://cinephiliabeyond.org/touch-evil-orson-welles-grandiose-film-noir-took-four-decades-shine-intended-form/>

<sup>132</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://akirakurosawa.info/akira-kurosawa-quotes/kurosawa-quotes-screenplay/>

1983, p. 142) Welles echoed this, "A strip of film is performed like a musical score, and that performance is determined by the editing"<sup>133</sup>. He stated that there were three possible musical tempos: the rubato, the romantic, and the "dry, academic".

### **The Creative Process as a mixture of intuition and the intellect**

Many film-makers assert that they are not in control of the creative process. This is linked to Plato's idea that poets are invaded by a divine spirit.

Bergman compares the creative act to a voyage into the dark, and contrasts the role of intuition and intellect. "I throw a spear into the dark. That is my intuition. And then, I have to send an expedition into the jungle, very slowly - that is my intellect - to find the spear, and to find the way to the spear"<sup>134</sup>. He added that he then uses his intellect analyses the creation of his intuition, and decide why the spear is in one place rather than another ". This is analogous to the hypothetico-deductive method in science, in which the imagination produces the hypothesis and the intellect deduces its logical consequences. The irrational produces the idea, the rational, the concrete shape.

### **Autobiographical dimension**

Film-poetry is often seen as more personal or autobiographical than other films, and the writings of the film-makers reinforce this.

Tarkovsky asserted that the most important qualities in an artist are "total honesty and sincerity towards himself" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.165), "sincerity, truthfulness, and clean hands" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.184), and "selfless devotion to duty" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.189). He stated, "Every artist as they say drinks from his own glass" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.149). This idea is echoed by many other film-makers. It is the infusion of the artist's spirit with a work that gives it vitality. Orson Welles remarked that "Any work...is good to the degree that it expresses the man who made it - contains his' flesh and blood"<sup>135</sup> and added "A film – is never really good unless the camera is an eye in the head of a poet"<sup>136</sup>.

Many films are self consciously autobiographical. Fellini said, "Each of my stories is really a period of my life. I can't distinguish my films one from another. For myself, I've always directed the same film"<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://cinephiliabeyond.org/touch-evil-orson-welles-grandiose-film-noir-took-four-decades-shine-intended-form/>

<sup>134</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/ingmar\\_bergman\\_759336](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/ingmar_bergman_759336)

<sup>135</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/reviews/tag/orson-welles/>

<sup>136</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.wellesnet.com/eyes-orson-welles-review/>

<sup>137</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.azquotes.com/author/4723-Federico\\_Fellini?p=3](https://www.azquotes.com/author/4723-Federico_Fellini?p=3)



It is the autobiographical element that drives the film-maker as if possessed. Fellini says, "What is autobiographical is the story of a kind of call that pierces the torpor of the soul and wakes me. I should very much like to stay in that state, in those moments when the call reaches me. I feel, then, that someone is knocking at the door and I don't go and open it."<sup>138</sup>

Kurosawa said of his films, "Within each film I have become one with many different kinds of people, and I have lived their lives". (Kurosawa, 1983. P. 97)

Tarkovsky stated that, "true artistic inspiration is always a torment for the artist, almost to the point of endangering his life" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.188). This is because, "The artist cannot express the moral idea of his time unless he touches all its running sores, unless he suffers these sores himself" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.88). "Film poets" differ between those who draw mainly from their dreams and imagination, and those who draw from the world around them. Tarkovsky refers to this, "Artists are divided into those who create their own inner world, and those who recreate reality. I undoubtedly belong to the first" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.118).

Many film-makers have stressed the importance of their dreams. Polanski said, "For as far back as I can remember the line between fantasy and reality has been blurred."<sup>139</sup> He said that as a child, he lived in "a separate, make-believe world of my own"<sup>140</sup>, which was the key to his existence. He concludes, "Art and poetry, the land of imagination always seemed more real to me."<sup>141</sup> Buñuel makes a similar statement. "Even as a young man I was able to glimpse something that on the spiritual and poetic plane, goes far beyond Christian morality." The ability to keep in tune with the dreams and visions of childhood is often important for the poet. Tarkovsky notes that, "A poet has the imagination and psychology of a child...His impressions of the world are immediate, however profound" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.41).

A very different tradition is that of the film-makers who use the world around them for their inspiration. Such film-makers live most intensely while conscious and acting within the world. Pasolini refers to his "passion for life, for reality, for physical, sexual, objectual, existential reality around me"<sup>142</sup> "The cinema is an explosion of my love for reality."<sup>143</sup>

Fellini expresses a similar love for the world around him. "I must know everything about everyone, make love to everything around me"<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://helplog4bmm.blogspot.com/>

<sup>139</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/polanski-libel-trial-compelling-viewing/article18241735/>

<sup>140</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/mar/27/featuresreviews.guardianreview14>

<sup>141</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/mar/27/featuresreviews.guardianreview14>

<sup>142</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://sgtr.wordpress.com/tag/pier-paolo-pasolini/>

<sup>143</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1283624>

<sup>144</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.g-truc.net/post-0237.html>

## **Opening the audience's eyes**

Tarkovsky believed that art can help both the director and the audience reach "towards the infinite" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.238). "An artistic discovery occurs each time as a new and unique image of the world, a hieroglyph of absolute truth" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.37). It appears to capture the universe within it. "It appears as a revelation, as a momentary, passionate wish to grasp intuitively and at a stroke all the laws of this world - its beauty and ugliness, its compassion and cruelty, its infinity and its limitations" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.37)

Tarkovsky compares art to an "endless system of spheres" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.39), whereas science is an "unending staircase" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.39). He believed that the spectator can sense the same forces of creation that the artist underwent. "Touched by a masterpiece a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.43). This releases his spirit. "Art acts above all on the soul, shaping its spiritual structure." (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.41). "Within that aura which unites masterpieces and audiences, the best sides of our soul are made known, and we long for them to be freed" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.43). "In those moments we recognise and discover ourselves, the unfathomable depths of our own potential, and the furthest reaches of our emotions" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.43).

## **Conclusion**

Taking into consideration the ideas of theorists on written poetry, the ideas about art and poetry developed by Freud and Jung and the ideas of the above cited filmmakers, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) Many commentators suggest that film is essentially a poetic medium and this isn't solely a question of film form but is also related to the power that individual images and montage can have on non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" and the unconscious.
- 2) To achieve impact at a poetic level it is necessary to challenge the dormancy of viewers that is cultivated by modern society, which sometimes requires "sugaring the pill" by using standard narrative techniques.
- 3) Poetic filmmakers should challenge genre conventions. Some filmmakers believe that it is possible to challenge conventions but remain within genre cinema and achieve poetic force, others believe that it is necessary to develop an alternative type of cinema.

## **Summary**

Cognitive film theory is an important new current in film analysis that establishes a bridge with phenomenological film analysis that had a major influence on the so-called “film poets” working until the early 1970s and also on modernist writers such as James Joyce. It moves beyond the psychoanalytic semiotic paradigm of 1970s high theory and provides the basis for moving beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema.

I argue that it also provides a bridge, explored later in this thesis, to theories based on comparative mythology and studies of non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, as developed by theorists such as Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung and Gilbert Durand.

## **Introduction**

One of the main tenets of this thesis is that the shift in European film production that occurred in the 1970s was linked to the shift in film theory, towards the second wave of auteur theory and “high theory” and its subsequent evolutions.

This shift in film theory coincided with the rising intervention of the state in European film funding and contributed towards shaping a marked distinction within European film production between the “cinema d’auteur” and “commercial” films in each country, and between European “cinema d’auteur” and Hollywood.

A psychoanalytic-semiotic theoretical paradigm began to dominate film studies from the 1970s onwards and continues to be one of the main ways of seeing film, especially in Europe.

In the United States, the first wave of the auteur theory was widely disseminated by theorists such as Andrew Sarris. From the mid 1970s, another major influence began to gain importance in the United States inspired by the ideas of Lévi-Strauss and Joseph Campbell, and also partly linked to interest in New Age ideas.

This divergence of theoretical paradigms explains in part the divergence of the European and American film industries and is also linked to different ways of seeing the “great divide” between erudite and popular culture.

A “third way” of seeing film theory is known as “cognitive film theory”.

As defended in Ted Nannicelli's book *Cognitive Media Theory* (Nannicelli, 2014) this is not a unified theory of film, but a research tradition that originated in the 1980s and is linked to studies in neuroscience and the sciences of the mind. It emerged as a reaction against and a critique of the psychoanalytic-semiotic theoretical paradigm.

There are antecedents to cognitive film theory, including studies of phenomenology linked to theorists such as Merleau-Ponty and Henri Bergson.

The main difference in current research is the link to recent findings in neuroscience. The difference between the psychoanalytic-semiotic paradigm and the phenomenological approach may be associated to the difference between theories based on mind-body dualism and monism.

### **Living Pictures**

Cleo Hanaway-Oakley in *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of the Film* (2017) argues that the theories of spectatorship defended by Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey, underpinned by Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, considers the spectator to be a voyeur, a non-reciprocated seer, a view which is often simplified as the "male gaze".

She defends a different approach:

As cinema is essentially light rays created by a machine, the idea of experiencing it in an embodied way may be hard to grasp. However many of us will have experienced a bodily reaction to – or corporeal involvement in – a particular film. Joyce was certainly interested in cinema's capacity to engage us corporeally; he asserted that "cinematographic images act like those stimuli which produce a reflex action of the nerves" (Scholes & Kain, 1965, p.96). Phenomenology helps to explain the tactile experience of film through reevaluating the seeming dichotomy between machine and human and mechanical and fleshy. (Scholes & Kain, 1965, p.17). (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p. 17)

Hanaway-Oakley argues that both films and the real world around us are experienced through Gestalt perception or "pre-conscious perception".

She notes that early film theorists focused on the "haptic" dimension of the film experience, citing Abbie Garrington's *Haptic Modernism* (2013): who said that the word haptic "should be understood as an umbrella term, encompassing touch, kinaesthetic and the vestibular sense" (Garrington, 2013, p.16).

In this regard, she recalls the fact that in the early years of cinema, films were referred to as "living pictures:

"As film historian Kevin and Emer Rockett note, the history of cinema *is* the history of "living pictures" and these living pictures "can be related back to the Greek myth of Galatea (or the myth of animation and of statues coming to life through art and divine intervention)" (Rockett & Rockett, 2011, p.13). But it was not just the pictures that were living: the audience was also animated, brought to life by the moving images in front of them. The term "living pictures" described films that

engaged the audience and prompted a powerful – often physical – reaction.” Rockett & Rockett, 2011, p.12) (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p. 12)

The two models of scopic voyeurism vs phenomenology are linked to Plato’s allegory of the cave. If spectators are effectively imprisoned in the film theatre, then a radical new form of cinema is required to liberate them. This idea was linked in high theory to the need for films that minimise visual pleasure and promote a distancing effect. Alternatively if the film experience is actually a liberating experience then audience engagement lies at the heart of cinema. This question has been posed since the invention of cinema.

Chris Marker explored the parallel between the filmic experience and Plato’s allegory of the cave, in a sequence of *The Owl’s Legacy* (1989), in which spectators sit in the dark as they watch Resnais’ *Hiroshima mon Amour* (1959). The voiceover states:

“In 1940, Simone Weil wrote, “Our movie houses are not unlike that cave”. It wasn’t meant as a compliment. How could she accept that this inferior art form should find within the cave the power to negate the cave, to disarm the Gorgon, to tie itself to the thread of human creation and, finally, to create its own myths?”

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Scopic voyeurism is linked to the idea of a binary relationship that separates the viewer from the object being viewed. By contrast Merleau-Ponty stated “the movies are particularly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.58).

Hanaway-Oakley emphasises that cinematic perception has links with Gestalt perception, a kind of “pre-conscious” perception, or “primary perception” that is immediate and embodied rather than involving a separate intellect. “Contrary to what classical psychology tells us, whether we are at the cinema, or out in the world, we immediately perceive things in a meaningful way, without requiring secondary input from our intellect.” (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p.20).

Whereas the semiotic paradigm emphasises the role of the intellect in decoding arbitrary signs and ascertaining their correlation to the real world, phenomenology emphasises that both the individual shot and the montage is processed at a gestalt level that doesn’t require the intellect.

### **Eisenstein - from dialectical montage to magic**

Eisenstein’s theory of montage – based on dialectical montage and concepts which emerge through collision - is often cited as an example of creation of meaning through a sequence of signs. But

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<sup>145</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJD0ts34MY>

Eisenstein actually became increasingly interested in the “magical” powers of cinema, as noted by Peter Wollen in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*:

This search for the synthesis of art and science led Eisenstein into a line of argument to which there could be no satisfactory conclusion. He became increasingly interested in the idea that verbal speech is a kind of secondary process and that the primary, underlying level of thought is sensuous and imagetic. He was impressed by the notion that the origins of language were in metaphor and in conjunction with magic and mystic rituals. He came to believe that the language of primitive peoples was more imagistic and metaphoric than the tongues of advanced nations. He saturated himself in the writings of anthropologists such as Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl and Malinowsky, and regarded myth as the primary function of thought; logical thought in the more usual sense came to be seen as a kind of shrivelled myth. It was in myth that the synthesis of art and science could be seen. This idea of course is at the root of *Que Viva Mexico!* Eisenstein also became interested in the concept of “affective logic” based on the observation that most people, in colloquial speech, did not utter complex and logically formed sentences so much as bursts of disjointed phrases which the hearer was able to connect. Finally, he was deeply impressed by the work of James Joyce and was persuaded that inner speech was closer to sensuous and imagistic thought than externalised verbal speech. In some sense, the cinema might correspond to interior monologue; the drift of Joyce’s literary innovation was towards a kind of cinematisation of language. (Wollen, 2013, pp. 36-37)

Up to this point, Wollen’s summary is perfectly aligned with the theory of Hanaway-Oakley. Indeed, the latter also notes that Eisenstein aimed to produce an effect as close as possible to a “synaesthetic experience in the viewer” (Dudley Andrew, 1976, p.50) She adds that Eisenstein aimed both to convey and to provoke “sensual thought” – a form of image-sensual”, “pre-logical” “inner speech”.

But Wollen considers that Eisenstein had gone astray from the original wisdom of his dialectical montage:

Of course it is easy now to point out how many of his mentors have been discredited, how our concept of myth and of the syntax of colloquial speech have been transformed, how it has been shown that inner speech is not less but more sophisticated and advanced than externalised speech. But at the time Eisenstein was working, and in the isolated conditions in which he worked, there was nothing abnormal about his line of thought. It did however bring him into error and confusion. (Wollen, 2013, p. 40)

Wollen notes that Eisenstein sought synaesthesia and “synchronisation of the senses” through cinema and says that his ideas are “of great erudition and considerable interest despite their fundamentally unscientific nature”.

He contrasts the ideas of the later Eisenstein with those of Brecht.

It should be noted in this regard that the distancing mechanism proposed by Brecht was appreciated by Wollen and by his wife Laura Mulvey.

Wollen writes:

They both sought the same goal: the elusive unity of science with art. But at the end of the 1920 they took different paths. Brecht protested to Treryakov against the idea of “pathetic overtones”, he devoted himself to attacking Wagner, to insisting that the senses, as the Laocoon had showed, must be clearly differentiated, that the different components in a work of art should be specified and be kept clearly apart. Brecht tried to find an artistic form for rational argument; Eisenstein repeatedly tried to cram and squeeze concepts into an artistic form he had already semi-intuitively (even “ecstatically”) elaborated: in the end he decided thought and image were at one in myth and inner speech, abandoning rational argument for “affective logic”. (Wollen, 2013, pp. 54-56)

Wollen says that Eisenstein lost his way when he disowned his early experiments with non-diegetic metaphor “the necessary beginning for any movement towards the establishment of paradigmatic sets, such as the Gods sequence in October.” (Wollen, 2013, p. 56)

Wollen suggests that Godard recovered this principle in *A Married Woman (1964)* and *La Chinoise (1967)*. He considers that Eisenstein’s “emphasis on the emotional impact of the cinema tended all the time to draw him away from the symbolic”. (Wollen, 2013, p. 56)

By contrast Godard is:

unafraid to mix Hollywood with Kant and Hegel, Eisenstein montage with Rossellinian Realism, words with images, professional actors with historical people, Lumière with Méliès, the documentary with the iconographic. More than anybody else, Godard has realised the fantastic possibilities of the cinema as a medium of communication and expression. In his hands, as in Peirce’s perfect sign, the cinema has become an almost equal amalgam of the symbolic, the iconic and the indexical. His films have conceptual meaning, pictorial beauty and documentary truth.” (Wollen, 2013, p. 132)

Wollen later admits that his praise of Godard was perhaps excessive but he nonetheless defends the importance of the “second avant-garde” that emerged in conjunction with Godard. This idea is linked to Godard’s later work from around 1967 onwards and to the idea of a second wave of auteur theory, as defended in this thesis.

Now for the second time – the first wave proved premature – the avant-garde has made itself felt in the cinema. Perhaps the fact that it is fighting mainly against Hollywood rather than against traditional “art” will give it an advantage over the avant-garde in the other arts. It is possible that the transitional period we have now entered into could end with victories for the avant-garde that has emerged. (Wollen, 2013, p. 150)

This programme of the second wave of auteur cinema against Hollywood, based on a symbolic and semiotic paradigm of film theory is very significant. It was directly linked to 1970s high theory.

### **Tarkovsky’s opposition to dialectical montage**

Tarkovsky rejected the principles of "montage cinema" precisely because it contradicts the emotional and poetic essence of cinema: "I reject the principles of "montage cinema" because they do not allow the film to continue beyond the edges of the screen: they do not allow the audience to bring personal experience to bear on what is in front of them on film" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.118).

He denied that montage produces a third, "higher" meaning. "Editing does not engender, or recreate, a new quality; it brings out a quality already inherent in the frames that it joins." Thus, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, only in that the whole enables richer appreciation of what was already in the parts.

Tarkovsky believed that "montage cinema" tends to produce an intellectual or ideological interpretation of events, rather than a poetic one. "I want to make films which carry no oratorical propagandist speech, but which are the occasion for a deeply intimate experience" (Tarkovsky, 1989, pp.83-84).

The crucial aspect of an artistic work for Tarkovsky, is that it is an organic whole, "wherever it becomes impossible to single out or prefer any one element, either of content or of form, without detriment to the whole" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.47). The director edits together the picture, but also "in a sense they edit themselves; they join up according to their intrinsic pattern" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.116). In this way, "a self organizing structure takes shape during editing because of the distinctive properties given the material during shooting" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.116).

Tarkovsky compared the complete film to a mosaic, or collection which is united by the same emotion and rhythm. "The cinema director is rather like a collector. His exhibits are his frames, which constitute life, recorded once and for all, time in myriad well-loved details, pieces, fragments, of which the actor, the character, may or may not be a part" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.140). If there are characters, then our impression of them will only be built up slowly. "The screen records personality from a mosaic of imprints on film" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.148). This makes film a living organism. Tarkovsky nonetheless believed that such an organism is based on opposition and conflict, which is reminiscent of Eisenstein's original theory of dialectical montage: "The work of art lives and develops like any other natural organism, through the conflict of opposing principles" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.47).

### **Emotion vs Reason - The two hemispheres of the brain**

The difference between a more intuitive and intellectual approach is also found in the work of Iain McGilchrist in *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2012). He argues that the invention of the alphabet and the printing press encouraged an emphasis on writing. This in turn has led to cultivation above all of the powers of logic and reasoning and has meant that the left hemisphere of the brain has become so dominant that it threatens what makes us human.

He begins by emphasising that interest in the differences between the two hemispheres of the brain has waned and is no longer viewed by many as a respectable area of research, especially due to



popular misconceptions of this difference which tend to make one hemisphere look artsy and the other sciencey. He nonetheless believes that there is a difference of specialisation within the brain and that this is significant:

My thesis is that for us as human beings there are two fundamentally opposed realities, two different modes of experience; that each is of ultimate importance in bringing about the recognisably human world; and that their difference is rooted in the bihemispheric structure of the brain. It follows that the hemispheres need to cooperate, but I believe that they are in fact involved in a sort of power struggle, and this explains many aspects of contemporary Western culture. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.3)

This effectively links the tension between the rational path and poetic path, as mentioned above, to the realm of neuroscience.

McGilchrist says that the right hemisphere is related to more holistic interpretation of information – the gestalt – adding that this possibly underlies and helps explain “the apparent verbal/visual dichotomy, since words are processed serially, while pictures are taken in all at once.” (McGilchrist, 2012, p.4).

Significantly he states that “the left hemisphere is ultimately dependent on, one might almost say parasitic on, the right, though it seems to have no awareness of this fact. Indeed, it is filled with an alarming self-confidence.” (McGilchrist, 2012, p.5). He adds: “An increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualized world, marked by unwarranted optimism, mixed with paranoia and feelings of emptiness, has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere.” (McGilchrist, 2012, p.6). He says that he doesn’t want to challenge rationalism or the importance of language but instead believes that it is necessary to create a better balance between the hemispheres and world views. He concludes his introduction stating: “At present the domain - our civilisation - finds itself in the hands of the vizier, who, however gifted, is effectively an ambitious regional bureaucrat with his own interests at heart. Meanwhile the Master, the one whose wisdom gave the people peace and security, is led away in chains. The Master is betrayed by his emissary” (McGilchrist, 2012, p.14).

He concludes:

I have tried to convey in this book that we need metaphor or mythos in order to understand the world. Such myths or metaphors are not dispensable luxuries or “optional extras” still less the means of obfuscation: they are fundamental and essential to the process. (...) The 2,000 year old Western tradition, that of Christianity, provides whether one believes in it or not, an exceptionally rich mythos – a term luse in its technical sense, making no judgement here of its truth or otherwise – for understand the world and our relationship with it.(...) At the centre of this mythos are the images of incarnation, the coming together of matter and spirit, and of resurrection of that relationship, as well as of a God that submits to suffer for that process. But any mythos that allows us to approach a spiritual Other and gives us something other than material values to live by, is more valuable than one that dismisses the possibility of its existence. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.442)

In this context, McGilchrist cites the example of Tarkovsky’s film *Solaris* - an “extraordinarily poetical exploration of the relationship between mind and the incarnate world”. (McGilchrist, 2012, p.442).

McGilchrist refers to Heidegger who never ceases to struggle to transcend the Cartesian divisions which analytic language entails, in order to demonstrate that there is a path, a way through the forest, the travelling of which is in itself the goal of human thinking(...)

Wittgenstein also saw the true process of philosophy as a way of transcending or healing the effects of philosophy in the philosophical mind: philosophy is a disease, as Karl Krauss said of psychoanalysis, for which it purports to be the cure. Merleau-Ponty, more explicitly than either, held out the hope that we could learn to see things again by a process of surreflexion, hyper-reflection, which would help to redress the distorting effects of consciousness by making us conscious of them. This idea had already occurred to the Romantics. At the end of his famous essay *On the Puppet Theatre*, Kleist offers the possibility that the crippling effects of self-consciousness may be transcended through a form of still further heightened consciousness, by which we might regain a form of innocence (McGilchrist, 2012 p.451).

McGilchrist concludes by noting that in Oriental culture there is no distinction between the phenomenological world and the world of ideas, a theme also found in Joseph Campbell.

“The sharp dichotomy in our culture between the ways of being of the two hemispheres, which began in Ancient Greece, does not appear to exist, or at any rate, to exist in the same way, in Oriental culture: their experience of the world is still effectively grounded in that of the right hemisphere” (McGilchrist, 2012 p.452).

Obviously this creation of the “other” – Oriental culture – may actually reveal more about views of Western culture than Oriental culture itself, as Foucault has pointed out, but the reference is relevant and has parallels in Western film culture – from *Star Wars* to the *Karate Kid (1984)*.

Stephen T Asma and Rami Gabriel in their article *United by feelings* (Asma and Gabriel 2015) state that:

“The computational model of the mind has been very powerful, but it has no way (and no need) to capture the biological ingredient of motivational feeling-states, and has been unconcerned with the evolved substrate to such processes” (Asma and Gabriel 2015, article).

As an alternative paradigm they focus on the work of neuroscientists Jaak Panksepp and Antonio Damásio and the neuropsychologist Richard Davidson, who “have been developing a new field of affective (or emotional) science since the 1990s.” (Asma and Gabriel 2015, article).

Echoing some of the ideas of McGilchrist they affirm: “The time has finally come for a defence of emotions as biological adaptations that do not merely follow or corrupt the dictates of reason, but successfully lead as well.” (Asma and Gabriel 2015, article).

The “rational school” tends to identify emotions as more “basic” cognitive elements which the power of reason then processes to achieve a more “erudite” understanding. They cite in this regard: Lisa Feldman Barrett’s book “How Emotions Are Made” (2017):

Barrett argues that emotions are conceptual events, and our emotions, such as anger or sadness, are very fast mental constructions – almost like real-time, miniature theories about our experiences. Emotions, in this formulation, are intellectual processes, requiring language to carve raw feelings into discrete emotions. Instead of biological or physiological systems, emotions are said to be more like thoughts, and each person learns early in life how to name and organise them into seemingly natural kinds, which in truth, according to Barrett, are cognitively and culturally constructed conventions. (Asma and Gabriel 2015, article).

Asma and Gabriel contrast the “constructionist” view defended by Barrett and others with a “phenomenological “ perspective: “In our view, this theory radically underdetermines the neuroscience, ethology and even the feeling (phenomenology) of our emotions, which all seem more useful rubrics by which to differentiate emotions.” (Asma and Gabriel 2015, article).

## Prosthetic memories and out-of-body experiences

The capacity to see things that we would otherwise be unable to see is one of the key attractions of the moving image – whether watching the tsunami in Japan or forbidden fruits of sex, via pornography.

The ability to share what can be viewed as “out-of-body experiences” which we engage with at a multi-sensorial level would have been viewed as a form of witchcraft in former ages, along the lines described by Carlo Ginzburg in *The Night Battles* (2013).

In primitive societies access to “out-of-body experiences” were only available to shamans who could then share them with others through a performance ritual, often with the aid of hallucinatory drugs.

Joseph Campbell described the performance of the shaman as follows:

Shamans, we shall presently see, leave their bodies and ride on their drums or mounts beyond the bounds of the visible world, to engage in adventures with devils and gods.

The trance-like state of the shaman underlying his performance, which including singing songs and assumption of animal and human characters, was the earliest form of theatre. The realm of myth, from which, according to primitive belief, the whole spectacle of the world proceeds, and the realm of shamanistic trance are one and the same. Indeed, it is because of the reality of the trance and the profound impression left on the mind of the shaman himself by his experiences that he believes in his craft and its power—even though, for a popular show, he may have to put on a deceptive external performance, imitating for the honest hunters some of the wonders that his spirits have shown him in the magical realm beyond the veil. (Campbell, 1960, p.80)

In the digital age the toolkit of communicating with sound and images can engender “out-of-body experiences”, reminiscent of the activity of the shaman and is suddenly available to the populace in general and is radically transforming human understanding of the world.

One of the first attributes of cinema that captured people’s imagination was that the images resembled our own sense impressions and memories. This is epitomised by the story of how the audience fled from the first film screening when they saw a train pull up at a station.

Audiences can obviously clearly distinguish between a film image and a true sense impression. This was particularly evident in the time of black and white films, which contrasted with people’s vision of the world in colour. However, in our memories still and moving images come closer to the memories of our own direct sense impressions.

Wez Rozen in his article *Out of Body Experience* noted:

“By looking through the eye of a camera, an audience is able to gracefully float through a crowd, invisible, ghostlike. We are able to coolly glide through a window to witness a heated argument, the flash of a gun, and the escape of a murderer. Through the devices of cinema, we can watch time lapse and see the world spin. We can project an augmented reality without the weight of our bodies, the time it takes to travel.” (Rozen, 2013, p.1)

By watching a film the spectator is transported from his normal material existence into an alternate reality, in which time can be expanded or contracted and in which he can see new unknown worlds and experiences.

Rozen argues that film-based storytelling creates a set of rules that determines an alternate reality and then builds up to a crucial moment in which there is transgression of these rules. He cites the example of Chris Marker *La Jetée*:

the moment takes place when the filmmaker breaks from the use of still photos with a brief cinematic clip of a woman batting her eyes. Building up to this moment we accept that still imagery relates to memory, to a frozen past. Based on the rules of this narrative structure, when the woman bats her eyes, the observer is no longer time-traveling into a dreamy past, but fully present in the now. The viewer sees something that is lifelike and familiar to anyone who has observed a lover awake. (Rozen, 2013, p.1)

In "*Film Experience and the Formation of Illusion: The Spectator as 'Surrogate Body' for the Cinema*" by Christiane Voss (2011), the author argues that due to the impact of philosophy on film theory the body has re-entered the frame and become a key focus of film theory:

Drawing on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and arguing explicitly against the body-scepticism of feminist and psychoanalytic film theory, Sobchack argued in her 1992 book *The Address of the Eye*, and again in *Carnal Thoughts* from 2004, not only that we should think of the spectator as an embodied being but that the film itself has a body—that is, that there is a corporeal dimension to the aesthetics of the film that transcends, even though it interacts with, the individual body of the spectator." (Voss, 2011, p.136)

The author also cites Raymond Bellour's 2009 book *Le corps du cinema*, focusing in particular on the film experience as a state of quasi-hypnosis and on aesthetic emotions on a presemantic, somatic level.

In the case of social media we know that a large amount of the available recorded media items are actually shared by very few people. By way of example, it is known that one third of YouTube videos have under 10 views. However, certain recorded media items are shared by large numbers of people, making them viral hits, or are broadcast to large numbers of people via traditional media.

These shared out-of-body experiences may be viewed as prosthetic memories, in the sense defended by Alison Landsberg in her essay *Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture* (Landsberg, 2004)

A key question is why we are attracted towards certain "prosthetic memories" rather than others.

A prosthetic memory may be viewed as a *phantasm* in the sense defined by Plato – as shadows on the cave walls- given that we consume them to gain a certain reality, although they are in fact fantasies, or distortions, or artefacts. This is not only the case for fantasy films, but for all recorded media.

A music recording may appear to be “real” but at a certain level it is a phantasm or illusion. A news report broadcast on the television may also appear to be “real” but at a certain level it is also a phantasm or illusion.

One of the interesting questions to be posed is why we are increasingly attracted to such *phantasms* or “prosthetic memories”. In urban landscapes we are surrounded by billboards and electronic displays. We use our laptops, tablets, smart phones to be able to consume “prosthetic memories”. Whether at home or outside many of us are constantly exposed to “prosthetic memories” throughout our daily lives and equally importantly we seek them out and share them with others.

If we compare the apparatuses associated to moving images to a blind man’s stick, we are increasingly dependent upon it. In part this can be explained by the monotony of our lives. Without “prosthetic memories”, without these out-of-body-experiences, our lives appear to be dull and repetitive. It is likely that the more dull and repetitive our lives, the greater our desire for “prosthetic memories”. But also the greater our desire for “prosthetic memories” the more likely that we will see the rest of our lives as being dull and repetitive.

An obvious example of this phenomenon is the sharing of photos and videos of travel destinations and tourism via social media. Many people who travel have the desire to share their “prosthetic memories” with others, and we also have the desire to consume them. At the same time there is an implicit frustration for the consumer of these “prosthetic memories”, who seems to be sharing the experience but only at a non-real level.

The allure of images that show a break with monotony, travelling etc, is used extensively in the world of advertising. The massive increase in tourism over recent years, in particular the city break phenomenon is also stimulated in part by this allure.

The phenomenon of YouTubers who seem to be on permanent holiday and share their experiences/prosthetic memories with others is related to this phenomenon and the implicit monotony of everyday life.

This phenomenon is reminiscent of Kathryn Bigelow’s film *Point Break (1991)* that was remade in 2015. The original film, if it had been made today, could have been about YouTubers who are “living the dream” by breaking with the material world. Instead of robbing banks they could have a YouTube channel whose revenues would pay for their lifestyle.

This impetus, of breaking with the material world, is also expressed in Sean Penn’s *Into the Wild (2007)*, whose main character, who renamed himself Alexander Supertramp, inspired Devin Graham to

use the moniker Devin Supertramp for his YouTube channels which features exotic locations and action sports.

There are many YouTube videos dedicated to the idea of living life to the full, based on this idea. For example, in Devin Supertramp's video: *Hawaii in 4K - Inspirational Speech - Make Your Life Extraordinary!*, which includes the statement: "Don't live like everyone else, existing. Be extraordinary, live every moment with passion and wonder. Don't take anyone or anything for granted. What is important to you? What dreams do you have? Go get them!"<sup>146</sup>

The images accompanying these images are young people on holiday in Hawaii, including images of cliff diving.

The concept of "seizing one's dreams" is associated to "prosthetic memories" of holiday images in exotic locations.

Certain advertisements can both criticise our vicarious living via posts of holiday images, while at the same time using images of escapism travel to express this idea, as in the case of this ad of Toyota's Aygo<sup>147</sup>, with the tag Scroll Less, Live More.

"Living more" or "living life to the full" is increasingly linked in our imaginations to the world of holiday-type "prosthetic memories".

Such "out-of-body" experiences are one of the key characteristics of contemporary existence which is radically different from the forms of communication prior to the invention of recorded media.

For example, Dan Bilzerian who "is seen as a man through whom millions vicariously live out their fantasies."<sup>148</sup>

The capacity to embark upon out-of-body experiences brings to mind Carlo Ginzburg's *The Night Battles* (Ginzburg, 2013). In the middle ages, the benandanti and witches could supposedly leave their physical bodies and journey to distant places.

The main recurring destination was the Witches' sabbath – a place of excess for the witches and the scene of battle against the witches for the benandanti.

In contemporary media, viewers can also journey to other worlds, which in certain cases take the form of sabbaths filled with music, dancing and excesses.

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<sup>146</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3V7LKYP1UQ>

<sup>147</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sP-OGYapNkQ>

<sup>148</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/7438133/dan-bilzerian-instagram-net-worth-poker/>

## Peeping through key holes

Film is an empowering medium, which provides access to otherwise closed places. For example French filmmaker, Jean Cocteau compared film to indiscreetly peeping through port-holes, key holes or trap-doors into cellars, and thereby "catch my wild beasts unawares"<sup>149</sup>.

There is obviously a voyeuristic and vicarious dimension to watching a film because we are being shown something that our natural powers of eyesight would otherwise be unable to see. This voyeuristic dimension can also be cause for concern, but it lies at the heart of the film experience.

Landsberg addresses the concern expressed by many scholars that film can generate fake memories which effectively tribalise society and prevent the formation of a collective ethos. She refers to the film *Strange Days* which depicts the commodification of memory, which to a certain extent cinema can be considered to be carrying out.

She continues:

the cinema and the technologised mass culture that it helped inaugurate transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Thanks to these new technologies of memory on the one hand and commodification on the other, the kinds of memories that one has 'intimate', even experiential, access to would no longer be limited to the memories of events through which one actually lived. This essay will argue that the effects of capitalist commodification and mass culture are not exclusively privatising and therefore conservative; these forces have also opened up the potential for a progressive, even radical politics of memory: such a politics instrumentalises what I have called 'prosthetic memory'. (Landsberg, 2004, p. 146)

In this manner Landsberg identifies the pivotal issue related to cinema and the two ways that it can be viewed – a more conservative approach which sees it as enslaving people; and a more optimistic approach in which film can open up new progressive possibilities for mankind.

This more optimistic, progressive view of cinema profoundly influenced the early years of modernism, in the sense I explained in the introduction, whereby this new technology could open the way to a new consciousness and could be instrumental in giving greater power to ordinary people, which was a key facet of the early years of cinema as a central form of popular culture.

Hanaway-Oakley refers to Landsberg's ideas of prosthetic memories and likens film to a walking stick used by a blind man and says that it is intimately connected to a phenomenological outlook:

The mimetic nature of cinema (its capacity to make a copy of reality) causes the spectator to question the nature of reality and perception: if I am not perceiving reality, what am I perceiving on the screen? What am I experiencing at the cinema? Spectators are obliged to step outside their ordinary perceptual stance in order to see things afresh. This process is similar to phenomenological reflection. Unlike introspection, which involves the contemplation of thought and ideas about a

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<sup>149</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theartsdesk.com/film/jean-cocteau-poet-can-never-die>



particular experience or object, phenomenological reflection is concerned with the comprehension of experience in itself (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p.16).

She adds “phenomenologists are in the business of exploding the naïve belief that the subject is here and the object is there” (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p.17). She quotes Shaw “the camera eye serves to create images that subsequently become the spectator’s temporary habituation as virtual body” (Shaw, 2015, p.56) and continues: “This camera intentionality – the body-subject viewpoint the spectator gains via the camera’s embodied, subjective and enworlded position – is akin to the indirect discourse for “focalisation” techniques employed by experimental and modernist writers” Shaw, 2015, p.26). She also refers to Merleau-Ponty’s statement that a blind-man’s stick ceases to be an object and becomes “an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.143). She adds: “Although, in most forms of cinema, we do not directly touch the film apparatus, our experience is still similar to the blind man’s: the film becomes an extension of our phenomenal field.” (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p.32)

### **Word vs Image**

Late US surgeon Leonard Shlain, in “The alphabet versus the goddess: the conflict between word and image” (Shlain, 1999) suggests that verbal communication is based on linear, sequential, reductionist, and abstract thinking, which he associates with left-brain capacities and the yang or masculine principle and that image-based communication is based on providing a holistic, simultaneous, synthetic, and concrete view of the world which he associates with right-brain capacities and the yin or feminine principle.

His idea that left-brain capacities are more masculine and right-brain capacities more feminine have no evidence in terms of neuroscience but at a purely pop culture level do reflect perceptions of differences between male and female ways of seeing the world. For example, the difference between left-brain and right-brain thinking, and the tracing of a parallel with male and female thinking has been amusingly presented by Mark Gungor, in *Why Men and Women Think Differently?*<sup>150</sup>.

Moisés Martins in *Crise no castelo da cultura: Das Estrelas para os Ecrãs* (Crisis in the castle of culture: from the stars to the screens) emphasises the dangers of communication based on images, because images incite emotion rather than the power of reason: “Technological devices aesthetically rearrange us, reorganizing our experience around subjectivity and emotionality, giving it a rhetorical and libidinal dimension: today we are consumed by emotion, sensation and seduction” (Martins, 2011, p.80).

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<sup>150</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkZvLHiaHQc&feature=youtu.be>

Martins emphasises the dangers associated to the transition from the *logos* to icons and from ideas to emotions and uses the terms *sun/bolé* and *dia/bolé* to refer to the uniting and symbolic power of the word, versus the divergent, tribal influence of the image. This distinction is based on the origins of the word “symbolic” and “diabolic” in Ancient Greek wherein the former means “to bring things together” and the latter means “to separate, to throw things apart”.

Following this line of reasoning Madalena Oliveira in *Media: symbols or devils?* suggests that audiovisual media are a powerful anaesthetic – “They make democracy lose its significance since they use mediatic power to create mediation, simulation, hedonism, narcissism...” “diabolical” is a good word to sum up the essence of mediatic culture” (Oliveira, 2004, p. 33)

Whereas the German romanticists identified the symbolic with the image, Martins considers that it is the word that assumes this function and that the image, especially the digital image is potentially dangerous since it divides people into tribal communities.

This argument is however nuanced because emotion in its own right can be a stimulus to action and rational thought. His main concern, following the ideas of thinkers such as Guy Debord is that by using images to incite terror, commotion and compassion can be paralysing and stultify critical thinking, which is particularly dangerous in the context of journalism – which is the main focus of his analysis.

Martins considers that the transition from the analogue image to the digital image increases this tendency, since an analogue photograph communicates through analogy, whereas a digital photograph communicates numerically and creates the *homo numericus*. “The biblical narrative always feared the possibility that the image might be tempted by diabolical, i.e. by separation.” (my translation)<sup>151</sup> (Martins, 2011, p. 77)

From this perspective Martins believes that the word unites man with nature, whereas images, especially technological images, mediated by screens, distances us from nature. This is reminiscent in part of Plato’s warning about the danger of the invention of writing.

“New communication and information technologies, specifically photography, film, television, multimedia, cybernetworks and virtual environments, serve as emotion-producing prosthetic devices, as apparatuses that model within us a hand-cranked sensitivity (my translation)<sup>152</sup> (Martins, 2011, p. 80).

A contrary perspective is provided by Landsberg.

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<sup>151</sup> Original: A narrativa bíblica sempre receou a possibilidade de a imagem se deixar tentar pela diabolía, ou seja, pela separação.

<sup>152</sup> Original: As novas tecnologias da comunicação e da informação, especificamente a fotografia, o cinema, a televisão, o multimédia, as redes cibernéticas e os ambientes virtuais, funcionam para nós como próteses de produção de emoções, como maquiuetas que modelam em nós uma sensibilidade puxada à manivela

She refers to Kathryn Bigelow's film *Strange Days* (1995) which depicts the commodification and sale of "prosthetic memories". She notes that the image of prosthetic memory "as an obstacle to rather than a catalyst for, progressive politics and collective action is shared by many scholars as well." (Landsberg, 2004, p. 145)

In particular the fear is that images atomise society, creating tribal perspectives, rather than building collective solidarities.

Landsberg is however more optimistic stating that the birth of the cinema and other technological innovations at the turn of the twentieth century led to the emergence of a truly mass culture. "In the context of mass migrations, memory would be required to play a crucial new role." (Landsberg, 2004, p. 145) This has parallels with Robert Sklar's thesis in *Movie-Made America* (Sklar, 1975).

Landsberg notes that in the first decades of the twentieth century, the US experienced its largest waves of immigration from Europe, and the mass migration of African Americans to the industrial centres of the North.:

With these movements of peoples came the rupture of generational ties, rendering the traditional modes for the transmission of cultural, ethnic, and racial memory – both memories passed from parent to child and those disseminated through community life – increasingly inadequate. At the same moment, the cinema and the technologised mass culture that it helped inaugurate transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Thanks to these new technologies of memory on the one hand and commodification on the other, the kinds of memories that one has 'intimate', even experiential, access to would no longer be limited to the memories of events through which one actually lived. (Landsberg, 2004, p. 146)

On this basis she argues that the effects of capitalist commodification and mass culture are not exclusively privatising and therefore conservative; but instead have also opened up the potential for a progressive, even radical politics of memory.

She focuses on the experiential and sensorial dimension of cinema, citing Max Scheler's 1913 essay *The Nature of Sympathy* in which he states that man has an 'innate capacity for comprehending the feelings of others, even though he may never on any occasion have encountered such feelings (or their ingredients) in himself" (Scheler, 2008, p. 47).

Landsberg distinguishes in this context between sympathy – in which the sympathiser has a condescending attitude towards the other, and empathy in which there is a union between the two and notes in this regard that: "technologies of memory have exponentially increased the opportunities for such empathetic understandings." (Landsberg, 2004, p. 147).

She notes the ideas of Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin in the 1930s who focused on the capacity of film to have a physiological impact on the viewer.

Landsberg moves this analysis one step further by focusing on the power of cinema to create empathy. “instead of simply condemning commodity culture, as many cultural critics have done, I will argue that the only way to bring about social transformation is by working within the capitalist system.” (Landsberg, 2004, p. 150). She cites the ideas of Stuart Hall and John Fiske who challenge the model of the “passive consumer” and instead focus on how people make their own reading of a cultural text. She suggests that the moving image and its sharing via the Internet actually challenges the foundation of private property which underpin the capitalist system:

I would argue that mass cultural commodities, and in particular the prosthetic memories that I am describing, pose a powerful challenge to the concept of private property; at the dawn of the twenty-first century, this challenge is lodged even more strongly by the Internet, with its capacity to disseminate freely texts, information, music and so forth. As memories that no individual can own, that individuals can only share with others, and whose meanings can never be completely stabilised, prosthetic memories themselves become a challenge to the ‘total possession’ of private property. (Landsberg, 2004, p. 151)

Landsberg concludes by identifying what she calls a “utopian dream” which is the opposite of the nightmare scenario presented in *Strange Days*:

My aim here is not to be an apologist for the Internet, particularly given its marriage to unbridled capitalism. But as with capitalism itself, the Internet has made available texts and archives that were accessible only to the privileged few. Many critics, for example, overlook the great strides that have been taken to make the Internet a legitimate tool in both the dissemination and archiving of history: the work of some historians has shown the capacity of the Internet to be educational, not just commercial. Furthermore, as an increasingly experiential medium, the Internet has the potential to generate prosthetic memories. Because of its fundamental interactivity, it engages the individual body. As its mode of address becomes more complex both visually and aurally, the Internet might be another mass cultural mechanism capable of generating empathy and ethical politics. (Landsberg, 2004, p. 157)

### **The capacity of images to define identities**

A core issue in terms of cognitive theory is how we ascribe identities to the objects and persons (human and non-human) that we observe.

Using the model proposed by McGilchrist, it is possible that the brain has the capacity to associate identities to the visual stimuli it receives. For example the traditional semiotic approach suggests that the word “dog” is related to a mental image of a “dog”. This can be simplified as saying that the written letters “dog” is the sign, the word itself is the signifier and the mental image is the signified.

The idea that a specific “mental image” is associated to the word “dog” may however be challenged. The word may have connotations, in the sense defined by Barthes, i.e. we may associate

images of dogs to the word, but we may question whether the word itself is necessarily understood as a mental image that is denoted by the word.

It can be argued that the word dog corresponds to a mental construct, but not necessarily an image. Indeed it may be argued that every word corresponds to a mental construct (although not necessarily a mental image). For example the adjective “tautological” corresponds to the mental construct that the subject/statement to which this adjective is applied is logically true regardless of whether the simpler statements contained within it are factually true or false. We can illustrate the meaning of this mental construct by citing an example of such a statement, such as “Either it will rain tomorrow or it will not rain tomorrow”. However there is no clear mental image associated to the word “tautological”. It is a mental construct.

The key question is where such mental constructs come from and whether they are created solely by language and exist solely within what may be called the “intellect”. It has been argued that we only learn to categorise the world by learning a language, but the reverse process may also occur. For example, how do we identify a “dog” how do we ascribe the mental construct of “dog” to an animal we see?

When we open our eyes and look at the world around us we process the information we receive. In the case of manmade visual signs we ascribe a socially established meaning. For example, a traffic sign has a clear denotational meaning, such as “you cannot turn left”. In this case, we interpret the visual information using a clear sign system which can be learned.

Musical notation is also a visual sign system and denotes specific musical notes and a written language is also a visual sign system and denotes words. The phonetic alphabet is used to represent sounds and can thereby be used to form written words which relate to the sound of spoken words.

But it is an open question as to whether generic visual sensory information corresponds to a sign system, i.e. that as soon as we open our eyes we are seeing signs.

Nonetheless we do try to categorise and make sense of these visual stimuli.

In order to comprehend the world and make sense of it we must be able to distinguish specific objects, and categories of object, and then interact with them using our sensorimotor system. This capacity to create identities and control our sensorimotor system is considered to be pre-verbal, part of the sensorimotor stage of human development.

Alistair Knott in *Sensorimotor Cognition and Natural Language Syntax* (Knott, 2012) suggests that this capacity of our sensorimotor system precedes and shapes our verbal capacity. He claims that the syntactic structure of a sentence related to a concrete episode in the world is directly linked to the

command system of the sensorimotor processes involved in experiencing that episode. He thereby establishes a link with Chomsky's idea of an innate language capacity, which many theorists consider to be discredited but which he suggests can have some validity in this context.

This question is directly related to whether we process a film as a sign system via the intellect, or on a multi-sensorial basis, using our sensorimotor system. It is precisely cinema's sensorial engagement which is viewed with a certain level of concern by some theorists, who fear in particular that the "society of the spectacle" is numbing our intellectual powers.

Others embrace this power of the moving image precisely because it can "transport" viewers to another state of consciousness.

These competing views are linked to Plato's allegory of the cave and the dichotomy between the "rational path" and the "poetic path" i.e. whether the essence of human wisdom resides in the power of reason or the power of the imagination/intuition.

The specific form of the image can obviously guide our viewing experience. For example certain parts of the image are highlighted through the use of the framing, colour and movement. Our attention is drawn to specific elements and the form of the shot will vitally condition our interpretation of it.

The expression "body language" also refers to how we interpret facial expressions, body position etc to extract meaning and this is a vital part of the film experience.

Just as we have traffic signs there are also certain socially-coded visual signs that we use in body language, such as putting our finger against our lips to tell someone to be silent. This is a case of a visual sign with denotational meaning. However there are other unconscious, or less conscious, elements of body expression where there is no evident denotational meaning. For example, by observing someone, some people may conclude that they are in love, others that they are expressionless or angry.

It is often claimed that we ascribe identities on the basis of language and that each language will shape our capacity to think about the world in these terms. For example the fact that the Innuits have many words for snow means that they can define more identities of snow than the typical Westerner.

### **The question of identity**

The question of identity raises major philosophical issues and is not necessarily solely a function of language.

David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) famously stated that every idea is derived from an impression. This principle has certain parallels with the model of signifier and signified.

But Hume had difficulty above all in explaining how we then construct notions of identity, starting with the question of personal identity, since there is no single impression or mental idea that encapsulates that identity.

One of the main problems faced by Hume and other empiricists such as George Berkeley, is precisely how we achieve this understanding of identities that persist over time and underpin our overall understanding of the “objective” external world. For example, how do we know that a room still exists when we close our eyes?

This debate is directly linked to the difference of views between Hume and Kant, in which the latter suggested the existence of innate capacities to understand the world.

Returning to the example of the word “dog”. We use this word to represent a mental construct that we know how to apply to the things we see. But it is not necessarily the case that we only learn this mental construct by learning a language, indeed it may work the other way around.

We know that children in the sensorimotor stage, as defined by Piaget, (Piaget, 1969) can identify dogs and may use onomatopoeic expressions such as “woof”, and point to a dog. They achieve this before learning how to use the word and it is an open question whether this capacity exists prior to hearing the word “dog”.

This issue is essentially related to the question of identity. How do we identify a “dog” how do we ascribe the generic identity of “dog” to an animal we see?

As an alternative to the traditional semiotic approach it may be argued that this capacity may derive from our sensorimotor command system and may be compared to right hemisphere thinking, from the perspective defended by McGilchrist, rather than from our language capacity.

Piaget says that during the sensorimotor stage children use innate skills to experience the world and gain knowledge through their senses and motor movements. Animals for example clearly have sensorimotor skills and these skills include innate skills.

In the sensorimotor stage children learn to identify objects and associate characteristics to them. This is achieved at both a specific level of each individual level and at a generic level – types of objects, for example dogs. Piaget argues that this ability occurs prior to learning language and involves identifying categories of objects and ascribing identities.

In the animal world there is no written language, although there may well be oral speech patterns, especially for advanced mammals such as whales and dolphins. But animals do seem to be able to identify individual objects and generic categories using their sensorimotor command system.

Some animals can also understand generic concepts from human language at least in terms of basic commands – such as “fetch,” “sit” or “basket”.

Knott says that the sensorimotor system plays a key role in the cognition process which we are still trying to understand: “When we describe a concrete event we witness, we convert a rich multimodal complex of sensory and motor stimuli evoked through contact with the world into a short expression in this simple medium. How this conversion is achieved is also very much an open question” (Knott, 2012, p.1).

Knott’s core claim in his book is that:

“the syntactic structure of a sentence reporting a concrete event in the world can be understood, at least in part, as a description of a sensorimotor process – namely the process involved in experiencing the event...When we study syntax we are unavoidably studying some aspects of the sensorimotor system as well” (Knott, 2012, p.2).

This is an intriguing idea at numerous levels inclusively because although animals do not have advanced linguistic capacities, at least in terms of written language, they do have advanced sensorimotor systems and therefore their thought processes, including identification of categories and identities and ideas of action and even thoughts of past and future may be structured within their sensorimotor system even without the existence of language.

One could go so far as saying that since animals have a sensorimotor system that classifies the world and structures their thinking about the world, this must be reflected in some form of “inner language” at the very least, and possibly in some form of outer language that enables animals to communicate with each other about the world around them.

Knott says that “one common proposal is that language evolved by reusing and adapting pre-existing sensorimotor mechanisms(...) what all of these accounts have in common is a prediction that there are some elements of the human language capacity that supervene on underlying sensorimotor mechanisms” (Knott, 2012, p.5). In this context, returning to the use of the word “dog”, when we hear the word dog we know what it means from a sensorimotor perspective, and have an understanding of that mental construct even before we learn the language. It can be argued that we can learn the words in a language, such as “dog”, because we have the capacity in our sensorimotor system to identify such a category of living being.

Knott goes even further to suggest that the syntax we use to link words together also reflects processes within the sensorimotor system, i.e. is based on shared mechanisms.

These issues are extremely relevant when trying to understand how we process visual stimuli including films.



## Film as a multi-sensory experience

In cognitive film theory the capacity of films to engage with our sense experiences and exploit our mirror neurons is a major field of enquiry.

Knott also refers to the role of our mirror neurons – when we see someone pick up a cup it triggers a mirror sensation within us.

Luis Rocha Antunes in *The Multisensory Film Experience – The Art(s) of Slow Cinema* (Rocha Antunes, 2016) provides an overview of previous studies in this field which are linked to the field of film phenomenology.

One of the key ideas in this field of enquiry, which is also reflected in David Bordwell's pioneering study, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Bordwell, 1985) is that the film spectator is not just a passive participant who decodes the signs being shown to him or her. The spectator takes an active role in interacting with the narration of the film and enters the film at a multi-sensorial level:

If the spectator is not a passive, Freudian-defined object, then what is she? Bordwell defines our film-viewing activities as proactive and constructive; he describes a goal-directed spectator, equipped with schemata (Gombrich) and ready to make assumptions, form expectations, motivate material, recall information, and project hypotheses (Bordwell, 1985. p. 335). Spectators do not merely perceive the film dominated by their Freudian impulses, but instead, they construct it through perceptual experience. They play an active role. (Antunes, 2016, p.26).

Antunes also quotes from Noel Carroll's *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory (1988)* adding that "In the manner of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, Carroll denies that spectators are passive "prisoners" sutured to the film medium. Instead, they play an active role in constructing the embodied experience of a film" (Antunes, 2016, p.26). He emphasises the importance in this context to move beyond analysis of film based on theories of verbal language (in particular semiotics and structuralism) and beyond simple psychoanalysis approaches that use the ideas of Freud to decode the meaning of the images.

Antunes identifies the issue of the multisensory film experience as both an expanding field of cognitive film theory and also a key trend in filmmaking itself. He suggests that New Hollywood films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and Samuel Fuller's *The Wild Bunch (1969)* represented a break with the classical Hollywood canon and took a leaf out of the book of New Wave cinemas in terms of promoting a more sensorial engagement with films.

In addition to Hollywood in general he focuses in particular on certain directors from the "slow cinema" tradition and analyses the work of three directors in particular: Gus Van Sant, Ki-Duk Kim and Knut Erik Jensen.

Antunes identifies three core vectors of the film experience which he considers are ignored by classic film theory: the vestibular sense (perception of orientation and balance), thermoception (perception of temperature), and nociception (perception of pain). In particular he emphasises that films don't just engage with our senses of sight and sound but engage all the five senses and these other senses. He states that these techniques are increasingly used by both Hollywood and independent cinema and cites Wylie (2009) suggesting that "when the character of Luke Skywalker is in the cockpit of a spacecraft that descends into a trench along the surface of the Death Star, the audience is exposed to a "flowfield resulting from the cockpit" (Antunes, 2016, p.63).

The audience's reaction is not just visual it is physiological, an actual form of perception. Antunes uses this idea to identify not only blockbuster films laden with special effects such as *Star Wars* but also so-called "cinema of walking" in which he includes the films of Gus Van Sant, Antonioni and Bela Tarr. In relation to the latter two he says

"these two directors use extremely long takes to record human locomotion, in contrast with another type of cinema that uses the long take as a still framing (e.g. the works of Manoel de Oliveira and Ming-laing Tsai). The difference is not only in the camerawork and how the camera interacts with the actors but also in the level of experience that these films offer the spectator" (Antunes, 2016, p.68).

Antunes also notes how early directors such as Chaplin and Buster Keaton used visual action and long shots to foster sensorial engagement. He cites how YouTubers incorporation of action camera devices promotes the vestibular sense.

In relation to Gus Van Sant's films he emphasises that this triggering of the vestibular sense means that the actual rhythm of the films is not slow: "I would like to develop the idea that they contain an intense flow of body action and thematic content that are not slow at all" (Antunes, 2016, p.71).

From this perspective the filmic narration is an active dynamic that interacts with the audience's five senses and their vestibular sense, thermoception and nociception. For example if we think about how the television coverage of football matches has evolved it has clearly attempted to increase spectators' sensorial engagement with the match. The same trend can be viewed in nature documentaries such as *Planet Earth* which are increasingly based on trying to involve the viewer in the action.

This also affects the way that we understand how viewers interact with a film as an active spectator. For example when watching a football match based on the different angles offered by the TV channel, the viewer is not just seeing the angle as a flat image. S/he constructs a three dimensional sense of the space of the football pitch and orientates each image viewed in relation to his overall

understanding of the action occurring on the pitch – which extends beyond the immediate images available.

The same takes place when watching a film. As soon as the viewer is presented with a single perspective s/he begins to imagine the entire 3D space and the narration of the film then engages with this understanding via an active viewing process.

## **The Hollywood Eye**

Jon Boorstin's *The Hollywood Eye: What Makes Movies Work* (Boorstin, 1990) re-issued as *Making Movies Work*, also focuses on the sensorial dimension of films and provides an insight into the visual storytelling techniques used in Hollywood films.

His introduction mirrors the idea defended in this thesis, when he recalls his experience of going to see a film as a child: "Engulfed by that dark space I indulged in glorious private pleasures, yet I was not alone. I was protected, but I was free. I felt my soul expand to fill the room." (Boorstin, 1990, p. 3)

Key aspects of the book include his emphasis on visceral filmmaking techniques that make the audience feel what they are seeing on screen. Boorstin states that there are three core pleasures from watching a film: voyeuristic, vicarious and visceral.

The voyeuristic dimension has previously been addressed by Laura Mulvey in relation to the male gaze. Boorstin identifies the voyeuristic process with the mind, vicarious with the heart and visceral with the gut. The voyeur's pleasure is linked to the out-of-body-experience, as a "prying observer" and the "simple joy of seeing the new and the wonderful" (Boorstin, 1990, p.12). But he suggests that the voyeur's eye becomes easily bored and therefore demands surprise: "For a movie to work brilliantly, the voyeur's eye must be entranced" (Boorstin, 1990, p.13). In terms of visual literacy Boorstin defends the idea that audiences are more sophisticated in decoding visual images than they themselves realise: "Hollywood technique is based on the faith that the audience is more demanding than it knows, that subtleties invisible to the viewer make a crucial difference to the viewing experience" (Boorstin, 1990, p.45). Where Boorstin distinguishes Hollywood from other cinematic traditions is its capacity to create visceral scenes, saying that these constitute the "pride and joy" of skilled directors:

The aim is to create a particular gut reaction in the audience. And in order to achieve the effect the director must look deep inside, not to plumb the subtleties of emotion but to re-create the way the world looks to a person under stress. The director comes face to face with the subjective quality of lived experience. Instead of the voyeur's outer world of objective geometric space or the vicarious inner world of emotions, the visceral is the outer world distorted by our inner passions twisted by the pressure of our own excited emotions pushing against our senses. (Boorstin, 1990, p.119)

Boorstin identifies this reaction as a gut reaction but it is also linked to non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious. He suggests that the capacity to achieve a visceral impact depends in part on the actor but above all on the capacity of the director to get into the spectator’s head:

The test for the visceral eye is a test of emotional truth, but it does not depend on the actor’s ability to convey honest emotion – it is a test of the director’s ability to re-create his or her own raw feelings directly inside the viewer’s head. It is filmmaking at its most personal, and that it has such power over the viewer is testimony to the fundamental commonality of human experience. (Boorstin, 1990, p.119)

Boorstin states that the suspense scene and action scene are two extreme examples of the visceral eye. He adds that the fact that Hollywood can achieve such a visceral impact in the generality of spectators is a key aspect of its power: “The visceral world is big box office. Critics may hate to admit it, but hot visceral thrills pack the theaters. They’re what movies do best and what Hollywood producers feel most comfortable pushing.” (Boorstin, 1990, p.119)

### **Narratology – The difference between narration and narrative**

The neo-formalist and semiotic paradigm focuses on issues of narrative and film form. The “grammar” of the shot and the cut are defined in terms of a classification system of the types of shot and types of edit.

The story is identified with the fabula and the way that it is told with the syuzhet. However this raises the issue of whether the syuzhet concerns the plot, the order that the story is told, or the filmic narration.

In a novel, the narration is easier to identify – as first person, third person or shared first person. In a film, there is sometimes a voiceover track which serves as a verbal narration. But every shot also expresses a perspective and forms part of the filmic narration.

The classic division of shots is between objective camera shots and subjective camera shots, wherein the latter are point-of-view shots in which the see the visual perspective or the “mind’s eye” (e.g. a flashback) of one of the characters. However even “objective” camera shots convey narration. For example an over the shoulder shot close to a character gives us a more intimate view of the interaction between characters. Following a character with a tracking shot also brings us closer to the character and can be a quasi POV shot. Videogames often use this technique where the player can see his or her character in centre frame moving through the game world. The viewer’s interpretation of each shot is therefore conditioned not only by the type of shot (close-up/long-shot), framing and colour but also the perspective in terms of the narration of the film.

These issues are analysed within the field of narratology. Patrick Colm Hogan in “Affective Narratology” (Hogan, 2011) argues that the structure of stories is a systematic product of human emotion system.

Over the last two decades, there has been an enormous increase in attention to emotion as a crucial aspect of human thought and action. This attention has spanned a range of disciplines, prominently including the fields gathered together under the rubric of cognitive science—thus parts of psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, anthropology, and so on. Narratology has perhaps been the area of literary study most closely connected with cognitive science. However, current research on emotion has had only limited impact on narrative theory. Of course, everyone recognizes that emotion is important in stories, and theorists of narrative usually have some place for emotion in their work. However, narratological treatments of emotion have on the whole been relatively undeveloped, at least in comparison with other aspects of narrative theory. (Hogan, 2011, p. 1)

Hogan argues that story structures are fundamentally shaped and oriented by our emotion systems. He begins by referring to expressive outcomes of emotions, including their phenomenological tone, and the impact that these outcomes have on us via empathy. “Our emotional response to emotional expressions appear to be largely innate” (Hogan, 2011, p. 3).

Expressive outcomes act as triggers which in turn create emotional memories. Hogan also argues that there are different emotion systems for different emotions. He emphasises that narratology based on affective science goes beyond the classical and post-classical approaches which are often orientated by Structuralism:

Many main figures of classical narratology – Genette, Greimas, Barthes, Todorov – were setting out to use Saussurean linguistics to understand narrative structure. Though this work was enormously valuable it was embedded in linguistic theories that had nothing to say about emotion. In and of itself, this is not necessarily a problem. However it tended to orient research programs in narratology toward issues and explanations that had little to do with emotion. (Hogan, 2011, p.16).

Hogan argues that film genres and recurring story prototypes such as heroic, romantic and sacrificial, derive from particular emotion systems. He also identifies minor genres that occur cross-culturally such as the attachment, sexual desire, revenge and criminal investigation genres. He concludes by arguing that narrative structures operate primarily through empathy.

“Like the development of emotional memories, the broadening (or narrowing) of empathic associations results from our experience of individual, particular works” (Hogan, 2011, p.244).

Peter Verstraten in *Film Narratology* (2009) distinguishes between the filmic narrator and the literary narrator. A literary narrator makes linguistic utterances and there may be multiple narrators in a single novel, including external narrators who exist completely outside the fabula and internal narrators who take on the identity of one of the characters.

He divides the filmic narrator, or narrative agent, into a visual narrator and auditive narrator.

The narrativity of a film is determined by the interaction between the narrative agent and the viewer. He continues:

In classic cinema, which spells out the development according to a clear pattern of causes and consequences, the narrative agent is so emphatically directing the story that the viewer need only follow. When often psychologically motivated pattern becomes less obvious, the viewer can accept the invitation to put in some effort himself. (Verstraten, 2009, p. 25)

This relates to Barthes' idea of a readerly and writerly text.

### **Link between genres and neurological responses**

Genres can also be linked to specific neurological responses in the brain.

One approach to this topic is provided by David JP Phillips, international speaker, author and coach in Modern Presentation Skills, known for his presentation *How To Avoid Death By PowerPoint*, delivered at TEDxStockholm in 2015<sup>153</sup>. Phillips argues that stories generate neurological responses in the brain. For example he claims that all story-telling is dopamine creating, by creating suspense and cliff hangers. Stories also stimulate the creation of oxytocin in the brain by creating empathy, that leads us to trust and bond with others, often induced by seeing the pain, experienced by others. Comedy elements in narratives, that make people laugh stimulate the creation of endorphins. He describes this trio of substances – dopamine, oxytocin and endorphins – created by suspense, empathy and humour, constitute what he calls the “angel’s cocktail” of storytelling. Which he contrasts with the “devil’s cocktail” of cortisol and adrenalin that are generated by conflict situations and in high concentrations lead viewers/listeners to become intolerant, irritable, uncreative, with their critical memory impaired, and make bad decisions.

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<sup>153</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/Ni-hdOMa3uA>

## **Storytelling and the science of the mind**

David Herman in *Storytelling and the Science of the Mind (2017)* provides a transdisciplinary exploration of narrative. His theory is linked to how we ascribe identities. Two key processes he identifies are “storying the world” and “worlding the story”. His theory is not focused specifically to film but to all forms of storytelling, whether through words, images or other means. Instead of focusing on signs, he suggests that we receive “cues” that we then use to fill in the gaps and flesh out the world and the narrative that is being communicated to us.

Herman also emphasises the shortcomings of the structuralist approach: “The structuralists’ neglect of issues of narrative reference can be traced back in part to the exclusion of the referent in favour of signifier and signified in the Saussurean language theory that the original narratologists treated as paradigmatic. By contrast over the past couple of decades the referential or world-creating potential of narrative discourse has become one of the most basic and abiding concerns of narrative theory” (Herman, 2017, p.43).

Herman argues that structuralist narratologistics neglect worldmaking processes in narrative contexts because they emphasise the language system over individual speech acts. He claims that it is the individual acts which act as cues or triggers that lead the spectator to build identities and worlds. He says that the cues trigger a mind-space or mentally configured worlds in which the viewer will want to determine the WHEN, WHAT, WHERE, HOW and WHY of the storyworld. He adds that the spectator co-constructs and imaginatively relocates to the storyworld which may be fictional or non-fictional.

“This understanding of worldmaking procedures in fictional contexts squares with recent work suggesting the need to detach the predicate “fictional” from the predicate “fake”, such that fictional narratives belong to an altogether different category from factual narratives, which encompass both true and false accounts” (Herman, 2017, p.46).

Fiction is an intendedly but non-deceptively untrue discourse. Making sense of the storyworld is based on enactive processes rather than disembodied mental representations, made possible by the way that living organisms engage with the world.

Herman emphasises the importance of cues related to persons (including human and non-human persons). He cites Emily Troscianko’s analysis of Kafka’s *The Trial* (Troscianko, 2014) : “the reading process is... enactive in the most fundamental sense. Kafka’s writing taps into the fundamentally non-linear, non-pictorial processes of perception, precisely by evoking the fictional world through the perceptual enactment of it, which directly stimulates the readers’ imagination (Herman, 2017, p. 159).

Herman argues that if the narration conveys the intentions of the persons in the story world this helps the viewer build the storyworld and the narrative, by creating identities for the persons and the storyworld within his mindspace. For example he suggests that Anna Sewell's 1877 novel *Black Beauty* portrays a horse as person and thereby suggests that the "rights and privileges associated with the primary kind of person, including the right to freedom from unnecessary suffering, should be extended to nonhuman agents" He says that this builds on the slavery abolition precedents set by Stowe's 1852 antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Herman, 2017, p.79).

Herman emphasises the importance of phenomenological approaches in this context:

Philosophers of mind who have drawn inspiration from the phenomenological models of thinkers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Scheler have likewise underscored the importance of embodied models of interaction between self and other later in life – sense-making practises that because pre- or nonconceptual, again fall outside the domain of narrative, even though they can of course be narrativised retrospectively. For example, leveraging ideas from the phenomenological tradition as developed by Merleau-Ponty to critique recent trends in the philosophy of mind, Gallagher's interaction theory suggests that crucial aspects of understanding another are lodged in the process of embodied interaction itself (see Gallagher 2005 pp 205-236). As Gallagher puts it, since "the understanding of the other person is primarily neither theoretical nor based on an internal stimulation (but) is a form of embodied practise (Gallagher 2005 p. 208) "the notion that in interacting with other we must theorise about an unseen belief or "mind-read" is problematic (Gallagher 2005 p. 212) (Herman, 2017, p.91).

In this philosophical tradition, also based on the ideas of Wittgenstein and Scheler, Herman notes that Zahavi (2007) argues that it "is possible to "experience other minded creatures" because from a broadly phenomenological perspective "affective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience, rather they are given in expressive phenomena i.e. they are expressed in bodily gestures and actions and they thereby become visible to others" (p.30) (Herman, 2017, p.91). This involves pre-linguistic capacities to understand the embodied experiences of others, which can also be termed our capacity for empathy.

Herman cites Hutto's *Narrative Practise Hypothesis* which is used to suggest that stories act as "a kind of "training set" by means of which children can learn how to move from understanding discrete propositional attitudes to being able to assemble accounts of why people do the things they do in particular contexts of action and interaction" (Herman, 2017, p.94). He describes this capacity as "storying the world".

In short, Herman suggests that the interpretative power of stories is optimally calibrated for the domain of persons and person-level phenomena.



## **Linking cognitive film theory to the approach defended in this thesis**

Analysis based on the psychoanalytic-semiotic paradigm of film theory provides a dispassionate analysis of films and certain theorists advocate an approach to film which uses distancing effects explored by Brecht in the field of theatre.

In the reductionist form of this theory the key player in the filmic communication is the auteur who uses the grammar of the shot and edit to code a message which is then decoded by the informed viewer, often with the aid of the theorist/critic. In this model the actors are a conduit that lead us to the intentions of the auteur.

The first wave of the auteur theory, which precedes the psychoanalytic-semiotic paradigm, also emphasises the role of the director who determines the technique, personal style and meaning of the film. In this context emphasis is placed on the formal elements determined by the director such as the camera placement, blocking, lighting, scene length and editing style.

The second wave of the auteur theory reinforced the emphasis on film form, whereby meaning is decisively shaped by the director through the structure of the shot and the montage.

This has led to the idea that an “art film” is one in which the director leaves his or her personal signature on the film, in particular in terms of an unmistakable film form/style.

As such an auteur film is one in which the film form of the individual shot, editing and narrative structure is unique to the director and diverges from the conventional technique. In this context it may be argued that a non-linear narrative is more “artistic” than a linear narrative and an unconventional shot composition is more “artistic” than a conventional framing.

Given that traditional filmmaking is heavily dependent on genres, which are defined in terms of their conventions and their association to a specific set of emotions, an artistic film is defined as avoiding genres or combining genres in an innovative manner.

By virtue of the emphasis on the characteristics of the director’s vision in terms of film form, if there is a simple play to emotion then this is often viewed as being less artistic.

These ideas underpin the divergence between auteur and genre cinema and are also linked to the “great divide” between erudite and popular cinema. An art film will be more difficult to decipher, and can therefore be seen as “erudite”. From this perspective it is virtually impossible for a popular film to be considered to have artistic value.

At a simplistic level it can be claimed that a popular film panders to basic emotional responses, such as fear, empathy, suspense, comedy, adrenalin, holding the spectator in a state of enthrallment that

paralyses his capacity for rational thought. By contrast, an erudite film will stimulate a “higher response”, although this higher response is not necessarily rational or intellectual, as I will explore below.

From the perspective of cognitive film theory, filmic communication is not based on deciphering narrative codes but is instead based on embodied perception of other storyworlds and persons, through prosthetic, out-of-body experiences.

The spectator is actively involved in the viewing process, not through active engagement of his or her intellect but because the film engages with the spectator at a multi-sensorial and pre-linguistic level, in which the capacity to empathise with, and understand, other persons is crucial to the experience.

Viewed from this perspective the distinction between narration and narrative is crucial. The filmic narration may involve visual and auditive narration as explained above and may include multiple narrators, through POV shots. However as we watch the film we look for an overall architect of the narration. We interpret this overall architect as a person who is shaping the filmic experience that we are taking part in. As we observe each camera shot, movement and edit, we attempt to make sense of what we are seeing and why we are being shown it. We may not ascribe specific beliefs or desires to the “person” responsible for the overall architecture of the narration, but we do look for this filmic narrator in order to make sense of what we are seeing.

This is an alternative way of understanding the famous Kuleshov effect for example <sup>154</sup>. The classic interpretation is as follows: it “explored how audiences ascribed meaning to and understood shots depending on the order in which they were assembled. The experiment signalled to directors and film editors that shot length, movement, cuts, and juxtaposition are filmmaking techniques that can emotionally affect audiences.” <sup>155</sup>

Hitchcock also explains this effect<sup>156</sup> and says that in function of the assembly of the shots, the same man (in this case himself) can either appear as a dirty old man or a benign gentleman who loves babies.

The issue at stake here is not the technical characteristics of each shot or the order in which they are shown, per se. It is related to the question of narration. We are looking for a meaning to the sequence of shots and are looking for a person/filmic narrator, who is showing us the shots in this order for a reason.

In addition we interpret the shots through the persons being shown, as embodied experience.

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<sup>154</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_gGl3LJ7vHc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gGl3LJ7vHc&feature=youtu.be)

<sup>155</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-the-kuleshov-effect-learn-the-importance-of-video-editing>

<sup>156</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/hCAE0t6KwJY>

With these two factors in mind we reach an interpretation of the assembled sequence. For example when we see Hitchcock in the sequence our choice between him being a benign gentleman and a dirty old man is also related to his embodied presence. It is not just a question of the order of the shots. We look for the reason why the filmic narrator is showing us the shots in this order, on this basis we interpret the shot of the girl or mother-with-child as a POV shot and then interpret his expression in this light.

In the case of the original Kuleshov effect the man in the sequence gives us an enigmatic expression which is difficult to decipher. This again is related to his embodied expression. We view the intervening shots of a bowl of soup, girl in a coffin and girl on a couch as POV shots, due to his gaze and our understanding of the narration. Our own empathetic reaction to each POV shot also comes into play – we see the bowl of soup as a source of sustenance, the girl in a coffin as a tragedy and the girl on a couch as an attractive figure. We then read these sensations into the enigmatic expression of the man.

The meaning that we extract from the sequences depends on our reading of the filmic narration, our reading of the situations, and our reading of the persons we see. We thus construct identities on this basis which shape our interpretation. It is not a simple question of a random assembly of shots.

If we accept the idea that when watching a film we are looking for the guiding hand of an invisible architect of the filmic narration, this means that at a certain level this “architect” is the “author” of the film. But this architect may also be a construction, a kind of demiurge, and the real author may lay behind this architect. In the case of literature Fernando Pessoa showed how it is possible to create heteronyms whereby we believe that we are interacting with the author/architect, but there is actually another author/person behind this imagined person.

The director may be viewed as the “architect” of the filmic narration, and this role is indeed crucial and highly distinct from that played by a theatre director or a novelist. But there may be other authors behind this architect.

For example the screenwriter may trace the key lines of the visual narration. The director then transforms the words into flesh, but there is clearly a shared authorship, even if there is only one master architect/filmic narrator with whom we interact.

Given the vital role played by the persons whose embodied experience we see on the screen, i.e. the actors portraying the characters, they are not mere puppets of the architect/filmic narrator. The meaning we draw from the film goes beyond the generic questions of the actor’s appearance, technical characteristics of the shot and editing. It is crucially based on our understanding of the identity of the character which is based on our empathy with that character via the embodied experience. This process

is obviously guided by the director but the actor plays a key role in this regard, by embodying the character.

This becomes clearer if we consider that the filmic experience has parallels with the shamanic experience, as explained later in this thesis.

If we see a film as a shamanic performance, it is not only the filmic narrator who guides this performance it is also the actors, who play a shamanic role, and bring the spectators into the embodied experience. This can be explained more concretely by considering the director Jean-Luc Godard. Peter Wollen states that Godard's films "have conceptual meaning, pictorial beauty and documentary truth." (Wollen, 2013, p. 135) as cited above.

These characteristics are identified independently of the actors in his films and ascribe the essential genius of his films to the director's vision and the concepts and truth that he wishes to convey. Pictorial beauty i.e. the aesthetic dimension of his films is presented as separate and distinct from the concepts and the truth.

However from the perspective of cognitive film theory, the actors who appear in Godard's films play a key role in the meaning that the spectators derive from his films.

In this context, and in relation to Godard's films in the 1960s, his muse and wife Anna Karina plays a decisive role in the communication process. In a 1987 TV interview, with Godard and Anna Karina, he stated:

I think Anna is an actress - for me this is a great eulogy – she is like one of the great actresses from the silent cinema era, that is to say someone who knows how to speak without us understanding, and yet we understand everything. That was the magic of silent cinema. She's also a great musical actress as well  
[...]  
I was copying others.  
There was Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth,  
Steinberg and Marlene Dietrich,  
Renoir and Catherine Hessling  
So I thought why I can't I do the same!  
There was a model  
We see that this model allows us to make certain films  
But it was difficult to pass these films into real life and things didn't work out between us.<sup>157</sup>

The key point being expressed here is the crucial importance of the actress (in this case) for the director. Godard also emphasises the central role played by Karina in embodying the roles she plays in the films. As spectators of Godard's films we construct identities and storyworlds around the images we are seeing and the actors play a crucial role in this process.

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<sup>157</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzR\\_t9kxgmE&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzR_t9kxgmE&feature=youtu.be)

It has been claimed that an actor can effectively be a co-author of the film on this basis, as has been suggested for Anna Karina. For example, Godard's *Vivre sa Vie* (1962) begins with Jean-Luc Godard reading the voiceover: "It's our story: a painter portraying his love."

Godard's 1960s films up until the new direction he chose after May 1968 are filled with the question of love and above all his love for his "muse" Anna Karina. But this passion is not merely unidirectional, through the embodied experience of the architect/filmic narrator and actress we become involved in this love. Even in films such as *Le Mépris* which doesn't include Anna Karina, her presence is nonetheless felt. For many viewers this is the key to the attraction of Godard's films rather than the conceptual meaning, pictorial beauty and documentary truth identified by Wollen.

Another short film *Anna Karina: The Muse of the French New Wave*<sup>158</sup>, by Fandor notes that alongside Jean-Luc Godard she produced some of the Nouvelle Vague's most iconic moments. He adds "The Karina-Godard relationship transformed art house cinema. Karina is more than just a European star, she's the quintessential female icon of a transformative cinematic movement." Anna Karina is clearly communicating not just with the director but with the audience and her embodied presence is a core element of the experience of Godard's films from this period.

The fact that we build a sense of identity and storyworld around Karina means that almost regardless of the filmic narration and the narrative we will construct our own meaning of what is happening in this world ("storying the world"). Seen from this perspective, the idea that an alternative narrative is somehow artistically superior to a classic narrative structure is missing the point. At worst, lack of interest in narration may undermine the communication between the filmic narrator and the spectator, which is crucial to the filmic experience.

Truffaut likened this relationship to guiding people down a corridor. In the documentary, *Duels - Truffaut / Godard, scénario d'une rupture* (2016)<sup>159</sup>, Truffaut says:

There are directors who work as poets. Who have a message to deliver. Who don't care whether they are followed or not. I'm waiting to be followed. I think a lot about the spectator. I compare this to walking down the corridor. I look behind me. To see if you are always following me. I open the door. But anyway I like to lead these spectators into a crazy region.<sup>160</sup>

In another context he stated:

There are two kinds of directors: those who take into account the audience when they conceive and direct their films and those who do not take them into account. For the former, cinema is a

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<sup>158</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XC5cpRwQBEO&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>159</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqCbWX58gKA&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>160</sup> Original: Il y a des metteurs em scene qui travaillent comme des poetes. Qui ont une message a delivrer. Que s'occupe pas se sont suivi ou non. Mois je me ocupe d'etre suivi. Je pense beaucoup au spectateur. Se on compare ça quand on marche dans le couloir. Je regards derriere moi. Pour voir se on me suit toujours. J'ouvre la porte. Mais j'aime entrainer ces spectateurs quand meme dans une region un peu folle

performance art, for the latter, an individual adventure. One doesn't have to prefer one or the other, that's the way it is. For Hitchcock as for Renoir, as indeed for almost all American directors, a film is not successful if it is not successful with the audience, i.e. doesn't attract a public, and this question has been constantly thought of since the moment when the subject was chosen until the end of the project. By contrast Bresson, Tati, Rossellini, Nicholas Ray, shoot the movies in their own way and then ask the public to enter "their game", Renoir, Clouzot, Hitchcock, Hawks make the movies for the public, by continually posing questions to be sure to interest future viewers.<sup>161</sup>

Truffaut also stated: "I am certainly not an innovator because I'm one of the remaining few who believe in characters, situations, narrative progression, sub plots, false trails, in a word acting....since the parallel between Godard and Picasso was established I feel in the situation of a figurative painter who continues resolutely in that style hoping that it will not disappear completely." (Truffaut, 1975, p. 85).

### **The transcendental dimension**

The questions of the importance of narrative, narration, alternative structures etc is linked to Truffaut's remark about leading his "spectators into a crazy region."

This is related in turn to the question of whether empathy, as identified in cognitive film theory, can lead to a "higher experience".

This question is addressed by Paul Schrader in *Transcendental Style in Film* (Schrader, 2018). I will return to this work in the next chapter, but for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note the following.

Truffaut cites films poets and identifies Bresson amongst them. Schrader analyses the work of Ozu, Bresson and Dreyer who he compares to earlier artistic-religious expression: the Zen arts of painting, gardening, and haiku; Byzantine iconography; and Gothic architecture, respectively. He says that the transcendental style is also found in directors such as Antonioni, Rossellini, Pasolini, Boetticher, Renoir, Mizoguchi, Buñuel, Warhol, Michael Snow, and Bruce Baillie, but not with such "devotion, the rigor, and the outright fanaticism to employ it exclusively" (Schrader, 2018, p. 41). In his recent introduction to the republished work he cites other examples such as Pedro Costa and Bela Tarr.

Schrader is interested in the higher calling of art and states that the Transcendent is intimately linked to religion and the arts, and has been cultivated in particular by the intellectual or clerical elite but

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<sup>161</sup> Original: Il y a deux sortes de metteurs en scène : ceux qui tiennent compte du public en concervant puis en réalisant leurs films et ceux qui n'en tiennent pas compte. Pour les premiers, le cinéma est un art du spectacle, pour les seconds, une aventure individuelle. Il n'a pas à préférer ceux-ci ou ceux-là, c'est ainsi. Pour Hitchcock comme pour Renoir, comme d'ailleurs pour presque tous les metteurs en scène américains, un film n'est pas réussi s'il n'a pas de succès, c'est-à-dire s'il ne touche pas le public à qui l'on a constamment pensé depuis le moment où l'on a choisi le sujet jusqu'au terme de la réalisation. Alors que Bresson, Tati, Rossellini, Nicholas Ray, tournent les films à leur manière et demandent ensuite au public de vouloir bien entrer « dans leur jeu », Renoir, Clouzot, Hitchcock, Hawks font leus films pour le public, en se posant continuellement des questions afin d'être certains d'eintéresser les futurs spectateurs. François Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, Paris, 1975, p. 104

is found in all walks of life, for example in Japan's Zen culture. He cites Gerardus van der Leeuw who said: "Religion and art are parallel lines which intersect only at infinity, and meet in God" (Schrader, 2018, vii). He continues: "Transcendental expression in religion and art attempts to bring man as close to the ineffable, invisible, and unknowable as words, images, and ideas can take him". (Schrader, 2018, p. 38). "Human works, accordingly, cannot inform one about the Transcendent; they can only be expressive of the Transcendent" (Schrader, 2018, p. 38).

Schrader believes that embodied experience, the immanent, can express the transcendent but that fascination with embodied experience is the opposite of transcendence. He explains this as follows:

The enemy of transcendence is immanence, whether it is external (realism, rationalism) or internal (psychologism, expressionism). To the transcendental artist these conventional interpretations of reality are emotional and rational constructs devised by man to dilute or explain away the transcendental. In motion pictures these constructs take the form of what Robert Bresson has called "screens," clues or study guides which help the viewer "understand" the event: plot, acting, characterization, camerawork, music, dialogue, editing. In films of transcendental style these elements are, in popular terms, "nonexpressive" (that is, they are not expressive of culture or personality); they are reduced to stasis. Transcendental style stylizes reality by eliminating (or nearly eliminating) those elements which are primarily expressive of human experience, thereby robbing the conventional interpretations of reality of their relevance and power. Transcendental style, like the mass, transforms experience into a repeatable ritual which can be repeatedly transcended. (Schrader, 2018, p. 41).

This is linked to the idea of the distancing mechanism advocated by Brecht.

It has parallels with neo-Platonism but cannot be equated with rationalism or the power of reason. This is why Schrader says that rationalism is also an enemy of transcendence.

Schrader notes that Mircea Eliade, in his anthropological study of comparative religions says that Freud and Jung identified transcendence with hierophanies, wherein they explained that the human religious experience is motivated by either a deep psychological need or neurosis (Freud), or by an external, Other force (Jung). He adds that Jung rejected transcendence:

Carl Jung was reacting against this tendency when he wrote, "Every statement about the transcendental ought to be avoided because it is invariably a laughable presumption on the part of the human mind, unconscious of its limitations. Therefore, when God or Tao is named as a stirring of, or a condition of, the soul, something has been said about the knowable only, but nothing about the unknowable. Of the latter, nothing can be determined. (Schrader, 2018, p. 38).

In the context of this thesis it is argued that the transcendental style is clearly one of the key facets of cinema with both an artistic and "higher" calling and is intimately linked to the tradition of poetic cinema, but that this tradition is not restricted solely to the ascetic style of Ozu, Bresson, Pedro Costa and Bela Tarr.

This is underpinned by philosophical paradigms, as will be explained herein. Schrader's model of transcendence is linked to neo-Platonism, but this tradition is only part of Plato's own thinking which

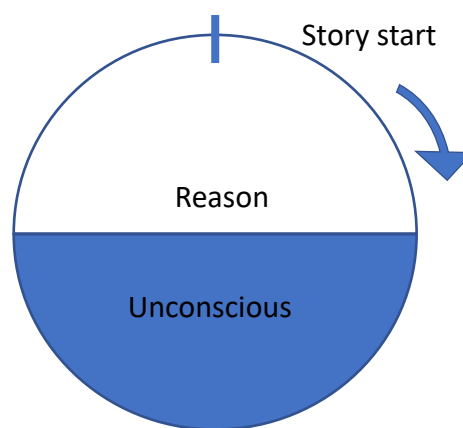
will be explained in the next chapter and ignores the currents associated to the tradition of a “poetic path” as will be explained herein.

### **Moving beyond cerebral reasoning**

Schrader is looking for a transcendental beyond human consciousness but the ideas defended by cognitive film theorists suggest that embodied experience may involve cognitive, pre-linguistic elements that can't be put into the words.

The idea defended by Boorstin (1990) is that the filmmaker must move beyond the conscious, cerebral world of logical intelligence, and even beyond the sphere of emotions, to reach gut reactions.

These may be linked to non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, and involve the irrational as much as the rational. A similar idea is found in Antunes (2016):



*Figure 18 – Movement from sphere of reason to non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious*

From this perspective the director must use the power of film to move beyond the world of reason. Truffaut referred to this when he said that he aimed to lead his spectators into a crazy region. This also has links to the Dionysian nocturnal journey, as will be explained below. This can be described as journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious but that can also be misleading. From a phenomenological perspective it may be simply a question of heightened consciousness.

Hanaway-Oakley says that the fascination with the unconscious can conceal the importance of immersing oneself within the conscious world, and it was precisely this aspect that interested modernist thinkers. She refers to Merleau-Ponty, who said that “the movies are peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.58). She adds:

Joyce was dubious about Freud's theory of the unconscious emotions: he felt that feelings are expressed, sometimes in complex ways, through the conscious body: “Why all this fuss and bother



about the mystery of the unconscious?" "What about the mystery of the conscious?" (Budgen, 1960, p.320). For Merleau-Ponty, contra Freud, gestures directly express the feelings of an embodied consciousness: "anger, shame, hate and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another's consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.53). In *Circe (1964)* there are several points that suggest that gestures are direct expressions, unmediated by a separate unconsciousness. ...Instead of giving Bloom a machine-body that is controlled by a detached human mind, Joyce makes Bloom an interconnected body-subject" (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, pp.80-81).

## **The limbic system**

The link to heightened consciousness has been portrayed as being related to the limbic system, which has been compared to our "animal brain".

From this perspective, much of modern education is dedicated to advancing the powers of our cerebral reasoning, as suggested by McGilchrist and others.

Boorstin does not refer specifically to the limbic system, but he does talk about the "lizard brain" which is linked to the same idea.

This idea underpins stories such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

In this context, the childhood perspective of the world seems to be more integrated and whole, whereas adult consciousness seems to be fractured, alienated and with the need for re-linking, as referred to by Joseph Campbell and others.

This idea is found in popular music in songs such as Supertramp's *Logical Song*.

When I was young, it seemed that life was so wonderful,  
A miracle, oh it was beautiful, magical  
And all the birds in the trees, well they'd be singing so happily,  
Oh joyfully, playfully watching me  
But then they send me away to teach me how to be sensible,  
Logical, oh responsible, practical  
And they showed me a world where I could be so dependable,  
Oh clinical, oh intellectual, cynical<sup>162</sup>

## **Conclusion : Journey towards non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" and the unconscious**

The main focus of cognitive film theory is how films engage with spectator's minds not solely at an intellectual level but also at a multi-sensorial level and a phenomenological level.

These theories emphasise the active role played by the spectator, through use of pre-linguistic and emotional tools, wherein empathy and the sensorimotor system plays an important role in the interaction with films.

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<sup>162</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.lyricsfreak.com/s/supertramp/the+logical+song\\_20133850.html](https://www.lyricsfreak.com/s/supertramp/the+logical+song_20133850.html)

This approach offers a bridge to the question of film poetry, analysed in the previous chapter, and the role of narrative in engaging with non-rational aspects of the human mind, to be discussed in the next two chapters.

The individual image and the overall narrative may play a role in leading viewers to engage with what may be called either heightened consciousness or a dreamlike state linked to the unconscious.

In order to “fall asleep” and enter the dream world, we need to be in a protected place where we can turn off our conscious faculties and allow the work of art to create an altered state of consciousness.

In the case of the performing arts, the venue in which the performance is presented must enable the spectator to extract himself from the everyday world.

An auditorium by definition is a place where we can hear the performance without distractions. A theatre is a place to watch, from Greek *theātron*, from *theāsthai*, to watch, from *theā*, a viewing.

When performances are seen at night, the capacity for seclusion from the day-to-day world is even greater. The audience enters an enclosed space which is initially immersed in darkness and then artificial light is used to allow the action to be observed, often accompanied by music which is an integral part of the spectacle.

The spectator’s journey from day to night, and then in the midst of the night is prompted to forget about day-to-day concerns and enter an illuminated magical space has parallels with the dream process.

The importance of enabling the spectator to immerse himself in the work is particularly obvious in the case of the performing arts. But also in order to fully appreciate painting, sculpture and literature there is a need to create an appropriate space for contemplation. In the case of architecture, the building itself creates the spaces and sensations required for the respective appreciation of the work.

In the case of religious temples a similar process of seclusion is achieved.

The thick walls of a church, the narrow windows, the use of candles and other forms of light, seclude the churchgoer from the outside world creating an oasis of calm and contemplation.

The architecture of the church has been cared to the sacred grove, with the columns resembling giant trees. The church has also been compared to a sacred grotto or even to the womb.

Expressions such as “mother church” (*igreja matriz* in Portuguese) reinforce the idea that the church is a mother/womb construction.

The appreciation of art, in particular of the performing arts, can be associated to a journey from the diurnal world (which some associate to left-brain thinking), towards an unknown or “nocturnal world” linked to aesthetics and emotions, using the ideas of French philosopher Gilbert Durand. While immersed in this “unknown world” the spectator is drawn towards the “inner sanctum” of the unconscious.

This “journey” can be presented visually as follows:

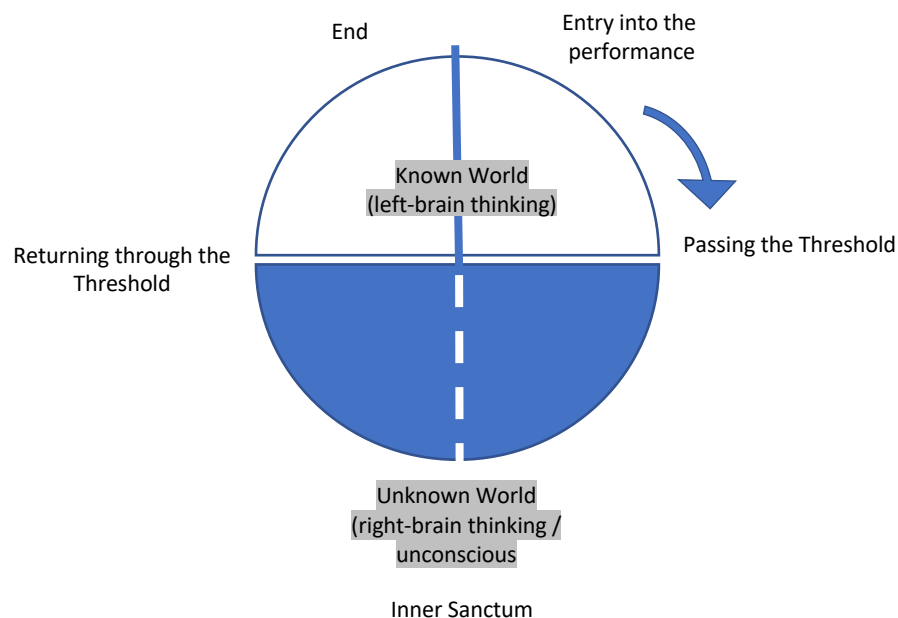


Figure 19 – Journey from Known World to Unknown World, passing thresholds

Using the line of reasoning presented above this may be compared to an entry (re-entry) into a kind of “womb”.

The spectator’s journey is paralleled by the protagonist’s journey within the narrative. Part of the journey into the unknown world may be described as a journey into the “forest”.

The journey may be towards a literal forest - for example a cabin in the woods is a staple element of many horror films and also features in Netflix’s recent series *Bird Box* (2018). Or it may be a metaphorical forest – for example New York becomes a dark forest in *Taxi Driver*.

Alexander Porteous' *The Forest in Folklore and Mythology* (Porteous, 1928) explores the multiple meanings associated to the forest, including the presence of woods or forests in many creation myths including the garden of Eden. He emphasises the primeval nature of the forest, and the existence of sacred trees (such as the Tree of Life) in many religions, and sacred groves and enchanted forests associated to many spiritual or religious shrines.

Many forests of fabulous fame have been mentioned in classical writings and by the authors of old romances. Hindu mythology tells of a great cosmogonic forest, the principal tree in which is the mighty Jambu, which bears an immortal fruit as large as an elephant, resembling gold, and of which the seeds produce pure gold.

In this celestial forest, in the field of flowers of light, the plant of immortality grew, and from this plant Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods, extracted the divine ambrosia.

One of the most ancient traditional forests of which we have any knowledge was the Forest, sometimes called the Grove, of Eridhu. It is frequently mentioned in the Assyrian tablets, and as Babylonian tradition placed the site of the Garden of Eden in its vicinity, it was believed that the Tree of Life grew therein. (Porteous, 1928, pp. 17-18)

Forests are a recurrent feature of romance and myth:

The Romances of the Middle Ages contain many allusions to forests famous in myth, and enchanted forests full of magic. Several of them are connected with the quest for the Holy Grail, and relate the adventures of the gallant knights who figure in Arthurian Romance as having undertaken that quest. (Porteous, 1928, p. 21)

Many mythological figures are also linked to the forest, including good spirits such as faeries and evil spirits such as demons. Creatures such as elves could be good or bad. "In Scandinavian countries the belief was held that when Lucifer and his angels fell from Heaven those who fell into the woods and forests remained there, becoming known as Wood-Spirits or Wood-Trolls." (Porteous, 1928, p. 84)

The forest is linked to male figures such as Pan, the Green Man, Robin Hood and to female figures, such as Diana, the goddess of the hunt, wood spirits, and the "mouras encantadas" of Portuguese and Galician folklore.

Druids are also linked to forests, as are witches.

There is also a link between the forest/grove and the design of the church, whose secluded atmosphere and high columns are reminiscent of the forest.

The forest is also linked in mythology to mother earth and Porteous claims that Rome was built precisely on the location of a sacred grove dedicated to Bona Dea and that there was a temple dedicated to her on the Aventine Hill:

The earth itself was considered to be a goddess, and was worshipped as such under the name of Bona Dea. She had a temple on the Aventine Hill at Rome, and there her festival was annually held on the first of May. There was also a grove dedicated to her, situated in the Campagna on the banks of the Tiber, five miles below Rome. This grove was a most peculiarly sacred one, and the trees composing it included Evergreen Oaks and Laurels. Should a rotten branch fall to the ground, should

a tree be struck by lightning, or should any damage of any kind occur to one of the trees, expiatory sacrifices of sheep and bulls had to be made. In the case of a tree struck by lightning it was obligatory to dig it up entirely, split the wood and burn it, and then plant another tree in its stead.

The tradition that Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf in a dark recess on the side of the Aventine Hill which was shadowed by an overhanging grove, rendered this spot sacred in the eyes of the Romans. Here was formerly celebrated the festival of the Lupercalia in honour of the god Pan, and riotous and lascivious scenes were annually witnessed there. After Rome became Christian this festival was celebrated even until the end of the fifth century. In the course of the centuries, that sylvan spot became covered with the stately buildings of the Forum, the seat of justice of Imperial Rome. (Porteous, 1928, p. 67)

In the context of mythology, the forest is both a place of life and death.

The journey to the forest may be a voyage towards destruction but also a return to the womb.

These questions will be developed further in the next chapter.

## Summary

The idea that linear narratives can't be poetic has a long lineage, as explored above. However Joseph Campbell explorations of comparative mythology suggests that myths can have a poetic dimension and may have linear narratives or, in contemporary creation, may be explored via anamorphoses that can only be understood by using a "conic mirror". He cites the example of James Joyce.

In particular Campbell draws a link between the artist and the shaman and views the latter as the forerunner of the poet. He identifies key stages in narrative structures such as the "moment of aesthetic arrest" and the "journey into the dark forest" which are directly linked to the poetic sensibility. For the purposes of screenwriting his ideas have been applied primarily on the basis of the "hero's journey" using an Apollonian model of a hero who overcomes a series of ordeals and returns victorious. But his full ideas, as developed in works such as the 4-volume *Masks of God* are more complex and include Dionysian elements and alternative structures such as the "Fisher King" myth, the "Shaman's Journey" and the "Lover's Journey".

## Introduction

The writings of Joseph Campbell (1904-87) are particularly relevant for this thesis for the following reasons:

- 1) Campbell wrote extensively in relation to one of the core ideas of this thesis – how art can engage with the unconscious.
- 2) Although he wrote very little explicitly on the cinema, his ideas have had tremendous influence on modern scriptwriting in particular in Hollywood, via his theory of the "monomyth".
- 3) The focus on Campbell's work, for the purposes of scriptwriting, has been primarily in relation to his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* whereas his magnum opus *The Masks of God* has many fascinating ideas which have been far less used for this context and are explored in this thesis.

An entire chapter is devoted to Campbell because his in-depth research into myth reveals patterns that are not only relevant in order to study story structure, they also explain an underlying pattern and structure that enable us to understand how stories interact with the psyche.

Campbell provides a detailed explanation of the difference between a more ascetic branch and a more passionate branch within the poetic path which is extremely relevant for the next chapter.

This chapter also highlights the fact that the adaptation of Campbell's ideas to Hollywood screenwriting are only a very limited part of his overall oeuvre and a detailed comparison will be made with the use of Campbell's ideas by screenwriting guru, Christopher Vogler.

Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) has had a tremendous influence on modern Hollywood and inspired texts such as Christopher Vogler's 7-page memo<sup>163</sup> which served as one of the points of inspiration for Disney's animation film *The Lion King* (1992) and subsequently led to his book, *The Writer's Journey* (2007).

In the "monomyth" structure the protagonist/hero moves from the known world and enters the unknown world, thereby paralleling the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious which many believe is one of the key objectives of cinema.

Before embarking upon this journey, the hero receives a call to adventure. This call to adventure has often been interpreted as a simple invitation to go on a journey, but Campbell links it in *The Masks of God* to a moment of "aesthetic arrest", i.e. a moment of spiritual awakening in which the protagonist is stirred to respond to a higher calling.

The hero initially rejects the call, and in the monomyth model is then convinced by a mentor to embark upon the adventure. He then undergoes numerous challenges in the unknown world, finds an "elixir" and then once again passes the threshold, returning to the known world, but with new found knowledge and powers.

This has been schematised by Vogler as follows:

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<sup>163</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://chrisvogler.wordpress.com/category/christopher-vogler/memo-from-the-story-department/>

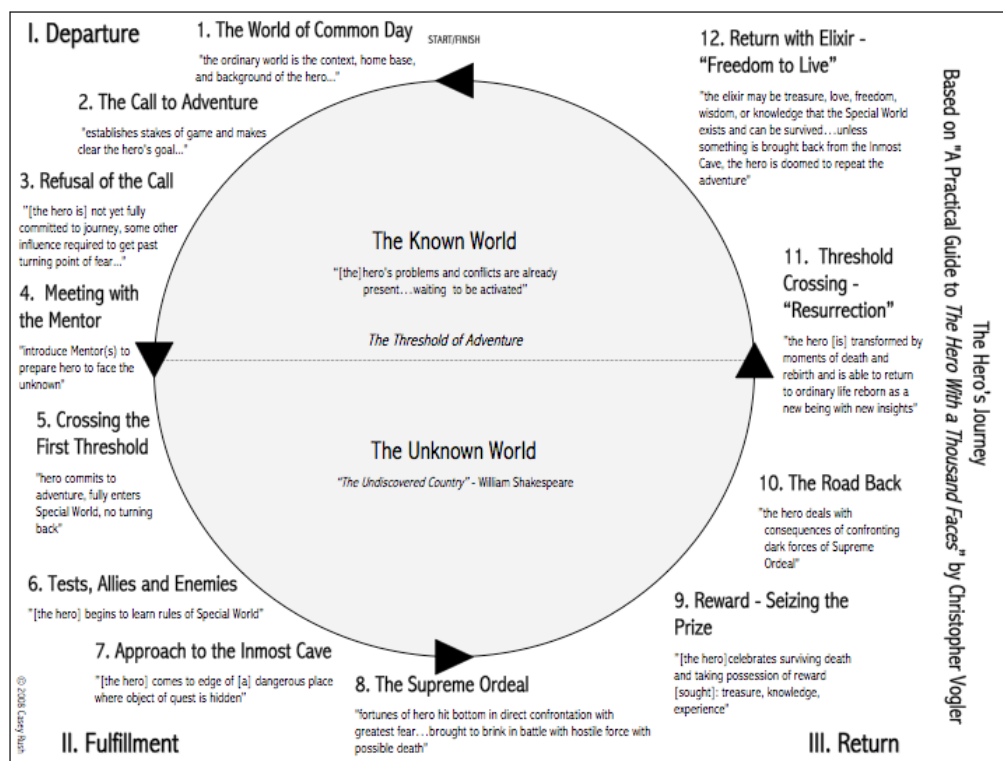


Figure 20 Visual representation of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey <sup>164</sup>

The parallel between the monomyth structure and Plato's allegory of the cave is evident.<sup>165</sup>

After completing *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* in 1949, Joseph Campbell spent twelve years researching his 4-volume series about mythology, religion and culture, *The Masks of God*. In the last volume, *Creative Mythology* he explores how artforms have contributed to our world-view of man's role in the universe, constructing a web of views that impact our views on spirituality and religion.

Campbell emphasises how art can transport us from our everyday experience towards a journey in which we come into contact with a higher spiritual reality. He considers that contemporary artists are creating "living myths" that play a comparable role to traditional mythology:

In the context of a traditional mythology, the symbols are presented in socially maintained rites, through which the individual is required to experience, or will pretend to have experience, certain insights, sentiments, and commitments. In what I am calling "creative" mythology, on the other hand, this order is reversed: the individual has had an experience of his own – of order, horror, beauty of even mere exhilaration – which he seeks to communicate through signs; and if his realization has been of a certain depth and import, his communication will have the value and force of living myth – for those, that is to say, who receive and respond to it of themselves, with recognition, uncoerced (Campbell, 1976, p.4).

<sup>164</sup> Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://mikemasonart.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/herojourneygraphicorganizer.jpg>

<sup>165</sup> For example: see: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://idealinthewest.com/episode-6-the-allegory-of-the-cave>



Campbell explores the link between the role of the artist and the shaman, and suggests that one of the key characteristics of art is precisely the capacity for transportation. He defines the following three core functions of myth:

- 1) To reconcile waking consciousness to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of this universe as it is; (Campbell, 1976, p.4).
- 2) To render an interpretive total image of the same, as known to contemporary consciousness. Shakespeare's definition of the function of his art, "to hold, as 'twere the mirror up to nature"...It is the revelation to waking consciousness of the powers of its own sustaining source. (Campbell, 1976, p.4).
- 3) Enforcement of a moral order: the shaping of the individual to the requirements of his geographically and historically conditioned social group. (Campbell, 1976, p.5).

These ideas lie within the framework of the tradition of a "poetic path" and a phenomenological approach, identified above in the thesis.

Campbell considered that whereas (1) and (2) are shared between traditional and "creative" mythology, aspect (3) is socially codified in traditional systems, but not so in the contemporary world, where we have competing mythologies, which is a source of creative inspiration but also of social disaggregation, stating:

The rise and fall of civilisations in the long, broad course of history can be seen to have been largely a function of the integrity and cogency of their supporting canons of myth; for not authority but aspiration is the motivator, builder and transformer of civilisation. A mythological canon is an organisation of symbols, ineffable in its import, by which the energies of aspiration are evoked and gathered towards a focus (Campbell, 1976, p.5).

In the midst of social disaggregation associated with the panoply of modern mythologies, "living myths" actually acquire even greater force, which brings Campbell to what he describe as the fourth and most vital function of a mythology:

- 4) "To foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity, in accord with d) himself (the microcosm), c) his culture (the mesocosm), b) the universe (the macrocosm), and a) that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things" (Campbell, 1976, p.6).

Campbell suggests that it is the power of the "poets" that enables us to connect these multiple levels: microcosm, mesocosm, macrocosm and infinite, and for this reason cited the Gnostic Thomas Gospel, "'The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.' Poets see it. That is the faculty of poets." (Campbell. J., 1965, p. 368)

This idea echoes with the ideas expressed in the chapter on poetic cinema.

The capacity to achieve this connection, this transportation, is embedded within the work itself, and requires the spectator to depart from his or her everyday world and enter a new world. This “departure” occurs within the story itself, as the protagonist sets forth on his adventure, but the spectator also partakes in this dreamlike journey, as he empathises with the protagonist and assumes the story as his own.

It can be argued that this process of empathy is particularly powerful in the case of film because of its phenomenological and multi-sensorial power and its associated link to non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious.

### **The moment of aesthetic arrest**

The initial step in this journey – for both the protagonist and the spectator - is the “call to adventure”, a stage identified in the monomyth (see above).

As mentioned above, Campbell establishes a parallel between this moment and what he calls the moment of “aesthetic arrest”, citing the example of Dante’s vision of Beatrice in his *Vita Nuova* or James Joyce’ description of when Stephen sees a girl in *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. In both cases, the protagonist is initially lost inside a “wasteland”/“dark wood” and then sees a glimpse of salvation, via this “aesthetic arrest”.

In popular folktales we find a similar structure in which the hero, typically a young adolescent, abandons/disobeys his family and departs from his home/known world into the dark forest, where there is an encounter that will ultimately deliver new powers, knowledge after overcoming various trials and tribulations.

Campbell quotes Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, in which he described this moment of aesthetic arrest:

At that instant, I say truly, the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling said these words: Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me. (Campbell, 1976, p.68)

This moment of “aesthetic arrest” is key to the transportation process and the passing of the threshold towards an “unknown world”, and according to Campbell is an aspect shared in common between all art forms.

Campbell refers to the ideas of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in this context to explain how the moment of aesthetic arrest can also lead to a sense of dread or awe:

The transition then is from an aesthetic (Apollonian) to a properly religious dimension of experience (or in Nietzsche’s terminology, toward Dionysian rapture); and the sense of awe, dread or terror that is then experienced is something different altogether from any “kinetic”, natural loathing or terror before an odious or dangerous object. For the precipitating cause here is not an object. It is the

sense, rather, of a break in the tissue of temporal-spatial causal relationships by which objects are supported, by which the subject too is supported: a chilling, stilling, indubitable sense of the immediacy of something – there? Here? Where? That is inconceivable: a void perhaps, a god perhaps, or a ghost. (Campbell, 1976, p. 352).

The moment of aesthetic arrest is thus the key to commencing this journey towards the “infinite”. The launch of this call to adventure or quest is an arduous journey, that most will fail to complete: “There have been many called, but the impediments of sin leave all but the gifted few strewn variously in defeat or partial victory along the way” (Campbell, 1976, p. 541).

Campbell continues:

The “upward pointing”, the “upward lead” to mysteries beyond the reach of sight, sound, word or symbol – is again the same: the Beatific Vision, beheld by Dante in the radiant celestial bowl of the rose of Paradise, and to be seen, finally, by Galahad within the mystic vessel of the Grail...Thus, the Grail in this work is equivalent to the celestial rose in Dante and, in Buddhist imagery, to the lotus of the saying: “OM MANI PADME HUM: the jewel in the lotus (Campbell, 1976, p. 541).

The concept of aesthetic arrest, in conjunction with Plato’s allegory of the cave, is extremely important for this thesis. Plato’s allegory of the cave is a metaphor for the process of learning in general, i.e. the departure from ignorance towards love of wisdom, which engenders moments of fear and also wonderment. But the idea of aesthetic arrest associated with this process of transportation, reveals that the path can only be achieved through aesthetic revelation rather than simply intellectual enquiry. In other words art forms offer the key to unlocking this realm of the void/God/ghost/grail/jewel in the lotus, while intellectual enquiry alone is unable to achieve the same goal.

This idea is expressed in T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, that conjures up parallels with the cave metaphor:

I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.<sup>166</sup>

This idea is further pursued in Eliot’s *Burnt Norton*, also linked to the “rose garden” (which we also find in Dante’s *Inferno*, and alchemical and esoteric symbolism etc):

What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://wasteland.windingway.org/411/dayadhvam-i-have-heard-the-key>

<sup>167</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/t\\_s\\_eliot/poems/15132](http://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/t_s_eliot/poems/15132)

In the same poem, Eliot refers to the importance of form and explores the challenge posed in trying to convey this moment of aesthetic arrest, leading us to the “infinite”:

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,  
Not that only, but the co-existence,  
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,  
And the end and the beginning were always there  
Before the beginning and after the end.  
And all is always now. Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Will not stay still.<sup>168</sup>

Ultimately it is this journey, this transportation process, triggered by “aesthetic arrest” which is sought by both the author of the artwork and is equally sought by the reader/spectator.

Indeed, the importance that most of us attribute to our favourite films, music or books is precisely because these works achieve this function for us. Not only do they help define our identity, concretising key references for our “sense of self”. They also transport us beyond ourselves towards the “unknown world” and establish the link between the microcosm, mesocosm, macrocosm and the “infinite”.

In traditional mythologies, this process of aesthetic arrest and transportation may be shared throughout society, spanning different age groups. But this is far from being the case in contemporary society. In function of age, interest, education or cultural background we have very different reactions to modern “creative mythologies”.

For example, our reaction to different works will be different at different ages and times in our lives. The same is true in function of people’s cultural references, social groups, class and education.

It is tempting to place value judgements on different types of aesthetic arrest – for example stating that the aesthetic arrest created by a work of “fine art” is “superior” to that engendered by a “minor art”. However, these are always subjective perspectives.

For example, *Star Wars* may provoke a moment of aesthetic arrest in one viewer while Andrey Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* or Manoel de Oliveira’s *Abraham’s Valley (1993)* will achieve a moment of aesthetic

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<sup>168</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/t\\_s\\_eliot/poems/15132](http://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/t_s_eliot/poems/15132)

arrest in another viewer, while both may be left cold by the other work. Indeed the same person may have these diametrically opposed reactions at different times in their lives.

### **The Monomyth and Rites of Passage**

Some defenders of the “monomyth” suggest that this structure can be found in all narratives, albeit with variations. Others identify it primarily with certain types of film, in particular fantasy and adventure films.

What is unquestionable is that the set of ideas relating to the “monomyth” and the Hero’s Journey have had a major effect on screenwriting, in particular Hollywood cinema. Many films deliberately follow the monomyth structure and in certain cases, such as *Rango (2011)*, the characters explicitly refer to story steps identified within the “monomyth” structure.

Given the tremendous impact of this set of ideas on modern filmmaking, it is necessary to analyse this structure within this thesis and also explore its underlying roots.

Joseph Campbell developed theories that had originally been explored by his predecessors, including James G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, in terms of study of comparative mythology and James Joyce who originally coined the term monomyth (in his novel *Finnegan’s Wake*).

This is important because the application of Campbell’s ideas to modern American cinema has made it appear as if these ideas are somehow essentially “American” – perhaps comparable to the manner in which pizza is often viewed as essentially an American invention.

In actual fact there was huge intellectual interest in comparative mythology in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. This phenomenon was also intimately linked to artistic movements such as the first avant-garde and to political movements. In the totalitarian societies that emerged during this period major emphasis was placed on the creation of modern mythologies, which in turn tapped into older mythologies.

The tremendous interest in contemporary myth-making in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe quickly assumed strong ideological overtones and propaganda elements. As a result, after the defeat of these totalitarian regimes, European filmmakers and artists in general were more wary to create “hero’s myths” and modern mythologies, precisely because these attempts were identified with such regimes.

However, the historical roots and appeal of creation of modern mythologies has obviously persisted, and it may be argued that it has been precisely the emphasis on this dimension within Hollywood cinema that has enabled its current hegemony of the world’s cinema screens.

The monomyth and Plato's allegory of the cave are intimately linked to rites of initiation. Joseph Campbell referred to this link in *Creative Mythology*:

Great biographers and novelists have always recognised that, in the lives of people growing up, initiations transpire through the revelations of chance, according to the readiness of the psyche. Beneath the accidental surface effects of this world sit – as of yore – the gods. Their ageless order of the archetypes of myth, “the grave and constant in human sufferings” can be discerned through all time and tide. The entire course of a lifetime is thus a rite of initiation and can be experienced as such (Campbell, 1976, p. 484).

The poet or *seer* is able to discern the eternal within apparent random events and thereby enables the neophyte to attain a higher level of wisdom.

However, this journey is not painless, indeed it is filled with trials and tribulations (hence “the hero's journey”). This facet of initiation and trials is also reflected in certain artworks, in which it is precisely fear, the sense of awe and Dionysian intoxication that is necessary in order to “break on through (to the other side)”, to quote Jim Morrison.

The horror genre, for example, directly uses this dimension. Throughout history, initiation rituals have included a testing element, as adolescents pass through the threshold towards adulthood. In the initiation rituals of the ancient Mystery Schools, the neophytes were thrown into dark caves and exposed to attacks by “wild monsters”. The horror genre repeats this same phenomenon, engendering visceral terror and fear, one of the forms of aesthetic arrest, but which at the same time can provide access to the “infinite”.

Campbell explored the links between the monomyth structure and the rites of the ancient Mystery Schools. This link has also been discussed by Christopher Vogler.

At this level the modern filmgoing experience may be claimed to have certain parallels with ancient initiation rituals – thus also providing one explanation of why filmgoing, at least until fairly recently, has continued to be popular amongst teenagers and young adults - as a rite of passage.

It is significant that given the hegemony of Hollywood cinema, this “rite of passage” is undertaken to a large extent via American productions.

The rituals of the Mystery Schools also had strong links to the fertility cults and the steps in the monomyth or hero's cycle are also linked to the annual calendar.

This once again demonstrates how this structure is potentially of relevance to all strands of artistic production and filmmaking, rather than being exclusively linked to American cinema.

The monomyth is typically displayed as a circle, evolving from the known world, through the unknown world and then back to the known world (see above).

This structure has parallels with the annual cycle, with the solar half of the year, between April and September and the lunar half of the year, between October and March. The annual cycle has various thresholds and turning points, as recorded in key dates on the calendar, many of which are holy days (or holidays) – such as the equinoxes and solstices and mid-points such as Halloween, Carnival, May Day and Assumption Day.

It is well-known that the mystery cults used this annual cycle and that myths such as Orpheus descending into the underworld, passing through the threshold from the known world to the unknown world, is directly linked to this cycle.

This annual cycle is also depicted in the cycle of the Zodiac, where each house is one part of the overall story.

## **The Power of Myth**

Campbell never wrote specifically about cinema, but his ideas have had a major impact on the seventh art, in particular from the late 1970s onwards, following the major media exposure generated by the fact that George Lucas credited Campbell as one of his key inspirations for his *Star Wars* saga.

Campbell and Lucas subsequently became friends and during the 6-hour interview with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, recorded in 1988 in Lucas' Skywalker Ranch, Campbell analysed the use of mythological elements in *Star Wars*.

In this context he said the following that the key idea here is the mentality linked to bureaucracy and a purely rational view of things which he said is the “real monster force in the modern world”.

I've heard youngsters use some of George Lucas' terms--"the Force and "the Dark Side." So it must be hitting somewhere. It's a good sound teaching, I would say.

“The fact that the evil power is not identified with any specific nation on this earth means you've got an abstract power, which represents a principle, not a specific historical situation. The story has to do with an operation of principles, not of this nation against that. The monster masks that are put on people in *Star Wars* represent the real monster force in the modern world. When the mask of Darth Vader is removed, you see an unformed man, one who has not developed as a human individual. What you see is a strange and pitiful sort of undifferentiated face.

Darth Vader has not developed his humanity. He's a robot. He's a bureaucrat, living not in terms of himself but of an imposed system. This is the threat to our lives that we all face today. Is the system going to flatten you out and deny you your humanity, or are you going to be able to make use of the system to the attainment of human purposes? How do you relate to the system so that you are not compulsively serving it? (...) The thing to do is to learn to live in your period of history as a human being... [b]y holding to your own ideals for yourself and, like Luke Skywalker, rejecting the system's impersonal claims upon you.

Well, you see, that movie communicates. It is in a language that talks to young people, and that's what counts. It asks, Are you going to be a person of heart and humanity--because that's where the life is, from the heart--or are you going to do whatever seems to be required of you by what

might be called "intentional power"? When Ben Knobi says, "May the Force be with you," he's speaking of the power and energy of life, not of programmed political intentions. ... [O]f course the Force moves from within. But the Force of the Empire is based on an intention to overcome and master. Star Wars is not a simple morality play. It has to do with the powers of life as they are either fulfilled or broken and suppressed through the action of man.<sup>169</sup>

## Criticism of Campbell

Within the academic universe, Campbell has been criticized in some quarters for lacking academic rigour.

David G. Barton, in his essay *Joseph Campbell: An Academic Skirmish* (Barton, 2013) writes that notwithstanding Campbell's popularity, "In the messy, book-splattered offices of university departments, it's a different matter. Myth and religion professors largely ignore Campbell's work, and when they don't ignore his work, they dismiss it." (Barton, 2013, essay).

Barton compares this situation to that depicted in Don Graham's essay *Redskins versus Palefaces* about American literature:

Among those with an interest in mythology there is a similar breakdown, although specific cases, such as Campbell, are complicated. Redskins may or may not have rural roots, but they tend to live close to the bone, prizing a raw connection to what they might call "mythic life." Rarely do they work in universities. They wouldn't attend an academic conference on the theory of mythology if you held a gun to their head. Many are artists, poets, or cultural outlaws, and they've taken to myth because myth, when read in a certain way, seems to them to open up the world, to reveal the interiority of experience. The Palefaces, on the other hand, regard the first group as scandalous. They have little interest in the raw psyche. The power of myth, with its metaphorical and imaginal truths, seems soft, uncertain, full of tautological embarrassments. When they work on myth, they prefer it cooked (Barton, 2013, essay).

For the purposes of the present text, while recognizing the danger of over simplification that exists in some of Campbell's broad historical generalisations, his writings provide a valuable framework for analysing the matter in hand.

Campbell had great admiration in the figure of the artist, poet, or shaman who in certain cases may achieve a direct spiritual awakening. He drew parallels between the "hero" in the monomyth and the shaman or poet, who must first be torn apart by life experience and then reconstruct himself or herself in order to teach others the way to greater spiritual understanding. He describes different religious traditions as each offering a "mask of God", hence the title, "The hero with a thousand faces". Although the masks may change, he considered that the underlying desire to reach a higher spiritual connection is held in common between all these different traditions.

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<sup>169</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/search?page=12&q=joseph+campbell>



At a certain level, this view may question the integrity of any specific tradition - for example Christianity or Islam, and suggest that these are mere “masks” and that many of their teachings are inherited or share in common elements from other “pagan” traditions. Indeed Campbell aimed to explore the roots underlying all religion and myths, and in this manner create a kind of “deep structure”. He was extremely interested in Eastern mythologies and sought to demonstrate the links between Eastern and Western thought. He believed that this offered tremendous potential for mankind, especially in light of the risk of world tensions based on religious divides, as he explains in the beginning of “Oriental Mythology”:

Two completely opposed mythologies of the destiny and virtue of man, therefore, have come together in the modern world. And they are contributing in discord to whatever new society may be in the process of formation. For, of the tree that grows in the garden where God walks in the cool of the day, the wise men westward of Iran have partaken of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, whereas those on the other side of that cultural divide, in India and the Far East, have relished only the fruit of eternal life. However, the two limbs, we are informed, come together in the center of the garden, where they form a single tree at the base, branching out when they reach a certain height. Likewise, the two mythologies spring from one base in the Near East. And if man should taste of both fruits he would become, we have been told, as God himself (Genesis 3:22)—which is the boon that the meeting of East and West today is offering to us all. (Campbell, 1962, p. 9)

## **Shamanism**

One of the starting points of Campbell’s analysis is his exploration of the shamanic tradition, which he describes in greatest detail in his first volume of *The Masks of God: “Primitive Mythology”*, and later explores in relation to the powers of poets and artists, in his final volume “Creative Mythology” - which analyses cultural production from the Renaissance onwards, including detailed analysis of the Grail myth and the writings of James Joyce.

Campbell provides a broad historical overview of religion in which he suggests that whereas primitive mythologies located spirituality as being impregnated within the material world, over time divinity was progressively distanced from the material world, which began to be seen as a source of evil and temptation, and located God and Heaven as lying far from man, beyond the stars, only reachable through faith and the mediation of the institutionalized church.

By contrast, Campbell reveals sympathy with religious views that locate spirituality in the material world i.e. are closer to the phenomenological approach and reject mind-body dualism - whether Oriental philosophy or the ideas espoused by the Gnostics.

Instead of locating heaven as a distant realm beyond the stars Campbell views heaven as existing here on earth, but that it often requires the vision of the shaman or poet to see it.

In "Occidental Mythology" Campbell identifies a crystallization of the Christian world view during the medieval period and suggests that this created the need and opportunity for artists to become the torch bearers of a modern, creative mythology, which has progressively superseded the role traditionally been played by organized religion.

As a consequence, he believes that the worlds of art and culture have played an increasingly important role in creating modern mythologies that satisfy man's need for divine communion.

### **Relevance of Campbell's thinking to the World of Cinema**

This outlook is obviously extremely interesting for the study of cinema, for various reasons.

Firstly because cinema continues to be one of the most powerful engines of creating modern myths in modern society, as discussed above. For example, the proliferation of superhero films, which is often dismissed as a form of escapism, can be responding to the need for new mythologies, as has been discussed by several authors, including Brett M. Rogers' *Heroes Unlimited: The Theory of the Hero's Journey and the Limitation of the Superhero myth*. (Rogers, 2011)

Secondly, as has also been extensively discussed in the literature, cinema communicates primarily via sound and images rather than by the written word, and therefore is particularly dependent on extricating meaning, including potentially a spiritual dimension, from images of material reality.

Thirdly, cinema's primary use of visual and aural, non-verbal communication makes it an international, universal form of myth-making that breaks down barriers and links together peoples and traditions from around the world.

Fourthly, because Campbell's analysis of the shaman/poet/artist also focuses on how art can be used to induce a trance-like state, an altered state of consciousness, in both the "performer(s)" and the audience, which is highly relevant for understanding his cinema can also interact with the audience.

### **The Artist as Shaman/Poet**

Campbell draws a parallel between the role of the shaman, poet and priest: "Those by whom the mythological traditions of the world have been developed and maintained have been the shamans, sages, prophets, and priests, many of whom have had an actual experience of this ineffable mystery and all of whom have revered it."

However, Campbell reserves greater praise for the shaman/poet than for the institutionally appointed and anointed priest:

The priest is the socially initiated, ceremonially inducted member of a recognized religious organization, where he holds a certain rank and functions as the tenant of an office that was held

by others before him, while the shaman is one who, as a consequence of a personal psychological crisis, has gained a certain power of his own. (Campbell, 1960, p.231)

Campbell considers that art: i.e., mythology and song, is central to the shaman's power for healing and derives from the "mystical experience": "The shaman represents this principle on the primitive level, as do the mystic, the poet, and the artist in the higher reaches of the culture scale" (Campbell, 1960, p.264).

Campbell views the shaman/poet as a "hero" who has gained his powers through a past journey of psychological crisis which opened up a mystical experience whereby he was able to reconstruct himself, from broken pieces and is then able to recreate his journey before an audience by surrendering to greater powers, in a performance that may involve dance and portrayal of other spirits, in which he departs from the known world and moves towards the unknown realm of the spirit world. Campbell believes that the shaman's capacity to create a trance-like performance is central to his art:

As Eliade has pointed out, the shaman's power rests in his ability to throw himself into a trance at will. Nor is he the victim of his trance: he commands it, as a bird the air in its flight. The magic of his drum carries him away on the wings of its rhythm, the wings of spiritual transport. The drum and dance simultaneously elevate his spirit and conjure to him his familiars—the beasts and birds, invisible to others, that have supplied him with his power and assist him in his flight. And it is while in his trance of rapture that he performs his miraculous deeds. While in this trance he is flying as a bird to the upper world, or descending as a reindeer, bull, or bear to the world beneath. (Campbell, 1960, p.257)

Campbell repeatedly focuses on the use of art as being central to the shaman's work and links this to the "hero's journey" of the shaman:

The basic form of the shamanistic crisis can be summarized as follows:

- A. A spontaneously precipitated rupture with the world of common day, revealed in symptoms analogous to those of a serious nervous breakdown: visions of dismemberment, fosterage in the world of the spirits, and restitution
- B. A course of shamanistic, mythological instruction under a master, through which an actual restitution of a superior level is achieved
- C. A career of magical practise in the service of the community, defended from the natural resentment of the assisted community by various tricks and parodies of power. (Campbell, 1960, p.265)

Campbell considers that the healing of the shaman is primarily achieved through art: i.e., mythology and song, rather than through medicine. "When I began to sing," said the shaman Semyonov Semyon, "my sickness usually disappeared." And the practise of the shaman also is by way of art: an imitation or presentation in the field of time and space of the visionary world of his spiritual "seizure" (Campbell, 1960, p.265).

Campbell links this shaman/hero figure to the hero-trickster god, who has had various names in different cultures:

We find his counterparts in myth and legend throughout the world, wherever shamanism has left its mark: in Oceania and Africa, as well as in Siberia and Europe. In Polynesia, Maui is the trickster. We have already witnessed a couple of his feats (pp. 191-195) Br'er Rabbit has taught us something of his African form, where he is also Anansi, the spider. Among the Greeks he was Hermes (Mercury), the shape-shifter and master of the way to the land of the dead, as well as Prometheus, the fire-bringer. In Germanic myth he appeared as the mischief-maker Loki, whose very character was fire and who, at the time of Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods, will be the leader of the hosts of Hel. (Campbell, 1960, p.275).

In terms of the link between Prometheus and the trickster-shaman, Campbell uses this to contrast the two traditions found in all cultures, not just Western culture, between the view of God defended by official religious institutions, run by appointed priests, and the artistic/poetic realm of a magician God, defended by shamans/poets:

These two traditions are mixed in the inheritance not only of the West but of all civilizations and represent the poles of man's spiritual tension: that of the priestly representation of the power that shaped the universe as a force beyond human criticism or challenge, the power that made the sun and moon, the seas, Leviathan, Behemoth, and the mountains, before whom man's proper attitude is awe; and, on the other hand, that of the intransigency of the self-sufficient magician, the titan power of the shaman, the builder of Babel, careless of God's wrath, who knows that he is older, greater, and stronger than the gods. For indeed, it is man that has created the gods, whereas the power that created the universe is none other than the will that operates in man himself and in man alone has achieved the consciousness of its kingdom, power, and glory. (Campbell, 1960, p.279)

Campbell portrayed this tension as currently developing in favour of the latter vision of spirituality/divinity, driven by poets and artists who are modern-day shamans: "Nietzsche's word was the first pronouncement of the Promethean Titan that is now coming unbound within us—for the next world age. And the priests of the chains of Zeus may well tremble; for the bonds are disintegrating of themselves" (Campbell, 1960, p.281).

### **AMOR – The Importance of Romantic Love in Modern Myth**

In *Occidental Mythology*, Campbell links the themes of individual conscience with the emergence of romantic love, which is central to many mythologies but is relegated to minor importance in the Christian tradition:

In the broadest view of the history of world mythology, the chief creative development in the period of the waning Middle Ages and approaching Reformation was the rise of the principle of individual conscience over ecclesiastical authority. This marked the beginning of the end of the reign of the priestly mind, first, over European thought and then, as today we see, in all the world. And therewith a new world age dawned, which is already as great in its advance beyond the high cultures of the past—spiritually and morally, as well as materially—as were these beyond the simple tribal Orders of paleolithic man. (Campbell, 1965, p.504)

Campbell considers that a key driving force in the development of a new individual conscience was the flowering of Arthurian romance and the grail quest, which once again establishes a link to the

“hero’s journey” in particular the quest of the Grail Hero — in the person of Perceval or Parzival, the "Great Fool":

The Grail Quest was an individual adventure in experience. The backgrounds of the legend lay in pagan, specifically Celtic, myth. Its heroes were the old Champions, Cuchullin and the rest, returned in knightly armor as Gawain, Perceval, or Galahad, to engage, as ever, in marvelous adventure. There had been added, furthermore, through the influence of Islam, related symbols, loaded with the mystic lore of Asia; elements, also, from Byzantium and from even farther East. By various schools of modern scholarship the Grail has been identified with the Dagda's caldron of plenty, the begging bowl of the Buddha in which four bowls, from the four quarters, were united, the Kaaba of the Great Mosque of Mecca, and the ultimate talismanic symbol of some sort of Gnostic-Manichaean rite of spiritual Initiation, practised possibly by the Knights Templar. All such alien, primitive, or related Oriental forms, however, were in the European romances reinterpreted and applied to the local, immediate spiritual Situation. Specifically, the legend refers to the restoration of a land laid waste through a Dolorous Stroke dealt to its king by an unworthy hand, which took possession of a sacred lance that in the later versions of the legend is identified with the lance that pierced Christ's side. And we do not have to ask or guess what the reference of such a legend may have been, or why the allegory in its time touched so many hearts: the condition of the Church, above described, explains this well enough. (Campbell, 1965, p.507)

Campbell considers that the Church during this period was one of the factors for distancing man from divinity, by placing God in a realm beyond the stars who could only be reached by a leap of faith and via the mediation of the Church. He uses the symbolism of the Fisher King and the waste land, used in the early twentieth century by T.S. Eliot in his poem, *The Waste land* to describe the barren world created by this mythology which deprived man of his link to the spiritual world that could only be broken by the quest of the Grail.

### **Hero/poet/shaman**

In order to embark upon this journey the hero must enter into a trancelike state of rapture or blessedness that would enable his soul to soar beyond the veil.

In turn the stories of Arthurian romance, recounted using song, dance and spectacle, enabled other mortals to share this trancelike state.

Passionate romantic love, in many tales in the context of adultery, are often central to this quest, engendering mystic transport and profound personal transformation:

What shall we say of the other great theme of Arthur's Table Round: the passionate loves in adultery of Tristan and Iseult and of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere? It is again a mystic theme of individual experience in depth, opposed to the sacramental claim— this time, of marriage. For in the Middle Ages marriage, sanctified by the Church, was a socio-political arrangement, bearing no relationship to the mystery and wonder of love. In the words of Professor Johan Huizinga in his eloquent little book, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, "From the side of religion maledictions were poured upon love in all its aspects." From the side of the court, on the other hand, and of the poetry of experience (again to quote a phrase of Huizinga), love "became the field where all moral and cultural perfection flowered." Love was a divine Visitation, quelling mere animal lust, whereas feudal marriage was a physical affair. The lover, whose heart was rendered gentle by the discipline of his lady, was initiate

to a sphere of exalted realizations that no one who had experienced such could possibly identify (as the Church identified them) with sin. One has but to read the poems of Dante's *Vita Nuova* to realize to what spheres of mystic transport the courtly way of love might lead. (Campbell, 1965, p.509)

The cosmic mission associated with the power of love is also explored in *Oriental Mythology*, where Campbell explores the division of God/man from unity into duality, describing this as the shared myth in Oriental and Occidental mythology “of the One That Became Two”.

For the Oriental version of this myth, Campbell cites the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which states that the universe began as a Self, which was both man and God, and which had no consciousness of its own identity. Once it became aware of its identity, there was a separation, between the consciousness and the identity, which created the notion of “I” and also of both fear and loneliness. This original Self was “exactly as large as a man and woman embracing”. (Campbell, 1962, p. 10) This image is also related to that of the circular yin-yang image which depicts two separate parts and at the same time a unity. Campbell continues the citation: “This Self then divided itself in two parts; and with that, there were a master and a mistress. (Therefore this body, by itself, as the sage Yajnavalkya declares, is like half of a split pea. And that is why, indeed, this space is filled by a woman.) The male embraced the female, and from that the human race arose.” (Campbell, 1962, p. 10)

Thus, Campbell argues that in the Oriental version of the myth “of the One That Became Two”, the path to wisdom is to transcend this division, both between man and woman, between mankind and God, and between “I” and the universe.

In this context the “Lover’s Journey” i.e. a dual journey of two individuals, gains greater importance than the journey of the single hero.

In the Occidental version of the myth, Campbell states that the same myth is told by way of the separation of Adam and Eve. But this separation is not within the divine essence but is instead achieved externally, by the Creator:

In the Indian version it is the god himself that divides and becomes not man alone but all creation; so that everything is a manifestation of that single inhabiting divine substance: there is no other; whereas in the Bible, God and man, from the beginning, are distinct. Man is made in the image of God, indeed, and the breath of God has been breathed into his nostrils; yet his being, his self, is not that of God, nor is it one with the universe. The fashioning of the world, of the animals, and of Adam (who then became Adam and Eve) was accomplished not within the sphere of divinity but outside of it. There is, consequently, an intrinsic not merely formal, separation. And the goal of knowledge cannot be to see God here and now in all things; for God is not in things. God is transcendent. God is beheld only by the dead. The goal of knowledge has to be, rather, to know the relationship of God to his creation, or, more specifically, to man, and through such knowledge, by God’s grace, to link one’s own will back to that of the Creator. (Campbell, 1962, p. 10)

For Campbell this difference is extremely significant because whereas the Occidental version is of a historical event, the Oriental version concerns a process, that is metaphysical, poetical:

Moreover, according to the biblical version of this myth, it was only after creation that man fell, whereas in the Indian example creation itself was a fall—the fragmentation of a god. And the god is not condemned. Rather, his creation, his “pouring forth” (srftih), is described as an act of voluntary, dynamic will-to-be-more, which anteceded creation and has, therefore, a metaphysical, symbolical, not literal, historical meaning. The fall of Adam and Eve was an event within the already created frame of time and space, an accident that should not have taken place. The myth of the Self in the form of a man, on the other hand, who looked around and saw nothing but himself, said “I,” felt fear, and then desired to be two, tells of an intrinsic, not errant, factor in the manifold of being, the correction or undoing of which would not improve, but dissolve, creation. The Indian point of view is metaphysical, poetical; the biblical, ethical and historical. (Campbell, 1962, p. 10)

This distinction is particularly important in light of the distinction between objective and subjective knowledge, analysed previously in this thesis.

If the biblical account of creation is interpreted as a historical event, i.e. objective knowledge of an event in the history of the universe, then when this historical event is challenged via an alternative interpretation of history, e.g. the theory of the big bang, Darwinism etc, then the mythology appears to be rendered meaningless.

However, if the creation is interpreted in metaphysical, poetical terms, as Campbell suggests is the Oriental tradition, then there is no tension between the scientific account of the history of planet Earth, for example, and this creation myth, which is related to mankind’s inner world, and the nature of spiritual existence.

On this basis, whereas modern science may pose a challenge to the literal text of the Bible, which claims to provide a historical account of the genesis of life in the universe, it does not pose a challenge to this Oriental version of the creation myth.

Campbell suggests that the “historical mission” defined in the Bible, that man will one day be reunited with God, as a historic event, pioneered by the chosen people, stands in stark contrast to the Oriental perspective: “In the Indian view, on the contrary, what is divine here is divine there also; nor has anyone to wait—or even to hope—for a “day of the Lord.” For what has been lost is in each his very self (atman), here and now, requiring only to be sought. Or, as they say: “Only when men shall roll up space like a piece of leather will there be an end of sorrow apart from knowing God.” (Campbell, 1962, p. 12)

As such, man’s journey towards spiritual awakening/reunion is an individual rather than collective journey and may and does happen at any time, instead of having to wait for Judgement Day. Campbell continues:

It is not that the divine is everywhere: it is that the divine is everything. So that one does not require any outside reference, revelation, sacrament, or authorized community to return to it. One has but to alter one's psychological orientation and recognize (re-cognize) what is within. Deprived of this recognition, we are removed from our own reality by a cerebral shortsightedness which is called in Sanskrit mayat "delusion" (from the verbal root md, "to measure, measure out, to form, to build," denoting, in the first place, the power of a god or demon to produce illusory effects, to change form, and to appear under deceiving masks; in the second place, "magic," the production of illusions and, in warfare, camouflage, deceptive tactics; and finally, in philosophical discourse, the illusion superimposed upon reality as an effect of ignorance). Instead of the biblical exile from a geographically, historically conceived garden wherein God walked in the cool of the day, we have in India, therefore, already c. 700 b.c. (some three hundred years before the putting together of the Pentateuch), a psychological reading of the great theme. (Campbell, 1962, p. 12)

In the oriental version of this myth, the path to redemption is a psychological path and is achieved through contemplation and viewing all forms of desire and passion as illusory. This is symbolized by the word "yoga" which Campbell states has the same etymological root as "yoke" and is associated with the idea of connection or reconnection, that is also found in the word "religion" which is associated with the idea of relinking.

In the Oriental tradition, Campbell suggests that this relinking is achieved through ascetic distancing from the illusion of the material world.

Love is viewed as a primary urge, to be overcome:

In the classic Indian doctrine of the four ends for which men are supposed to live and strive - love and pleasure ( kama ), power and success ( artha ), lawful order and moral virtue ( dharma ), and, finally, release from delusion(moksa) – we note that the first two are manifestations of what Freud has termed "the pleasure principle," primary urges of the natural man, epitomized in the formula "I want." In the adult, according to the Oriental view, these are to be quelled and checked by the principles of dharma, which, in the classic Indian system, are impressed upon the individual by the training of his caste. The infantile "I want" is to be subdued by a "thou shalt," socially applied (not individually determined), which is supposed to be as much a part of the immutable cosmic order as the course of the sun itself. (Campbell, 1962, p. 21)

At various moments in *Masks of God* Campbell establishes a link between the views from the Orient and the vision of the Gnostics and the troubadours and the Arthurian romance. But in this case the "relinking" between man and God is not achieved through ascetic distancing but rather via the quest for "true love", including passion expressed through a physical union of man and woman.

In this context, the Grail is not a material object, created at a specific historical moment in time and to be rediscovered at another moment in time, but rather a reunion between two separated halves of the same essence, at a metaphysical, poetic level and simultaneously at a physical level.

From the above-cited version of the Oriental perspective, the Arthurian romance could be viewed as a reflection of the pleasure principle and therefore as childish urges, which may be overcome through asceticism, contemplation and yoga.



In many ways this finds a parallel with the Occidental mythology whereby the asceticism of the hermit, monk or chaste priest is the only path to spiritual enlightenment.

However, the Oriental tradition also includes an interpretation of relinking through physical passion, as Campbell explains: “In the Bhagavata Purana of the tenth century a.d.—which is the chief work of meditation of Krishna-devotionalism to this day the young god is master of the lover’s art, and the balance now has shifted from introversion to a translation of yoga into bhoga (“physical enjoyment, possession”; from the root bhuj, “to enjoy a meal, to consume”). (Campbell, 1962, p. 346).

In this context, Campbell cites the erotic poem of Jayadeva, *The Song of the Cowherd* (c. 1175 a.d.). However, he again contrasts the model of courtly love with this Oriental version, in that whereas courtly love focuses on a single beloved, in the Oriental version, there are multiple loved ones, even if there is a favoured beloved.

Obviously such differences are also related to social customs, and the difference between monogamous and polygamous traditions.

But what is clear is that there are two distinct approaches towards spiritual enlightenment – the path of asceticism and seeing beyond the illusion of the material world, and the path of love and earthly passion, whether directed towards a single or multiple lovers.

These two distinct paths are related to the distinction between Paleface and Redskin, referred to in Don Graham’s essay about American literature cited above.

## **Rapture**

Campbell focuses on the capacity of myth, in particular of poetry and art to nurture “the flowering of rapture within man’s heart and soul”:

When any of the great mythic imageries comes to be read as poetry, as art, as a vehicle not of empirical information but of experience – in other words: not as a newspaper—we find a message of accord, which, in brief, is that of the living God, who is not apart, but within all and of no definition. “God,” as Eckhart declared, “is born in the empty soul by discovering himself to her in a new guise without guise, without light in divine light.

The orthodox Christian notion that nature is corrupt and the Christian Church incorruptible can be said to represent an extreme Statement of the implications of the Jewish myth of God apart from the world, creating, judging, condemning it, and then offering, as though from outside, to endow some particle of its immensity with the virtue of his particular attention—as by a Covenant, Koran, or Incarnation. Ironically, however, the very symbols used by the Church to teach of this supposed circumstance bore in themselves implicitly a contrary instruction, which of itself spoke to the open heart through the silence of their eloquent forms—and in Eckhart, as in Dante, as in the Grail and Tristan romances, the old lesson of eternal man awakened, within whom there dwell, and from whose heart there have been born, all the forms and experiences in all the world of both heaven and hell. (Campbell, 1965, p.516)

The driving inspiration behind many modern creators, in Campbell's opinion, is the inspiration of romantic love, which he links to the notion of rapture and the above mentioned "aesthetic arrest".

The path towards romantic love begins when the shaman/poet separates himself/herself from the known world. In this sense the "Call to Adventure" identified in the steps of the monomyth is an "inspired insight", a seizure, a moment of aesthetic arrest or rapture, trance, a kind of "divine visitation" or glimpse beyond the veil, which motivates the hero to embark upon his quest:

First, in the *Buddenbrooks* (1902) and *Tonio Kroger* (1903) of Thomas Mann, *Stephen Hero* (1903) and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) of James Joyce: accounts of the separation of a youth from the social nexus of his birth to strive to realize a personal destiny, the one moving from the Protestant side, the other from the Roman Catholic, yet each resolving his issue through a moment of inspired insight (the inspiring object, in each case, being the figure of a girl) and the definition, then, of an aesthetic theory and decision. (Campbell, 1976, p.38)

The concept of "aesthetic arrest" is central to Campbell's analysis of modern creative mythology, since it transports the creator beyond his known world:

As characterized by James Joyce in the words of his hero Stephen Dedalus, it is that "enchantment of the heart" by which the mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing in the luminous stasis of aesthetic pleasure. "This supreme quality is felt by the artist" Stephen declares, "when the aesthetic image is first conceived in his imagination." By Dante the moment is described at the opening of his *Vita Nuova*, where Beatrice—then but a child of nine, he also a child of nine—first appeared before his eyes.

At that instant, I say truly, the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling, said these words: Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi [Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me].

At that instant the spirit of the soul, which dwells in the high chamber to which all the spirits of the senses carry their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, speaking especially to the spirit of the sight, said these words: Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra [Now has appeared your bliss].

At that instant the natural spirit, which dwells in that part where our nourishment is supplied, began to weep, and, weeping, said these words: Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus erodeinceps [Woe is me, wretched! because often from this time forth shall I be hindered].

I say that from that time forward Love lorded it over my soul, which had been so speedily wedded to him: and he began to exercise over me such control and such lordship, through the power which my imagination gave to him, that it behooved me to do completely all his pleasure. (Campbell, 1976, pp.67-68)

Campbell's own personal motto "follow your bliss" is based on this principle. He quotes James Joyce who in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, describes his own moment of aesthetic arrest, in the youth of his alter-ego, Stephen, who enmeshed in "a Waste Land of total disillusionment in the goals and ideals offered him by the society and its church into which he had been born" suddenly saw a girl staring out to sea:

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an

envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! (Campbell, 1976, p.69)

Campbell identifies other moments of aesthetic arrest, such as the “moment of the meeting of the eyes and stilling of the world” (Campbell, 1976, p.70) when Tristan first meets Iseult.

The driving force of rapturous, passionate love or the true bliss of love, is obviously a frequently analysed theme in the history of art: the role between the artist and his or her muse (each artist's Beatrice), often leveraged by an impossible or tragic love.

Campbell says that Schopenhauer portrays love as a “great transforming power that converts the will to live into its opposite and reveals thereby a dimension of truth beyond the world dominion of King Death: beyond the boundaries of space and time and the turbulent ocean, within these bounds, of our life's conflicting centers of self-interest” (Campbell, 1976, p.71).

He expands on this idea:

Science, Schopenhauer declares, is concerned with the laws of cause and effect, which are not the object of art. Mathematics is concerned with the conditions of space and time: these conditions are not the object of art. History is concerned with motivation: motivation is not the object of art. Art is informed by the contemplation of the object in its character as "idea": not as a "concept," abstracted by the intellect, but as a thing regarded in and for itself, dissociated from the temporal flow of causal laws. "And this separate thing" Schopenhauer explains, "which in that general stream has been but the least vanishing particle, becomes, when so regarded, an epiphany of the whole, equivalent to the entire unending manifold of time."

This way of seeing is the way of genius, the way of art, the way of perfect objectivity, the way of the world eye, and is not to be confused either with intellectual abstraction or with allegorical reference. But for those unable to bear its impact, which annihilates momentarily the entire world and world-orientation of the self-protecting, self-advancing biological-political individual, the consequence is madness. Schopenhauer cites from Aristotle a sentence quoted by Seneca: "Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae /uit." He cites, too, the lines of Dryden:

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied, And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

And he reminds us, finally, of Plato's allegory of the cave,\* where the poet-philosopher states that those who have been outside the cave are mocked when they return, since their eyes, disaccustomed to its darkness, no longer rightly see and judge its shadows. The genius, then, may be said to be one who can live simultaneously in two views of the world, that of art and that of the will, without going mad. (Campbell, 1976, p.82)

## **The Meeting of the Eyes**

In addition to, or in conjunction with, the moment of aesthetic arrest, a key element in the “call to adventure” is when the artist is confronted by a vision of beauty, typically inspired by seeing another human being and thereby realises his or her calling, and as a result embarks on a personal journey or quest.

Campbell highlights the importance of the “meeting of the eyes” between two lovers, which he also associates to a “stilling of the world”.

The moments of aesthetic arrest, call to adventure and meeting of the eyes are intimately linked:

As in the poetry of the troubadours, so in Gottfried's *Tristan*, love is born of the eyes, in the world of day, in a moment of aesthetic arrest, but opens within to a mystery of night. The point is first made in his version of the love tale of parents, Blanche-flor and Rivalin. For there was in their case no potion at work, inspiring magically a premonition a priori of the course along which they were to be drawn through sensuous allure, from love's meeting of the eyes, to love's pain, love's rapture, and on to death. (Campbell, 1976, p.186)

For example, Dante's inspiration by Beatrice commences with the moment of aesthetic arrest and meeting of the eyes:

In Dante's case, it is true, no personal relationship beyond the meeting of the eyes was ever established here on earth between the poet and his beloved. However, it was Beatrice and she alone-Beatrice Portinari, in her own spiritual character, not as an exemplar merely of the general female power (Sakti) but as that uniquely beautiful Florentine lady she had been when their eyes met-whose recollection brought home to him, in the decade following her death, the realization of the radiance and beatitude of that "divine Love," as he writes, "which moves the sun and the other stars." 36 Nor was she left behind, dissolved, forgotten, in the rapture of that beatific radiance, but herself was there, at the very feet of God, when the consummation was attained. And the work itself then was composed-the poet tells-in celebration specifically of her (Campbell, 1976, p.63).

Campbell also associates this moment to Joyce's meeting of a girl on the beach, referred to above, and to the moment in the *Tristan* legend when the couple, sailing from Ireland to Cornwall, drank by accident the magic potion that Isolt's mother had prepared for the maiden's wedding night with King Mark. He also links these moments to the aforementioned idea that the kingdom of heaven exists on earth but goes unnoticed by many, and that, for the (lucky) few, through the "meeting of the eyes" the universe suddenly seems to make sense.

The sense experienced by lovers, already at the first meeting of the eyes, of having discovered in the world without the perfect complement of their own truth, and so of a marvelous coincidence thereby of destiny and chance, inner and external worlds, may, in the course of a lifetime flowering from such love, conduce to the poetic conviction of an accord universal of the seen and the unseen.

But of course, on the other hand, to those upon whom neither love, nature, nor symbol has ever bestowed any conic mirror, such romanticism is moonshine.

Campbell also refers to tales that emphasise how beauty, and in the cases which he most cites are those of female beauty, can be as powerful as the song of the siren, or mermaid, in enchanting the observer.

## The secret love grotto

If the lovers are able to unite in the secret love grotto, their eyes play a key role in paving the way to this union, that Campbell suggests in a form of holy grail in its own right, and reinstates a unity that was broken at the birth of creation:

The love grotto, like the center of that circle whose circumference is nowhere and center everywhere, can be found as well in the Rhineland as in the neighborhood of Tintagel; and for those at rest on its crystalline bed the conditions of time dissolve to eternity. As Gottfried tells of his two lovers there: "They looked upon each other and nourished themselves with that. . . . Nothing but their state of mind and love did they consume." \* How few, however, have known the purity of that bed!

We may dance toward it and away, achieve glimpses, and even dwell in its beauty for a time; yet few are those who have been confirmed in that knowledge of its ubiquity which antiquity called gnosis and the Orient calls bodhi: full awakening to the crystalline purity of the bed or ground of one's own and the world's true being. Like perfectly transparent crystal, it is there, yet as though not there; and all things, when seen through it, become luminous in its light. Moreover, it is hard, endures forever. And the green floor across which one approaches reveals the excellence of time, which is ever-renewing.

In short, the love grotto in its wilderness can be compared to cave-sanctuary of the classical mysteries of Eleusis, or to the sanctum of the female triad. (Campbell, 1976, p.66)

The eyes, for Campbell, play a key role in the path towards love. I will quote the following at length due to its importance for this thesis:

Amor is neither of the right-hand path (the sublimating spirit, the mind and the community of man), nor of the indiscriminate left (the spontaneity of nature, the mutual incitement of the phallus and the womb), but is the path directly before one, of the eyes and their message to the heart.

There is a poem to this point by a great troubadour (perhaps the greatest of all), Guiraut de Borneilh (c. 1138-1200?) :

So, through the eyes love attains the heart:  
For the eyes are the scouts of the heart,  
And the eyes go reconnoitering  
For what it would please the heart to possess.  
And when they are in full accord  
And firm, all three, in the one resolve,  
At that time, perfect love is born  
From what the eyes have made welcome to the heart.  
Not otherwise can love either be born or have commencement  
Than by this birth and commencement moved by inclination.  
By the grace and by command  
Of these three, and from their pleasure,  
Love is born, who with fair hope  
Goes comforting her friends.  
For as all true lovers  
Know, perfect kindness,  
Which is born-there is no doubt-from the heart and eyes.  
The eyes make it blossom; the heart matures it:  
Love, which is the fruit of their very seed.<sup>8</sup>

We have here attained, I would say, new ground: such ground as in the whole course of our long survey of the world's primitive, Oriental, and Occidental traditions has not been encountered before.

It is the ground, unique and new, on which stands the modern self-reliant individual- in so far, at least, as he has yet been able to mature, to show himself, and to hold his gained ground against the panic weight in opposition of the old and new mass and tribal thinkers. In the nineteen lines of this troubadour poem, in fact, there already comes to view a prospect of that world of Renaissance man which in art was presently to be typified in the rules, the objectively discovered principles, of Renaissance (linear) perspective: the organization of a selected or imagined field from an individual point of view, along lines going out toward a vanishing point from the locus of a living pair of eyes- according to the impulse, moreover, of the individual's private heart. The world is now showing itself in its own sweet light and form, at last, to men and women of sense, who are daring to look, to see, and to respond. The system of problems of the controlling religious tradition is in principle disregarded, and the individual standpoint becomes decisive. And so, although it is true that in the century of the troubadours there was rampant throughout Europe a general Manichaeian heresy, and that many of the ladies celebrated in the poems are known to have been heretics- just as others were practicing Christians, and the poets themselves communicants of one tradition or the other- in their character as artists and in their poetry and song the troubadours stood apart from both traditions. The whole meaning of their stanzas lay in the celebration of a love the aim of which was neither marriage nor the dissolution of the world. Nor was it even carnal intercourse; nor, again- as among the Sufis- the enjoyment, by analogy, of the "wine" of a divine love and the quenching of the soul in God. The aim, rather, was life directly in the experience of love as a refining, sublimating, mystagogic force, of itself opening the pierced heart to the sad, sweet, bittersweet, poignant melody of being, through love's own anguish and love's joy (Campbell, 1976, pp.177-178).

### **The Lover's Journey – overview of the key steps**

On the basis of this analysis of key moments of the "lover's journey", which has parallels with the hero's quest, but may be adapted from the perspective of Arthurian romance, we can identify the following key steps, which will be followed by the two characters involved in this journey.

The story begins in the waste land, in which the hero is alienated from his or her true essence and is therefore despondent and sad.

At a key moment s/he sees his/her "beloved". This glimpse momentarily provides a glimpse of paradise in the midst of the waste land. At this same moment, or soon after, there is a meeting of the eyes of the two lovers, fomenting the desire to be together. However, one or both heroes suffers a real or allegorical death, which expels them from their community and the waste land, and propels them into a dark wood, in which they dream of being reuniting with their beloved.

As each or both heroes venture through the dark wood, they are progressively dismembered, like the shaman, but remain alive with the hope of reuniting with their beloved. The beloved in turn attempts to save him/her and be reunited.

If successful they will reunite in the midst of the dark forest, in the secret love grotto, where they will momentarily experience a moment of time beyond time. From that moment forth they will either be separated forever, through death or parting, but will know of their eternal love together (tragic ending) or be reunited forever.

This structure applies to the Osiris-Isis myth, tale of Orpheus, Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Iseult and also the storyline of films such as *Titanic*.

### **The Role of Modern Mythology**

In the conclusion of *Occidental Mythology* Campbell identifies four essential functions of mythology:

- a) eliciting and supporting a sense of awe before the mystery of being
- b) render a cosmology, an Image of the universe that will support and be supported by this sense of awe before the mystery of a presence and the presence of a mystery. The cosmology has to correspond, however, to the actual experience, knowledge, and mentality of the culture folk involved.
- c) support the current social order, to integrate the individual organically with his group
- d) to initiate the individual into the order of realities of his own psyche, guiding him toward his own Spiritual enrichment and realization.

Author's summary

Campbell believes that the thrust of modern, creative mythology focuses on the fourth function and has been driven primarily by the Western tradition based on the principle of individual judgment and responsibility which was first developed by the Greeks and Romans, and since the period of the Reformation and Renaissance has been the main cultural driving force, separating the West from what he calls "the archaic Oriental mind":

This humanistic individualism has released powers of creativity that have brought about in a mere two centuries changes in the weal and woe of man such as no two millenniums before had ever worked. The result being that where the old patterns of morality are retained they no longer match the actualities even of the local, let alone the world, scene. The adventure of the Grail—the quest within for those creative values by which the Waste Land is redeemed—has become today for each the unavoidable task; for, as there is no more any fixed horizon, there is no more any fixed center, any Mecca, Rome, or Jerusalem. Our circle today is that announced, c. 1450, by Nicolaus Cusanus (1401-1464): whose circumference is nowhere and whose center is everywhere; the circle of infinite radius, which is also a straight line.

Hence it will be our charge in the volume next to come, *Creative Mythology*, to follow systematically from the period of the Table Round (where there was no one sitting at the head, but each was a champion paramount) to the present hour of the detonation of the atom, the long process of the Opening of the Eye of European man to a state that is no state but a becoming: and the vanishment thereby of all the earlier masks of God, which now are known to have been of developing man himself.

Some, perhaps, will desire to bow still to a mask, out of fear of nature. But if there is no divinity in nature, the nature that God created, how should there be in the idea of God, which the nature of man created?

"By my love and hope, I conjure thee," called Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "Cast not away the hero in thy soul!" (Campbell, 1965, pp. 522-523)

In his final volume *Creative Mythology*, Campbell considers that artists and poets are the creators of the "actual living mythology of our present developing humanity" (Campbell, 1976, p.36).

They do so through producing art that has no fixed references or structure, unlike previous cultural traditions, driven in part by the liberation of science:

The application of science to the fields of practical life has now dissolved all cultural horizons, so that no separate civilization can ever develop again. Each individual is the center of a mythology of his own, of which his own intelligible character is the Incarnate God, so to say, whom his empirically questing consciousness is to find. The aphorism of Delphi, "Know thyself," is the motto. And not Rome, not Mecca, not Jerusalem, Sinai, or Benares. But each and every "thou" on earth is the center of this world, in the sense of that formula just quoted from the twelfth-century Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers. of God as "an intelligible sphere, whose center is every-where. (Campbell, 1976, p.36)

All artists, he suggest, must pursue an individual, "pathless" way through the dark forest:

I accept the idea proposed by Schopenhauer and confirmed by Sir Arthur Keith, the intention being to regard each of the creative masters of this dawning day and civilization of the individual as absolutely singular, each a species unique in himself. He will have arrived in this world in one place or another, at one time or another, to unfold, in the conditions of his time and place, the autonomy of his nature. And in youth, though early imprinted with one authorized brand or another of the Western religious heritage, in one or another of its known historic states of disintegration. He will have conceived the idea of thinking for himself, peering through his own eyes, heeding the compass of his own heart. Hence the works of the really great of this new age do not and cannot combine in a unified tradition to which followers then can adhere, but are individual and various. They are the works of individuals and, as such, will stand as models for other individuals: not coercive, but evocative. (Campbell, 1976, pp.39-40)

This statement is significant in that although Campbell defends the idea of the monomyth in relation to studying world mythologies, in which he has identified common steps, he believes that modern artists are creating their own personal mythologies, which don't necessarily adhere to the monomyth structure.

Such monomyth references may nonetheless be used in honing communication of the message:

Creative myth springs from the unpredictable, unprecedented experience-in-illumination of an object by a subject, and the labor, then, of achieving communication of the effect. It is in this second, altogether secondary, technical phase of creative art, communication, that the general treasury, the dictionary so to say, of the world's infinitely rich heritage of symbols, images, myth motives, and hero deeds, may be called upon-either consciously, as by Joyce and Mann, or unconsciously, as in dream - to render the message. (Campbell, 1976, p.40)

It is therefore clear that study of the monomyth should only play an altogether secondary role, at most, in honing the communication of any story.

This is particularly significant given that Campbell's ideas have been primarily used to structure linear narratives with a clear sequence of steps whereas his ideas also encompassed non-linear structures and creative impulses such as Joyce's stream of consciousness.



## Anamorphoses

The key moment for Campbell is not the desire to recount a mythic tale, but rather the moment of aesthetic arrest or initial inspiration “when the possibility of a life in adventure is opened to the mind” (Campbell, 1976, p.40). A classic example of Campbell’s admiration for narratives that do not have a classical structure is that of Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*.

However, in relation to stories that do have a classic structure, that follow the steps of the monomyth, or non-traditional narratives he believes that there is an underlying inspiration, that of the shaman, of perceiving the Kingdom of heaven on earth, which goes unnoticed by most. Within this structure there can still be echoes of the monomyth. He quotes Schopenhauer metaphor of anamorphoses: “which to the naked eye are only broken, fragmentary deformities but when reflected in a conic mirror show normal human form” (Campbell, 1976, p.194). Campbell suggests that whereas texts such as Joyce’s *Ulysses* may seem to be completely shapeless, if we apply a “conic mirror”, we can perceive elements of classic structure and myth: “The casual, chance, fragmentary events of an apparently undistinguished life disclose the form and dimension of a classic epic of destiny when the conic mirror is applied, and our own scattered lives today, as well, are then seen, also, as anamorphoses” (Campbell, 1976, p.195).

Campbell also cites the existentialism of Sartre, in which ultimately no order or meaning or divinity is found, but considers that this all forms part of a wider search to find “conic mirrors” that make sense of our anamorphoses. He also emphasizes how modern artists, such as Picasso, with *Guernica*, even while breaking with traditional forms, structures and narratives, continue to drink from the same essential mythological sources:

However, what I do find surprising, and cannot help pausing a moment to remark, is the fact that in the tortured figures of Picasso's masterpiece (and he surely knew what he was doing - as will appear on a later page) what we are contemplating is a constellation of perfectly traditional mythological symbols, arranged in such a way as to bear to us in their silent speech (whether intended or not by the artist) a message still in perfect concord with the spirit and lore of the old Sumerian lunar bull. (Campbell, 1976, p.216)

Campbell explains this in terms of depth psychology:

In the course of the six and a half decades of his development of his theories of the unconscious (1896-1961: exactly the years during which a formidable company of creative artists and authors—Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Mann, Picasso, and Klee, for example—were exploring the same “dark wood,” each in his own direction and where there was no way or path), Dr. Jung used the terms “archetype” and “primordial image” interchangeably, to designate those formative powers of the psyche that have been discussed at length in the first chapters of the opening volume of this study. (Campbell, 1976, p.653)

## **The Waste Land and the Dark Forest**

Campbell identifies a common structure in both classic mythologies and modern myths, of a movement from the waste land to the dark forest.

The waste land is one of the key motifs of the Grail Legend.

It is an arid land, devoid of water, which symbolizes mankind's spiritual emptiness, whereas the dark forest, or dark wood, is a humid, dark zone related to the human unconscious.

The artist/shaman/poet/hero lives in a waste land and then through a moment of aesthetic arrest is drawn towards the dark forest, on a quest, thus initiating the adventure.

Campbell suggests that the waste land results precisely from man's spiritual distancing from God, which he says is equivalent to the modern term of "alienation". He suggests that in the Western tradition this is the result of interpreting the creation myth as a historical event which has now been disproved by science:

Unhappily, however, in the light of what is now known, not only of the history of the Bible and the Church, but also of the universe and evolution of species, a suspicion has been confirmed that was already dawning in the Middle Ages; namely, that the biblical myth of Creation, Fall, and Redemption is historically untrue. Hence, there has now spread throughout the Christian world a desolating sense not only of no divinity within (mythic dissociation), but also of no participation in divinity without (social identification dissolved): and that, in short, is the mythological base of the Waste Land of the modern soul, or, as it is being called these days, our "alienation. (Campbell, 1976, p.394)

This sensation of desolation is intimately linked to the loss of a mythology which binds society together:

The sense of desolation is experienced on two levels: first the social, in a loss of identification with any spiritually compelling, structuring group; and, beyond that, the metaphysical, in a loss of any sense either of identity or of relationship with a dimension of experience, being, and rapture any more awesome than that provided by an empirically classifiable conglomerate of self-enclosed, separate, mutually irritating organisms held together only by lust (crude or sublimated) and fear (of pain and death or of boredom). (Campbell, 1976, p.394)

It is precisely this sense of waste land or alienation which lies at the heart of modern mythologies. But again Campbell suggests that at a certain level this has always been the case but is now sensed more keenly, due to the loss of traditional belief systems, and the spectre of meaninglessness posed by the modern consciousness.

Modern myths can either highlight this waste land, journeying through it, and facing the abyss of its emptiness, or set forth into a dark forest, in which there is an attempt to find some redemption or meaning.

From an existentialist viewpoint this search for meaning can appear to be childish and naïve.

## **The Fisher King**

At the centre of the waste land we find the maimed Fisher King who has suffered a dolorous stroke and thus lost his capacity to fertilise the land. If his virility/fertility can be restored, his country can be returned to a green and pleasant land. In order to redeem this dolorous stroke he must enter the dark wood.

This concept is clearly linked to the notion of separation, described above, between man and woman and between mankind and God.

## **Christopher Vogler's "The Writer's Journey"**

One of the principal texts that apply Joseph Campbell's thinking to screenwriting is Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*.

Obviously, it would be pointless to attempt to summarise all the observations found in this book.

At a surface level we can note the 8 key characters that are identified in the book: the Hero; Mentor: Wise Old Man or Woman; Threshold Guardian; Herald; Shapeshifter; Shadow; Ally; and Trickster, and the 12 key steps of the Hero's Journey: Ordinary World; Call to Adventure; Refusal of the Call; Meeting with the Mentor; Crossing the First Threshold; Tests, Allies, Enemies; Approach to the Inmost Cave; The Ordeal; Reward; The Road Back; The Resurrection; Return with the Elixir.

In relation to the observations made in this text, Vogler highlights the fact that the mentor is a shaman-like figure and that the hero is in many ways an apprentice shaman. He also states that the writer/author can be viewed as a shaman, noting: "We writers share in the godlike power of the shamans. We not only travel to other worlds but create them out of space and time. When we write, we truly travel to these worlds of our imagination." (Vogler, 2007, p. 295)

Vogler primarily focuses on Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He recognizes the danger of interpreting the hero as a male warrior figure, rather than a shaman/poet figure, and emphasizes that: "The warrior is only one of the faces of the hero, who can also be pacifist, mother, pilgrim, fool, wanderer, hermit, inventor, nurse, savior, artist, lunatic, lover, clown, king, victim, slave, worker, rebel, adventurer, tragic failure, coward, saint, monster, etc." (Vogler, 2007, p. xxi)

Nonetheless by focusing primarily on one of Campbell's earliest works, Vogler insufficiently draws attention to nuances found in Campbell's later works, in particular *The Masks of God*.

For example, Vogler states:

The Hero with a Thousand Faces is his statement of the most persistent theme in oral tradition and recorded literature: the myth of the hero. In his study of world hero myths, Campbell discovered that they are all basically the same story, retold endlessly in infinite variation.. He found that all storytelling, consciously or not, follows the ancient patterns of myth and that all stories, from the

crudest jokes to the highest flights of literature, can be understood in terms of the Hero's Journey: the "monomyth" whose principles he lays out in the book. The pattern of the Hero's Journey is universal, occurring in every culture, in every time. It is as infinitely varied as the human race itself and yet its basic form remains constant. The Hero's Journey is an incredibly tenacious set of elements that springs endlessly from the deepest reaches of the human mind; different in its details for every culture, but fundamentally the same. (Vogler, 2007, p. 4)

In relation to modern storytelling, from the middle ages onwards, and particularly from the twentieth century onwards, Campbell emphasizes that the structure of many of the stories is less schematic than the hero myths of antiquity, which were inspired by a fascination with the celestial order. He notes that the work of artists such as Picasso, include references to this eternal wellspring, but the idea of a "basic form that remains constant" can be misleading in relation to Campbell's understanding of modern storytelling, in particular it does not refer to Campbell's reference to anamorphoses and conic mirrors that are needed to make sense of them.

Some of Campbell's key references in terms of the passage from the waste land to the dark wood, and the path towards spiritual reunion with higher forces through love, are present in Vogler's work, for example with his citation of the Grail legend, but not highlighted specifically as such.

For example, Vogler states that: "Most stories take the hero out of the ordinary, mundane world and into a Special World, new and alien" (Vogler, 2007, p. 10). But although Vogler refers to the spiritual dimension of this journey he does not underline its central role.

In the step of the journey, Approach to the Inmost Cave, Vogler also doesn't highlight the possibility that this may represent the "secret love grotto" as identified in *The Masks of God*.

The "Hero's Journey", at least in Vogler's version, thus reads as an individual quest, whereby an individual male or female protagonist overcomes a series of trials and then returns with a secret elixir, but without highlighting the aspect of spiritual union through love – i.e. man's union with divinity and with his beloved – that is central to Campbell's analysis of modern myth, from Arthurian romance onwards.

Vogler states that: "The Hero archetype represents the ego's search for identity and wholeness." (Vogler, 2007, p. 30)

This is misleading in that Campbell identifies the need to recognize that the ego is an illusion, which must be sacrificed in order to achieve identity and wholeness. The search is therefore of the individual but not of the ego, per se.

In particular Vogler does not emphasise the spiritual dimension of the hero as shaman/poet that is found in Campbell's work, nor the moment of aesthetic arrest, or meeting of the eyes which are core ideas in *The Masks of God*.

This spiritual dimension is nonetheless found in Vogler's book, primarily in relation to the mentor. He writes: "Good teachers and Mentors are enthused, in the original sense of the word. "Enthusiasm" is from the Greek en theos, meaning god-inspired, having a god in you, or being in the presence of a god." (Vogler, 2007, p. 39).

Vogler continues: "In the anatomy of the human psyche, Mentors represent the Self, the god within us, the aspect of personality that is connected with all things. This higher Self is the wiser, nobler, more godlike part of us." (Vogler, 2007, p. 40). This statement requires a minor caveat, since Campbell tended to identify the Self with the ego, as something that is an illusion which has to be discarded in order to recognize "the god within us."

In relation to the power of love, which is central to Campbell's analysis of modern myth, Vogler states in relation to the mother goddess Shakti: "In the realm of love, the Mentor's function may be to initiate us into the mysteries of love or sex. In India they speak of the shakti — a sexual initiator, a partner who helps you experience the power of sex as a vehicle of higher consciousness. A shakti is a manifestation of God, a Mentor leading the lover to experience the divine." (Vogler, 2007, p. 43) This statement again lacks the nuances found in Campbell's work, wherein the beloved is not necessarily a "mentor" and neither is Shakti a manifestation of God, or sexual initiator, but is the goddess in her own right.

Although Vogler does not refer to key elements identified in Campbell's *Masks of God* such as aesthetic arrest, meeting of the eyes etc they are nonetheless implicit in his analysis.

For example, in his analysis of James Cameron's *Titanic* he draws a parallel between the Inmost Cave and the scene in the motor car in which the lovers join and "By crossing this great threshold, they have died to the old life and are reborn in the new." (Vogler, 2007, p. 243).

### **Key differences between Vogler and Campbell**

There are key differences of emphasis in Vogler's work and Campbell's broader thinking, in particular that expressed within *The Masks of God*.

Firstly, Vogler places an emphasis on the individual dimension of the Hero as Self, who partly appears as a loner, who is assisted or challenged along his journey by others. Even if he or she sacrifices their life at the end of the tale, in a true heroic gesture, there is an element of loneliness to this quest. He emphasizes that the Hero may undergo "Death of the Ego" and may achieve a "Sacred Marriage" with his or her beloved, but the romantic dimension of the Grail quest, for example, is given less emphasis. By contrast, Campbell focuses his attention on the need for the hero to shed the illusion of

not only the ego, but also of the self, which is achieved first and foremost through the realization of love, both for the divinity found within the world and/or through love for his or her beloved.

Secondly, Vogler emphasizes the key steps of storytelling as if they are universal, whereas Campbell emphasizes that modern narratives are characterized by their violation of classical structures and primarily observe an individual narrative or logic, of the author, which although may be understood as following patterns of classic storytelling through application of what he calls a “conic mirror” do not necessarily observe a sequential set of key steps.

Thirdly, Vogler places less emphasis on the poetic and spiritual dimension of the hero’s quest, which is central to Campbell’s thinking.

As a result, Vogler’s analysis applies most directly to classical linear narratives, focusing on a main protagonist/hero, Campbell’s model characterizes modern art as being primarily non-classical in structure and primarily poetic in its ambition. These are in no way errors, and much of these ideas are implicit within Vogler’s analysis. They are primarily a question of emphasis, and in this regard there is a clear difference of emphasis between the two sets of writing.

The spirit of the quest in both Vogler’s and Campbell’s work is the same, as reflected in the final paragraph of *The Writer’s Journey*:

As Dante says, at the beginning of the Inferno, "In the midst of life's journey I found myself in a dark wood, for the right path was lost." I think we're all doing that, in our various ways, finding ourselves through the journey of our writing lives. Looking for our Selves in the dark wood. I wish you luck and adventure and I hope you find yourself on your journey. Bon voyage. (Vogler, 2007, p. 370)

## **Conclusion**

Campbell’s writings go well beyond an attempt to create a unifying monomyth that explains all mythologies. In relation to modern myths, in particular, he states that each personal universe exists in its own right and will often explore non-traditional narrative structures. He nonetheless believes that the same basic searches and same core archetypes underline all mythologies, including modern myths. He uses the metaphors of the waste land and the dark wood to symbolize man’s spiritual emptiness or alienation in the modern world, and the exploration of non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, respectively. He distinguishes between a rational path and a poetic and religious path, and within the latter identifies two bifurcations – one based essentially on asceticism and removal from earthly temptations and the other based on romantic love and passion.

These two poetic paths – ascetic and passionate - are discussed further in the next chapter.

## Summary

The “great divide” between erudite and popular culture has profound theoretical roots dating back to Antiquity and is linked to the bifurcation between a more ascetic approach and a more romantic approach to the poetic path, as explained above.

These influences have inevitably left their mark on contemporary film theory. In order to move beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema it is necessary to analyse these roots. This includes study of various dichotomies, such as the idea of Paleface and Redskin defended by Philip Rahv (Rahv, 1939) the rational path vs the poetic path and the ascetic route vs the passionate route, Word vs Image, Apollonian vs Dionysian paradigms and the myth of Apollo vs Marsyas.

## Introduction

Dichotomies and binary divisions between true/false, wrong/right etc are one of the most salient features of human thinking. But they can also be dangerous, as is noted by Hanaway-Oakley because “dualism too neatly divides the binary opposites, making more refined or subtle interpretations difficult to achieve” (Hanaway-Oakley, 2017, p.15).

The objective of this thesis is to move beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema. But this dichotomy is based on other binary divisions which have structured Western thought, including the “schizophrenic” division of Western thought between a “rational path” and a “poetic path”, as identified by Bertrand Russell, Marshall McLuhan and many others, and between an ascetic and passionate route to art and religion.

The different traditions of a “rational path” and a “poetic path” and of an ascetic and passionate route can be traced back to the ideas of Plato who opened up multiple perspectives in this regard. Neoplatonism tends to focus on Plato’s theory of the forms and the idea that the world of sense perception is an illusion and that by using the powers of the intellect we can attain an understanding of abstract Forms. Plato’s writings, in particular the allegory of the Cave in *The Republic* are used to support this approach. In *The Republic* Plato talks disparagingly about image makers as mere copyists of the world and also suggests that poets such as Homer, notwithstanding their talents, should be excluded from the ideal Republic.

However Plato also provides ideas to the contrary in other texts, for example the power of love to reveal an almost divine inspiration.

Plato's *The Republic* offers a blueprint for a utopian society. One of the key elements of the text is the role of the "guardians" who are "philosopher kings" and act as gatekeepers to preserve the ideal state. Another key aspect is the importance of the intellect which distinguishes the higher classes from the lower classes and more evolved societies from less evolved societies.

Plato's ideas have been key to movements such as rationalism and the Enlightenment and also served for centuries as key elements of the church's doctrine.

The idea that the intellect distinguishes the "erudite" from the "rude", or "crude" is the basis for the class system and also for empire building, and in the recent era for colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Plato's ideas are also relevant to the distinction between erudite culture and popular culture. The social blueprint provided in *The Republic* is relevant for determining what should be included within erudite culture and that which essentially pertains to popular culture. Plato includes certain musical traditions within the ideal republic, but places a question mark on poetry, and places major doubts in relation to painting and sculpture.

Raymond Williams in his 1974 essay *On High and Popular Culture (1974)* states that high culture corresponds to "the best that has been thought and written in the world" over the ages, and adds that until the twentieth century popular culture existed primarily within the sphere of oral culture rather than written culture.

When cinema was invented literacy levels continued to be low in many countries and cinema "spoke" to large sections of the population in a more immediate and powerful manner than written texts.

The nineteenth century was decisively shaped by the written word, including newspapers, magazines and novels, and this phenomenon was directly linked to the emergence and consolidation of the middle classes.

By contrast, the twentieth century was progressively shaped by recorded images and sounds which provided unprecedented power for the popular classes.

Much of the debate about the power of cinema and the role of popular culture has been, and continues to be, shaped by these differences, and this explains in part the different approaches to cinema that have been adopted in Europe and America.

The emphasis on the power of reason, inspired by the ideas of Plato, was a critical element to justify the cultural and political hegemony of the Athens class in Ancient Greece and the patrician class in Ancient Rome and the empires built by them. The rulers had greater wisdom and reasoning power than "primitive peoples" who believed in nature spirits, animism and variants of shamanism.



In the colonial era a similar argument was provided to justify the hegemony (and the “white man’s burden”) of the colonial powers vis-à-vis the colonised.

In Western societies, education systems, which are highly focused on the powers of science and reason, uphold the cultural hegemony of the ruling classes and middle classes over the working classes, based on the power of reason. The working classes no longer believe in animism, shamanism etc per se, but their beliefs in astrology and folk wisdom are often seen as substitutes, and in certain cases enjoyment of Hollywood films is portrayed as an example of primitivism.

The dichotomy between civilisation and wilderness, a key element of the Western genre, always involves a hidden admiration for the other side. Although the civilised person, empowered by reason, considers himself to be superior to the primitive person, there is a hidden feeling that the latter has greater spiritual awareness, physical and sexual power.

For this reason, in a genre such as the Western, the hero moves between both worlds. The modernist movement has an ambivalent relationship to these tendencies.

One strand of modernism reflects complete confidence in the powers of reason and the progress that is made possible by the advancement of science and technology. This branch of modernism sees the past as being infected by superstition and irrational beliefs and considers that the modern age is fundamentally different and superior to the past.

However there is another powerful strand of modernism in art that incorporates a different type of break with the past, through a return to primitivism.

Modernist painters are often portrayed as essentially experimenting with form, motivated in part by the need to break with realism, due to the fact that photography is now able to mirror reality.

But many modernist painters also explored the link with primitivism, classic examples including Picasso and Matisse who were inspired by African art. In terms of modernist literature, writers such as James Joyce are also often analysed in terms of their innovation in form, but they were also deeply linked to an exploration of primitivism.

Cleo Hanaway-Oakley provides a fascinating reappraisal in *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film (2017)* suggesting that Joyce’s exploration of stream of consciousness was directly inspired by cinema.

John Berger in *Ways of Seeing (1972)* also addresses the fact that art critics often focus on issues of formal experimentation in art, rather than identifying the sense and meaning of the paintings themselves.

These two approaches – which can be described as the rational path vs the poetic path – is linked to other approaches, such as Philip Rahv's essay *Paleface and Redskin* (1939) which identifies two literary traditions, which have parallels with filmmaking traditions as will be explored herein.

The invention of cinema created unprecedented opportunities to explore primitivism, animism, shamanism, romanticism and a “redskin” approach to culture. This issue is also linked to the way that the mind processes images in comparison with words.

Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (2009) analyses how the power of images have been viewed with tremendous caution by French intellectuals.

At a simplistic level the difference between processing words and images can be compared to the left- and right-hand faculties of the brain. This simple dichotomy has been shown to be deeply flawed, but Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2012) offers a nuanced analysis of the different ways that the brain processes visual and verbal information and the fact that intellectuals have often downgraded the importance of holistic thinking, which is more directly linked to images.

Leonard Shlain's *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess The Conflict Between Word And Image* (1999) offers a non-academic analysis of this question, suggesting that the rising power of images is a factor in breaking down the patriarchal system.

Stephen Apkon's *The Age of the Image* (2014) is partly inspired by Shlain's ideas, but offers a more rigorous approach, that focuses on the need for visual literacy education in modern classrooms.

This is another dimension of this question and is inevitably linked to the way that cinema is perceived in Europe.

It is not only neuroscientists such as Antonio Damásio who have tried to combat the rationalist outlook epitomised by Descartes. This idea has also been explored by theorists such as Gilles Deleuze.

For certain theorists it is precisely this capacity to move beyond reason which has inspired leading philosophers. For example Eve Tavor Bannet in her essay, *Derrida and the Wholly Other* (1989) argues that Deleuze's advocacy of deconstruction was precisely to attain a non-verbal or pre-verbal form of consciousness:

Deconstruction of the *constructi* – the concepts, structures and constructs – of language, culture and the philosophic mind is thus both less and more than a subversion of what Derrida has called 'the metaphysics of presence' which have governed Western language and logic from the Greeks to the present day. Deconstruction is a displacement of the human constructs that have displaced the originating unity. (Bannet, 1989, abstract)

Joshua Ramey's *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* links this approach in the writings of Deleuze to the ideas of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) who was burned as a heretic in 1600:

For Bruno, a kind of affective vertigo is inseparable from knowledge of nature, in a way that is similar to Deleuze's affirmation of the artist as a "cosmic artisan" in touch with profound cosmic dynamics through an extraordinary sensitivity to the unknown in nature and affects (ATP, 342) In *The Heroic Frenzies*, Bruno appropriates the tradition of Petrarchan love poetry to outline the contours of how, through forms of intense mental contraction, a thinker can become deeply enfolded in matter itself. (Ramey, 2012, p. 70)

Ramey continues: "We could say with Deleuze that for Bruno certain intensities, whether of memory or sensation, lure us further and further into the depths of nature, until the maker becomes unmade and remade, the hunter, the hunted, the knower, the known." (Ramey, 2012, p. 72) These ideas find clear echoes in the shamanic journey, as explained in this thesis.

Ramey quotes Bruno in this context:

I say very few are the Acteons to whom destiny gives the power to contemplate Diana naked, and the power to become so enamored of the beautiful harmony of the body of nature so fallen beneath the gaze of those two lights of the dual splendour of goodness and beauty, that they are transformed into deer, inasmuch as they are no longer the hunters, but the hunted. For the ultimate and last end of this chase is the capture of a fugitive and wile prey, through which the hunter becomes the hunted, the pillager becomes the pillaged. Because in all the other species f the chase undertaken for particular things, it is the hunted who seeks to capture those things for himself, absorbing them through the mouth of this particular intelligence; but in that divine and universal chase he comes to apprehend that it is himself who necessarily remains captured, absorbed and united." (Bruno, 1964, p 225)

From this perspective, certain fields of artistic and philosophical enquiry, including the filmic experience, if they are able to shed the *constructi*, can re-establish contact with the originating unity.

### **The first and second waves of auteur theory**

The existence of two main theoretical outlooks within the body of European film theory, as defended in this thesis, is recognised by many theorists. An illuminating example is Ian Aitken's *European Film Theory and Cinema - A Critical Introduction* which distinguishes between "an intuitionist modernist/realist paradigm, and a post-Saussurian one" (Aitken, 2001, p.1).

Aitken states the following:

This study also attempts to re-focus attention on a tradition within European film theory and cinema which has been neglected, and even dismissed as irrelevant to contemporary critical concerns. The critical opprobrium which has been directed at movements such as French impressionism, and at theories such as that advanced by Kracauer, is often remarkable in the extent to which it so confidently dismisses them as of little worth. However, such repudiations are largely the product of a failure to comprehend the complexity and sophistication of the intuitionist modernist/realist

tradition, and this failure is, in turn, a consequence of the hegemonic hold which post-Saussurian thought has exercised over film studies. There is, however, growing evidence that this hold is beginning to weaken, as attempts are made to broaden and reconstruct the field. The emergence of 'post-theory', and of critical work on film studies drawn from disciplines as diverse as cognitive science, philosophical aesthetics, phenomenology, and philosophical realism, reflects this attempt at configuration. (Aitken, 2001, p.2).

Aitken emphasises how in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a rising body of theorists who advocated an anti-realist, deconstructive, post-structuralist cinema and who distanced themselves from theorists such as Metz because he defended a highly understandable narrative cinema (Aitken, 2001, p.110).

He criticises the structuralist approach as follows, which I will quote at length because of its relevance for this thesis:

The work of Propp, Lévi-Strauss, Metz, Wollen and others illustrate a number of fundamental theoretical inadequacies which structuralism was prone to. First, the concept of structure often employed appears to imply that 'structure' has an autonomy and volition of its own, as though it were some sort of sentient entity.

This notion of structure is difficult to defend philosophically, as it is based on an unprovable metaphysical conception of being. In addition, the concomitant idea that such structures are complete, unified systems rules out the possibility that they might, in fact, not be unified at all. The idea of deep structure as autonomous and unified also lends structuralism a deterministic dimension. Deep structures appear to dominate individuals who are not in control of the social processes within which they find themselves, and this means that there is, therefore, a 'hidden metaphysical commitment to determinism' within structuralism.

Structuralist analysis also tends to result in the production of descriptive, as opposed to evaluative criticism, and to reduce complex aesthetic objects to a skeleton of formal categories. The final conclusions which are drawn from such analyses are often mundane and prosaic. For example, and as already mentioned, Wollen's principal conclusion concerning *The Searchers* was that 'it is the richness of the shifting relations between antinomies' in the film which makes it superior to either *My Darling Clementine (1946)* or *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)*. However, such conclusions say little about one of the most important films in the history of the cinema. Two final problems with structuralist methodology are a tendency to impose theoretical models upon empirical evidence, and an inability to account for audience reception. These final two difficulties have led to the charge that structuralism is an insular intellectual tradition, which ignores that which falls outside its own boundaries. (Aitken, 2001, p.110-111).

Aitken's analysis of the two key movements in European film theory, as being intuitionist modernist and post-Saussurian, coincides with the analysis provided herein of first wave and second wave auteur theory, but otherwise the two studies do not overlap. However his emphasis on the insular intellectual tradition of post-Saussurian theory leads to the next section.

## Paleface vs. Redskin

The distinction between popular and erudite cinema finds parallels with the debate concerning different currents within modern literature, as described in the essay *Paleface and Redskin (1939)* by American literary critic Philip Rahv. The ideas in this essay echo Truffaut's essay on *A certain tendency of French cinema (1954)* in which he criticised films based on scripts, written by "men of letters".

Rahv states that American writers group themselves around two polar types - Paleface and Redskin – with no love lost between them-

The fact is that the creative mind in America is fragmented and one-sided. For the process of polarization has produced a dichotomy between experience and consciousness – a disassociation between energy and sensibility, between conduct and theories of conduct, between life conceived as an opportunity and life conceived as a discipline. (Rahv, 1939, p. 280)

Rahv contrasted these traditions using a series of examples, that may be summarised as follows:

	Paleface	Redskin
1	Drawing-room fiction of Henry James	Open air poems of Walt Whitman
2	Loneliness and tragic failure of Melville	Boisterous career and dubious success of Mark Twain
3	The thin, solemn, semi-clerical culture of Boston and Concord	Low-life world of the frontier and the big cities
4	Patrician	Plebeian
5	Endless ambiguities in being American	Glorifying in Americanism
6	Allegory and distillations of symbolism	Gross, riotous naturalism
7	Highbrow	Lowbrow
	Intellectual, strong religious norms, with a refined estrangement from reality	Emotional, spontaneous and lacking in personal culture.

Table 1 – Paleface vs. Redskin – Philip Rahv

Source: (Rahv, 1939) – author's analysis

Rahv identifies a major shift in literature between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: “The palefaces dominated literature throughout the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth they were overthrown by the redskins” (Rahv, 1939, p. 283). This is significant in the context of this thesis given the explosion of other media, in particular the cinema and then radio (and subsequently television). He identifies the “redskin” as a purely indigenous phenomenon (i.e. exclusive to the United States) and notes how certain American “paleface” writers, such as Henry James and T.S. Eliot left their native land for England, in order to maintain their cultural output in an environment more favourable to paleskin culture. (Rahv, 1939, p. 283)

Rahv did not address the issue of cinema but his essay has obvious relevance for this field.

Perry Meisel, in *The Myth of Popular Culture from Dante to Dylan (2009)* quotes Rahv's essay and explores the dichotomy between highbrow and lowbrow culture in order to highlight the powerful artistic roots of popular culture - which are often dismissed by many critics.

Meisel focuses primarily on the world of pop and rock music, and states that the work of artists such as Bob Dylan should be understood “dialectically”, i.e. as a “negotiation” between the British “paleface” heritage and the American “redskin” tradition.

Meisel also explores the world of film and suggests that Hollywood's aristocracy aims to be ‘high’ rather than ‘low’, as expressed in the voting patterns for the Academy awards.

Film critic Michael Sragow applies Rahv's model to British cinema in his 2001 article in *The Baltimore Sun* entitled *On screen, the Brits beat the colonies* (Sragow, 2001), suggesting that the terms “Tory” and “Rebel” are perfect substitutes for “Paleface” and “Redskin”.

Sragow refers to what he describes as “the root of the Tory myth”, i.e. “that British films have always been bloodless, insipid, earnest, lacking the emotionalism and originality of Continental cinema and the hustling vitality of Hollywood's Dream Factory.” (Sragow, 2001, article)

In other words, he suggests that the clichéd view would position British cinema with the “paleface” model, and Hollywood and European continental cinema of the period within the “redskin” tradition. This is important because whereas the European New Wave cinemas had strong “redskin” elements, the subsequent move to slow cinema has stronger paleface dimensions.

Sragow suggests that recent British films such as *Bridget Jones Diary (2001)* encroach upon “redskin” territory. He also finds similar elements in classic British directors such as Carol Reed, Michael Powell and David Lean. He concludes his article stating “with *Lawrence of Arabia*, David Lean, like his hero, came as close as any Tory could to going native.” (Sragow, 2001, article)

As Sragow suggests, the Hollywood tradition, based on principles such as “show don’t tell”, is clearly more closely linked to what Rahv identifies as the “redskin” literary tradition.

This is part of the secret of Hollywood’s popularity – as suggested in Boorstin’s *The Hollywood Eye* (1990) and is also one of the reasons why this area of “popular culture” is viewed in such low regard from a “paleface” perspective.

The “paleface” tradition is closer to Europe’s tradition of “Quality tradition films”, that aim to achieve broad audience appeal, while upholding values associated with classic novels and historical recreations.

This tension was addressed in the 2011 film *My Week With Marilyn* by Simon Curtis which contrasted the earthy spontaneity of Marilyn Monroe with the intellectual aloofness of Laurence Olivier and British cinema of the epoch.

Curiously, the original advocates of auteur cinema (i.e. the “Young Turks” of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*), notwithstanding their cultural pedigree, were more attracted to the “redskin” side of American literature and cinema. Their interest in westerns, gangster films and film noir was not solely due to the strength of the respective auteurs, but also due to the earthiness of the settings. This spirit is conveyed in films such as Visconti’s *Ossessione* (1943), Fellini’s *Il Vitelloni* (1953) or Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim* (1962). This is also why the New Wave films caught the admiration of the Hollywood filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg.

Italian neo-realism and the New Wave movements also ushered in new screen goddesses in Europe such as Sophia Loren in Italy and Brigitte Bardot in France.

However, although the New Wave films of this period had close links to popular cinema motifs, the second wave of auteur cinema, often based on a slow cinema aesthetic, may be considered to be closer to a “paleface” mentality and restricted to a more informed (and middle class) audience.

Auteur cinema as a whole, encompassing both the first wave and second wave (which obviously are not clear-cut categories) bridges both camps. Some auteur films are closer to the redskin tradition, whereas other auteur films are closer to the paleface tradition. But there is nonetheless a clear difference between New Wave films and the majority of the current auteur films.

In order to illustrate this point, and at the risk of being accused of over-simplifying these issues, the following table indicates certain attributes of auteur films that can be used to classify them into either the redskin or paleface camps.

	Paleface "Auteur films"	Redskin "Auteur films"
1	Emotional detachment	Emotional engagement
2	Distancing	Desire
3	Loneliness and tragedy	Boisterous and hopeful outlook
4	Serious	Playful
5	Disdain in relation to popular culture	Fondness for popular culture

*Table 2 Paleface Auteur Films vs Redskin Auteur Films*

Obviously this is an indicative list of characteristics rather than a categorical definition – as indeed is Rahv’s own essay.

However, if we apply these considerations to some of Europe’s leading auteurs it provides interesting results.

For example, using the descriptions provided in Ginette Vincendeau’s *Encyclopaedia of European Cinema (1992)*, we can draw up a preliminary list of “redskin auteurs”:

Almodovar – “simultaneous celebration and parody of cinema-verité, neo-realism, thrillers, musicals and horror”, “exploration of love and desire” (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 8).

Bertolucci – “eroticism”, “violent restlessness” (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 44).

Buñuel – “desire and *amour fou*”, “tolerant understanding of human folly”, “corrosive wit” (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 65).

Fellini – “extravagant inventiveness and carnivalesque style”, “fondness for popular culture” (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 139).

Truffaut – “prized American cinema”, “sentimental”, “love for popular entertainment”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 430).

Other auteurs have mixed both traditions:

Bergman - mixes intense eroticism and emotional engagement with intellectual enquiry and symbolism (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 41).

Godard mixes “romanticism and cinephilia”, “lyricality” and sexuality in the first period of his work, followed by emotional detachment and melancholy in his later work. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 81).

Antonioni - mixes an abstract, formalist style that explores themes of alienation, while at the same



time chronicling the “impossible quest for intimacy”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 16).  
 Bresson mixes “austerity” and “religious discourse” with a deep sense of humanity (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 59).  
 Tarkovsky - mixes an intimate tactile poetry and vivid dream sequences with high culture references (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 419).  
 Lars von Trier - combines a dark, melancholic style with diverse references, including German Expressionism, American film noir and Andrei Tarkovsky (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 428).

In relation to “Paleskin auteurs” we can suggest the following:

Peter Greenaway – “highly intellectual”, “sumptuous cleverness”, “bizarre collocation of eroticism and trompe-l’oeil modernism”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 191).  
 Michael Haneke – “disciplined, sparse style”, “bleak but compelling view of the end of civilisation”, exploring “narcissism, abjection and the coldness of personal contacts in the age of video”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 198).  
 Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub – “modernist, oppositional, demanding” with “roots in European high culture”, “theoretical, elliptical, innovative and challenging”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 210).  
 Alain Resnais – “Modernist concerns and drawing on serious literature (rather than pulp fiction)” which “set him apart from other New Wave directors”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 358).  
 Wim Wenders – “detached observational stance (which covers deep narcissistic wounds)”. (Vincendeau, 1992, p. 451).

If we divide the auteur tradition into two currents – paleface and redskin, instead of a tripartite Venn diagram, it’s possible to represent European cinema on the basis of 4 overlapping vectors, as follows:

Redskin	Paleface
Popular cinema	Quality cinema
“Redskin” auteur cinema	“Paleface” auteur cinema

*Table 3 Paleface and Redskin - Popular, Quality and Auteur cinema*

In the 1970s, the “new wave” tradition, linked to the first wave of auteur cinema, began to lose steam and the second wave of auteur cinema increasingly migrated towards the “paleface” tradition for the reasons explained above.

From the 1990s onwards there has been renewed interest in producing popular cinema and “Quality tradition films” in Europe.

“Quality tradition films” increasingly use the devices of popular cinema. One example is literary adaptations such as Joe Wright’s *Atonement* (2007) which mixes elements of the “quality film” approach with popular cinema.

“Redskin” auteur cinema is now relatively sparse, unlike the time of the New Wave movements. European cinema is thus divided between popular and quality film genres, on the one hand, with a more “redskin” and “lowbrow” flavour, and “paleskin” auteur cinema, on the other hand.

### **The rational path vs the poetic path in Plato**

In the work of Plato we also find a distinction that mirrors Rahv’s ideas vs paleface and redskin.

Plato’s writings – and it should be noted that for centuries Plato was regarded to be the scribe and Socrates the philosopher – contain ideas related to the two traditions of Western philosophy identified by Bertrand Russell, i.e. a passionate, mystical path and an empirical and rationalistic path. The latter is however the strongest of the two, especially in *The Republic*.

As a blueprint for an ideal society, in *The Republic* Plato/Socrates identifies three classes – the guardians, auxiliaries and producers, who broadly correspond to the aristocracy, middle class and workers. Plato says they are also governed by the metals of gold, silver and bronze.

However unlike many authors Plato states that this division into different classes is the result of a “noble lie” or “audacious fiction” linked to “an old Phoenician tale”.

Whereas all citizens are born from the same mother earth, of the same original stock, they will be told the following lie:

You are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children. But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son. (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version)

This idea is very familiar but what is of note in Plato is that he says that it is a deceit: “Such is the tale; is there any possibility of making our citizens believe in it?” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version)

Given that *The Republic* is essentially about creating an ideal state, based on the division between guardians, auxiliaries and workers, the entire text can be viewed as part of the tale, with which Plato/Socrates actually disagrees, but sees it as a necessary fiction.

Although it may take various generations to implant this noble lie, Socrates states that: the fostering of such a belief will make them care more for the city and for one another” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

Socrates says that the guardians must be subjected to an ordeal in which they will prove their love of beauty and harmony, above temptation:

So must we take our youth amid terrors of some kind, and again pass them into pleasures, and prove them more thoroughly than gold is proved in the furnace, that we may discover whether they are armed against all enchantments, and of a noble bearing always, good guardians of themselves and of the music which they have learned, and retaining under all circumstances a rhythmical and harmonious nature, such as will be most serviceable to the individual and to the State. And he who at every age, as boy and youth and in mature life, has come out of the trial victorious and pure, shall be appointed a ruler and guardian of the State. (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version)

This is clearly an Apollonian model.

In *The Republic* the emphasis is placed on the powers of reason and the intellect and the higher social strata must prove themselves through the power of reason, even though Socrates himself confesses that this is a noble lie.

Plato identifies: four divisions, two for intellect and two for opinion, wherein he calls “the first division science, the second understanding, the third belief, and the fourth perception of shadows” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

Plato states that the populace are more attracted to the latter - belief and “the perception of shadows” - and the rulers/philosopher kings to the former - science and understanding.

In this regard he considers that painters, “tragic poets” and “imitative poets” focus on imitating and “passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version). He states that the imitative poet is similar to the painter “inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth” and are “concerned with an inferior part of the soul” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version).

Both are therefore to be excluded from the “well-ordered State” because they “indulge the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater and less, but thinks the same thing at one time great and at another small” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version).

One can say that the painter/imitative poet is “a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version)..

In *The Republic* the danger of poetry is underlined: “we must beg Homer and the other poets not to be angry if we strike out these and similar passages, not because they are unpoetical, or unattractive to the popular ear, but because the greater the poetical charm of them, the less are they meet for the ears of

boys and men who are meant to be free, and who should fear slavery more than death.” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

In particular Socrates considers that interest in the darker side of consciousness, the shades, will undermine the nobility of the intellect:

“we shall have to reject all the terrible and appalling names describe the world below, Cocytus and Styx, ghosts under the earth, and sapless shades, and any similar words of which the very mention causes a shudder to pass through the inmost soul of him who hears them. I do not say that these horrible stories may not have a use of some kind; but there is a danger that the nerves of our guardians may be rendered too excitable and effeminate by them (...) Another and a nobler strain must be composed and sung by us. (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

The guardians should avoid imitating these baser spirits: “if they imitate at all, they should imitate from youth upward only those characters which are suitable to their profession –the courageous, temperate, holy, free, and the like; but they should not depict or be skilful at imitating any kind of illiberality or baseness, lest from imitation they should come to be what they imitate.” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

Socrates emphasises that “pantomime”-style imitators should be sent away to another city: “For we mean to employ for our souls' health the rougher and severer poet or story-teller, who will imitate the style of the virtuous only.” . (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

For this reason he praises only the Dorian and Phrygian harmonies and the lyre and the harp over the flute, i.e. “the preferring of Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

Music based on harmony and the harp and lyre are therefore praised: “musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful.” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version).

He states that: “true love is a love of beauty and order - temperate and harmonious” and that “no intemperance or madness” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3, online version) should be permitted.

Plato explains the allegory of the cave as moving beyond the world of appearances, based on vision of the visible world, and the “ascent of the soul into the intellectual world” which he also calls the “upper world” beyond the world of “human affairs” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 7, online version). The philosopher strives to move from the world of becoming to that of being.

As such Plato views the visible world as actually being a kind of underworld, a world of shades and illusion, in which man is in shackles.

He says that sensual pleasures such as eating and drinking are like leaden weights “attached to them at their birth, and which drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 7, online version).

Socrates accuses artists of hubris because he imitates the creator/God who he calls “the real artist”: “The imitator or maker of the image knows nothing of true existence; he knows appearances only” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version).

He emphasises the importance of the “calculating and rational principle in the soul” to defend against the allure of the imitative arts.

He continues: “poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version).

Socrates would even exclude Homer from the *The Republic*. “Homer is the greatest of poets and first of tragedy writers; but we must remain firm in our conviction that hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be admitted into our State” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 10, online version).

He sees love of poetry as a “childish love” and that one should be on guard against its seductions.

However given that Socrates admits that the division into social classes is a noble lie, the entire text of *The Republic* must be viewed from this light.

The emphasis on the power of reason to justify the rule of the upper classes, and of superior nations, who can overcome the seductions of passion, has had a decisive influence on Western thinking and history.

But in some of Plato’s other texts, we find almost the opposite argument defended, which comes closer to the ideal of Pan/Dionysus/Marsyas, rather than Apollo.

In *The Symposium* Alcibiades specifically compares Socrates to Marsyas, i.e. the very figure that Socrates suggests should be excluded from the ideal city state in *The Republic*.

“Are you not a flute-player? That you are, and a performer far more wonderful than Marsyas. He indeed with instruments used to charm the souls of men by the powers of his breath, and the players of his music do so still: for the melodies of Olympus are derived from Marsyas who taught them, and these, whether they are played by a great master or by a miserable flute-girl, have a power which no others have; they alone possess the soul and reveal the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries, because they are divine.” (Plato, *The Symposium*, online version)

In *The Symposium* Socrates emphasises the importance of love, rather than reason, as the key path to wisdom: stating love is “the eldest of the gods. And not only is he the eldest, he is also the source of the greatest benefits to us.” “Love will make men dare to die for their beloved-love alone; and women as well as men” (Plato, *The Symposium*, online version).

Notwithstanding this emphasis on love, Plato nonetheless distinguishes between a higher and lower form of love, which seems to be in line with the approach provided in *The Republic*. Pausanias distinguishes between a higher and lower love – wherein the former is love for the Aphrodite Urania, known as Heavenly Aphrodite, and the latter is love for Aphrodite Pandemos, known as Common Aphrodite.

Love for Heavenly Aphrodite has been interpreted as a purely intellectual love, which gives us the concept of “Platonic love” or alternatively as love between two men, and therefore suggesting that love between man and woman is a lower form of love.

Whereas, Plato defends an essentially Apollonian model in *The Republic* (above all) and in *The Symposium*, he draws closer to the Dionysian model in *Phaedrus* and “Ion”. In the former, Socrates expresses his praise for “divine madness”, saying that:

The divine madness was subdivided into four kinds, prophetic, initiatory, poetic, erotic, having four gods presiding over them; the first was the inspiration of Apollo, the second that of Dionysus, the third that of the Muses, the fourth that of Aphrodite and Eros. In the description of the last kind of madness, which was also said to be the best, we spoke of the affection of love in a figure, into which we introduced a tolerably credible and possibly true though partly erring myth, which was also a hymn in honour of Love, who is our lord and also mine, Phaedrus, and the guardian of fair children, and to him we sung the hymn in measured and solemn strain (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online version).

Socrates states that the divine madness of Aphrodite and Eros is the “best”. His emphasis on “divine madness” is significant. Of course love for Aphrodite and Eros could possibly be equated with a love of harmony, beauty and reason, but Socrates goes further in his praise of madness calling it “a divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men. For prophecy is a madness, and the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona when out of their senses have conferred great benefits on Hellas, both in public and private life, but when in their senses few or none” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online version).

He links “inspired madness”, to the Muses:

The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; which taking hold of a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muses' madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the

temple by the help of art - he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man disappears and is nowhere when he enters into rivalry with the madman. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online version)

This is very significant because whereas Plato praises the Apollonian virtues of reason and order in *The Republic* he now seems to be praising the “madman”. He continues:

I might tell of many other noble deeds which have sprung from inspired madness. And therefore, let no one frighten or flutter us by saying that the temperate friend is to be chosen rather than the inspired, but let him further show that love is not sent by the gods for any good to lover or beloved; if he can do so we will allow him to carry off the palm. And we, on our part, will prove in answer to him that the madness of love is the greatest of heaven's blessings, and the proof shall be one which the wise will receive, and the witling disbelieve. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online version)

This statement that “the madness of love is the greatest of heaven's blessings” is clearly within the tradition of a “poetic path” rather than the “rational path” of *The Republic*.

Plato maintains the idea of a divinity in *Phaedrus* and describes God as “the pilot of the soul” but he identifies the path to ascend to this divinity as “inspired madness” rather than reason.

Socrates concludes *Phaedrus* with an eulogy to Pan rather than to Apollo: “Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, online version).

In *Ion*, Plato is even more explicit about the need for the poet to detach himself from the realm of reason. Whereas in *The Republic* Socrates says that the philosopher cannot be wise, and can only love wisdom, in *Ion* he says that poets are truly wise and moved by divine inspiration: “rhapsodes and actors, and the poets whose verses you sing, are wise; whereas I am a common man, who only speak the truth” (Plato, *Ion*, online version).

Furthermore he claims that God speaks through the poets:

God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know them to be speaking not of themselves who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but that God himself is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us. (Plato, *Ion*, online version)

In *The Republic* Plato excludes poets from the ideal city state because they mimic the creator by creating images, but will lead people astray - in particular the Guardians. He also praises music that will create a sense of harmony in *The Republic* but in the *Ion* emphasises how music can create a state of divine inspiration, like that created by the worshippers of Dionysus:

All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantic revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains: but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they

themselves say; for they tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the reason is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. (Plato, *Ion*, online version)

Raphael Foshay in his essay *Mimesis in Plato's The Republic and Its Interpretation by Girard and Gans* (Foshay, 2009) highlights the contradictory approach found within Plato's writings, concluding that:

It can be argued that Plato was entirely aware of these rather bald inconsistencies, that he is at once pointing to the ideal of philosophical eros in its pursuit of a transcendence of philosophical and political conflict and at the same time demonstrating dramatically and dialogically how very difficult it is to achieve in practice, even by the exemplary character of his own teacher. (Foshay, 2009, article).

But the issue at stake is more than the question of the pragmatic possibility of achieving the "ideal of philosophical eros". There is a clear agenda of social engineering in *The Republic*, which Socrates admits is a noble lie. By contrast his own beliefs seem to draw closer to a Dionysian idea that the path to true divinity is divine madness rather than Apollonian harmony and reason.

Given the importance of Plato's thinking for Western thought over the last two thousand years it is important to consider this question at greater length.

### **Apollo vs. Marsyas**

The ancient myth of Apollo vs Marsyas has parallels with Rahv's idea of the Paleface vs. Redskin.

Plato emphasises the importance of certain myths to foster order within society, while at the same time admitting that the division into social classes is a "divine lie".

The allegorical tale of the contest between Apollo and Marsyas concerns the battle between a solar deity and the master of the lyre, and a lunar mortal who plays the flute and after losing the contest is flayed alive.

The myths associated to this duel, which were popular in Antiquity and revived in the Renaissance, as analysed in Edith Wyss' *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Images* (Wyss, 1996) provide fascinating insights into the difference between erudite/high culture and popular culture. For example in Milos Forman's *Amadeus* (1984), Salieri is presented as a high culture figure, who defends the Apollonian order, whereas Mozart is a libidinous satyr-like character, closer to Marsyas, who produces divine music. Forman's *One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1976) explores a similar contrast, between the cold and rational Nurse Ratchet, and the satyr-like McMurphy.



Plato addresses the Apollo-Marsyas myth in *The Republic*, where he says that the “flute is worse than all the stringed instruments put together” and “There remain then only the lyre and the harp for use in the city, and the shepherds may have a pipe in the country...The preferring of Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas and his instruments is not at all strange.” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3).

He adds that as part of “purging of the State” to create the ideal republic, the power of the word should prevail over that of the music: “we shall adapt the foot and the melody to words having a like spirit, not the words to the foot and melody.” (Plato, *The Republic*, book 3).

However in Plato’s other texts, such as *The Symposium* Socrates is compared to the satyr Marsyas, adding that:

The melodies of Olympus are derived from Marsyas who taught them, and these, whether they are played by a great master or by a miserable flute-girl, have a power which no others have; they alone possess the soul and reveal the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries, because they are divine. (Plato, *The Symposium*, online version)

Socrates is said to be able to achieve this power solely through his power as an orator, but nonetheless this offers a more “lunar” view of wisdom and knowledge.

This idea of the city and state being controlled by the solar deity of Apollo and the people as being moved by a lunar satyr-like spirit, such as Marsyas, was also reflected in the deities worshipped by the patricians and plebeians in Ancient Rome. The Capitoline Triad of the patricians was formed by Jupiter, Juno (or Mars) and Minerva, who had strongly male, solar Apollonian qualities.

The Aventine Triad of the plebeians was formed by Ceres, Father Liber (Dionysus) and Libera, and had a stronger link to female, lunar and Dionysian qualities. The Aventine Hill was linked to a sacred grove, and to the goddess Bona Dea, as noted above.

The solar and lunar paths are also linked to the difference between Apollo and his twin sister Diana. Diana is linked to the primeval forest, which is one of the themes analysed herein and also to agrarian cults. Ginzburg in *The Night Battles (2013)* analyses the alleged cult of the goddess Diana recorded in late 15th century Modena.

The distinction between the solar and lunar path has a direct parallel with the distinction between the rational path and the poetic path as analysed herein, and finds echoes in the writings of the likes of William Blake and Friedrich Nietzsche.

When Nietzsche famously said “God is Dead” in *The Joyful Wisdom (1882)* one of his core ideas was that the Age of Reason has eliminated our conception of a divinity, also allied to his criticism of

Christianity. Nietzsche focused on the battle between Apollo and Dionysus and suggested that the victory of the lyre over the pipe is a victory of the eye and reason over the ear and the spirit.<sup>170</sup>

These considerations are relevant when we consider the power of recorded image and sounds precisely because they give a hitherto silenced voice to popular culture and to the more lunar aspect related to Marsyas and Dionysus.

Plato defends an essentially Apollonian myth for the guardians and even offers the prospect that poets such as Homer can enter the ideal city state if they write poems which promote order and harmony. Implicitly he leaves Dionysian myths, symbolised by the figure of Marsyas for the people. This creates a classic division between high culture and popular culture, wherein Apollo represents the former and Marsyas the latter.

At the same time, Plato's statements about the divine lie and about Dionysian "divine wisdom" suggests that there is a wisdom which lies within popular culture which may be more important than Apollonian high culture. This division finds an echo in the ideas of Nietzsche who suggests that folk music is especially Dionysian:

One might also furnish historical proofs, that every period which is highly productive in popular songs has been most violently stirred by Dionysian currents, which we must always regard as the substratum and prerequisite of the popular song.

First of all, however, we regard the popular song as the musical mirror of the world, as the Original melody, which now seeks for itself a parallel dream-phenomenon and expresses it in poetry. Melody is therefore primary and universal, and as such may admit of several objectivations, in several texts. Likewise, in the naïve estimation of the people, it is regarded as by far the more important and necessary. Melody generates the poem out of itself by an ever-recurring process. (Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, section 6)

Nietzsche identifies the Dionysian outlook with that of the titans, that was overthrown by the Apollonian views of the Greeks and then went underground in the form of folk music and folk tales.

Edith Wyss in *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance* summarises the myth as telling the "fate of the Phrygian satyr Marsyas whose skill in aulos music emboldened him to challenge Apollo to a musical contest. The divine tunes of the god's lyre easily defeated the satyr. In revenge for the insult to his authority, Apollo flayed the upstart" (Wyss, 19986, p. 13).

Wyss explains that depiction of this myth in paintings and sculpture was extremely popular in Antiquity and in the Renaissance and had two main interpretations – one spiritual, as an admonishment against hubris and the other political emphasising the fate of those who had the affront to challenge the ruling powers.

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<sup>170</sup> See: [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from http://www.stevenconnor.com/marsyas/](http://www.stevenconnor.com/marsyas/)

Marsyas is linked to satyrs, river deities and nature spirits that were central to the “primitive” religions which were overcome by the Athenians. The aulos was believed to have originated in Asia Minor whereas the lyre was seen as essentially Greek. Wyss says that the aulos was the favourite instrument in the cult of Dionysus and was played with abandon by the satyrs, silenes, and maenads who accompanied the god in the thiasos. She cites Plato’s reference to Marsyas and also Aristotle who said that the aulos “is not a moralizing, but rather an exciting influence. So that it ought to be used for occasions of the kind at which attendance has the effect of purification rather than instruction. And let us add...that playing it prevents the employment of speech” (Aristotle, *Politics*)

The aulos was therefore only appropriate in “psychic catharsis” and was “not conducive to virtue” and had “no effect on intelligence”. Wyss continues: “The quoted citations are often invoked by modern authors who attempt to interpret the Marsyas myth as the conflict between the “Apollonian and the “Dionysian” psychic dispositions, with the one standing for reason, knowledge and discursive thought, the other for passion, instinct and mysticism” (Wyss, 1996, p.27). She nonetheless emphasises that this is a modern perspective and may obscure the myth’s deeper meaning.

She states in particular that Plato and his followers did not see the two gods as adversaries, this was a subsequent interpretation. “They were celebrated as harmoniously completing each other, even at times as two manifestations of one and the same deity” (Wyss, 1996, p.27).

She emphasises the fact that Plato praises the ecstatic disposition in writings such as *Timaeus* and that the symbolic role of the seven-stringed lyre as representing universal harmony. In this context Apollo is a purifying force and his flaying of Marsyas is necessary to restore the cosmic order.

Wyss nonetheless states that the myth was interpreted by some as an allegory of power. “The learned Berchorius offered a unique interpretation that turned the myth into an exemplum of social criticism. Apollo is a “rich evil superior” such as a “prelate or ruler” whose wrath Marsyas, equalled to a “simple man” incurs because of insufficient deference” (Wyss, 1996, p.34). She underlines that this interpretation is far from the classical meaning. Wyss explores the link between the aulos, the pipe played by Pan and the syrinx played by Mercury.

The use of the reed in the pipe can also be linked to the story of the theft of holy fire in a reed by Prometheus – who is then disembowelled daily as punishment. Wyss does not establish this link but does say that the pipe was considered as potentially conveying advanced or esoteric knowledge to the unworthy and was dangerous precisely for this reason.

The flaying of Marsyas is linked to the association with nature and the vegetation cycle. He is tied to a tree and flayed, just as trees and vegetation lose their foliage in the autumn. Apollo, the eternal sun, does the flaying.

In this context, Marsyas has parallels with the forest, ordinary people the rural world, which is subject to the natural cycle, whereas Apollo is linked to the eternal city. This was particularly important in the depiction of the myth in Renaissance Venice: "Marsyas' punishment is meant to exalt the harmony emanating from the retainer of the political power which, in Venice, was not an individual pontiff or prince but the body of laws and political usages implemented by the ruling class of the aristocracy" (Wyss, 1996, p.118). Wyss continues by explaining that Marsyas' "social and cultural inferiority is usually readily recognised, be it by his costume, his churlish demeanour, or his second-rate instrument. Nowhere else in Italy at this time did the myth enjoy as marked a popularity as in Venetian art, be it as a subject involving music, as part of Ovidian narrative cycles, or for more serious allegorical purposes" (Wyss, 1996, p.119).

During the counter-reformation Wyss explains that Apollo was depicted as personally and violently flaying Marsyas and that this had political connotations and issued a stern warning to anyone who dared to rise against the authorities. The flaying of Marsyas also began to be depicted in ways that resembled the passion of Christ.

But although some artists portrayed Marsyas with compassion, many, especially in Northern Italy showed Apollo as a stern executioner.

Wyss emphasises that the meaning of the myth was not just about the struggle between high art and low art, but is above all about defending harmony and cosmic order. She notes how it sent a message from the elite to the rest of society:

The tolerance for revolt was low in the sixteenth century among the ruling elite who, after all, commissioned and owned these images. In the course of the century, the social stratification progressed and the political power became more entrenched. The hierarchical structure of the Church and the increasing weight of religious orthodoxy contributed to an attitude of submission before authority. The position toward temporal and spiritual dominance was far more stringent than in a modern society. (Wyss, 1996, p.121).

Analysis of the myth of Apollo and Marsyas provides valuable insights into how these issues were viewed between the periods of Antiquity and the Counter Reformation.

The Apollonian principles of order and harmony, as defended in Plato's *The Republic* were upheld by the Church over the centuries.

But with the Enlightenment, a new set of meta-narratives came to the fore. The emphasis on the power of Reason, as found in *The Republic* gained even greater impetus, but interest in the more mystical

side of Plato's thinking and belief in the importance of "divine madness" was given even shorter shrift than ever before, from the side of rationalism, but was explored in other contexts, such as mysticism.

The emphasis on rationalism led to its counter movement of romanticism, that was particularly marked in the 18th and 19th century, but continues up until the present day.

### **18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism and the importance of myth**

Erwin F. Cook in *The Philosophy of Myth (2019)* traces the key ideas associated to German romanticism and suggests that some of these ideas have paved the way for a film franchise such as *Star Wars*. This is obviously extremely relevant to this thesis, especially in the context of the debate as to whether science fiction and superhero films have any artistic value.

Cook explains how the early German romantic philosophy of myth believed that that "the first men enjoyed a oneness with experience, and specifically with nature, that was lacking in civilized Europe" (Cook, 2019, p. 113) They considered that this distancing from nature resulted from the Platonic tradition, and Cartesian mind-body dualism, which was further reinforced by Kant's "first critique, with its foreclosure on human ability to directly experience things in themselves" (Cook, 2019, p. 113). The German romantics believed that additional factors were the fragmentation of religion and the meta-narrative associated to science: "Science also contributed to man's alienation from nature, with the mechanistic worldview ushered in by the Copernican revolution and dramatically strengthened by Newton's demonstration of physical laws governing nature." (Cook, 2019, p. 114).

Instead they focused on the symbolic, intuitive mode of myth to "narrow the gap between signifier and signified, between consciousness and the objects of consciousness." (Cook, 2019, p. 114). This obviously has links to the phenomenological approach, as described above.

In particular the German romantics were inspired by Kant's theory that images, symbols and aesthetical ideas can achieve a pre-linguistic or non-linguistic understanding. Kant defined the aesthetical idea as the "representation of the Imagination (*Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft*) which occasions much thought, without, however, any definite thought, i.e. any *concept* (*Begriff*), being capable of being adequate to it; it consequently cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language"<sup>171</sup> (Kant, 1951, p. 197).

Cook asserts that Schiller, Goethe and others adopted this view of the symbol, which he describes as a "finite representations of the infinite", which "provides direct mediation between the phenomenal and the noumenal". (Cook, 2019, p. 116)

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<sup>171</sup> Kant 1951: 197 § 49 [=1793: 192-3].

He says that German philologist, Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) saw the poetic as a historically later species of myth and played a key role in this regard through his study of “contemporary ‘primitives’ in Africa and the Americas:

Heyne concluded that mythology is a universal feature of human culture: if a culture does not now have a mythology, then it has simply lost it. Moreover, myth is not merely a function of narrative content, but a type of speech and of consciousness; and it is not abstract or rational but highly concrete and emotional. (Cook, 2019, p. 119)

Cook argues that Heyne’s contemporary, the cleric Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) took these ideas further:

Herder finds that the very primitiveness of ancient man made them great poets: living in a state of nature, they sang about their lived experiences; while modern poets compose their works on paper locked away in their studies. Modern poetry is consequently more refined, but has lost the power and immediacy of the ancient songs. (Cook, 2019, p. 121)

As such a poem or myth can give a voice to the entire culture, which becomes an individual in its own right. This led to a call to action to create new poems and aesthetical Ideas, while recording folk tales and songs. Cook notes that he Heyne an avid collector of folk-songs in that he says inspired the Heidelberger romantics, von Arnim and Brentano, and the brothers Grimm.

The set of ideas developed by Heyne and Herder shaped key aspects of subsequent romanticism thinking which later inspired thinkers such as James Frazier with *The Golden Bough* and the likes of Jung and Campbell. Cook summarises this set of ideas as follows:

Comparative mythology and ethnology, historicism, the universality of myth in small-scale, preindustrial societies, an age of myth, myth as primitive thought, as childlike thought, a mythic consciousness even, the necessary and universal mode of thought by early man, nature myth, myth as the origin of philosophy and science. (Cook, 2019, p. 121)

Cook argues that Schiller recast the ideas of Herder as a loss of natural religion. “Whereas ancient man experienced the magic and wonder of an animate natural world, the rise of Christianity and scientific rationalism at the expense of pagan religion has left us with an *entgöttete Natur*” (Cook, 2019, p. 122).

Schiller thereby paves the way towards phenomenological theories, in contrast to the subsequent semiotics approach that separates sign and signified:

If [in the case of modern poetry], the sign remains eternally heterogeneous and alien to the signified, so springs forth [in the case of ancient poetry] the language as through an inner necessity from the thought, and is so one with it that the spirit (*Geist*) appears as though laid bare, even beneath its bodily husk. Such an art of expression, where the sign disappears entirely in the signified, and where the language leaves the thought which it expresses simultaneously naked, since it could not express it in any other way without at the same time veiling it (*verhüllen*) is that which one, in the art of

writing best calls brilliant and profound (genialish und geistreich). (Schiller quoted by Cook, 2019, p. 123)

Inspired by Schiller, Schlegel wrote *Gespräch über die Poesie* which is formally modelled on Plato's *The Symposium*.

In this text, one of the characters, Ludovico, asserts that the "Greeks were culturally unified by a body of shared narratives, and therefore produced superior art, as they supplied a common stock of material and frame of reference and belief on which to draw in the production and reception of art" (Cook, 2019, p. 123).

Schlegel advocates the development of a new mythology which will "envelop (umfassen) all other works of art, and serve as the bed and vessel for the ancient and eternal fountain-head of poetry, and even as the infinite poem which covers the seeds of all other poems" (Cook, 2019, p. 123).

A key dimension of this thinking is essentially animistic, i.e. that God is found within and throughout nature. In other words God is an immanent presence rather than a transcendental being.

The capacity to express this immanent presence can in part be achieved by poetry, in particular the poetry of antiquity rather than modern poetry, the Romantics also placed great emphasis on the power of the image.

Cook refers to the work of Friedrich Creuzer, professor of Classics at the University of Heidelberg from 1804 to 1845. Creuzer identified the source of myth as the esoteric theology of Indian Brahmins and said that the Indic priests "communicate and elucidate their meanings with images in which the spiritual and material remain united, so that the spiritual is given concrete form: the transcendental symbol is thus a religious symbol" (Cook, 2019, p. 141).

Cook says that the Indic priests told stories as a way of communicating and explaining their images/symbols. The Greeks then developed their own, plastic symbols "in the form of sculpture, which is the highest art form mankind has ever achieved". (Cook, 2019, p. 141).

As such, Creuzer's symbol is primary even to language and myth merely represents it.

Cook concludes:

Creuzer's most important and wide-ranging influence lay in his theory of the transcendental and concrete symbol, which informs the psychological theories of Karl Jung, and from him Joseph Campbell, whose Jungian inspired monomyth remains enormously influential in popular culture. From that perspective, it would not be wholly illegitimate to say that Creuzer is the spiritual ancestor of Star Wars. (Cook, 2019, p. 142)

Cook does not analyse the contribution made to these ideas by the development of communication technology. It is nonetheless undeniable that the increasing possibilities to share images from the eighteenth century onwards was a critical factor in this regard.

## Word vs Image in Twentieth-Century French Thought

In the twentieth century, as the image has gained increasing ascendancy, there has been strong current influenced by rationalism, especially marked in French philosophy, that notes the potential danger of image-based communication for Western culture.

Martin Jay in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (2009) discusses the intellectual roots of what he calls “iconophobia” which he says include monotheistic religions, beginning with Judaism, that “have been deeply wary of the threat of pagan idolatry” (Jay, 2009, p.13). He cites St. Paul’s warning against *speculum obscurum*, the glass (or mirror) and Augustine’s admonition against *concupiscentia ocularam* – “Ocular desire, which diverts our minds from more spiritual concerns” (Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, chap. 35).

Jay suggests that such religious iconophobia also extends to an important current of twentieth century Western thought, especially firmly rooted in France, and criticises in particular its supposed complicity with political and social oppression through the promulgation of spectacle and surveillance. He says that the main goal of his study is “to demonstrate and explore what at first glance may seem a surprising proposition: a great deal of recent French thought in a wide variety of fields is in one way or another imbued with a profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era” (Jay, 2009, p.13). Jay also links this discussion to the debate between modernism and postmodernism.

Jay begins by analysing the theory of vision in Antiquity and notes Plato’s hostility to the mimetic arts – most notably painting – but also theatre and at least certain forms of poetry. He also identifies the two traditions of speculation, “the rational perception of clear and distinct forms with the unclouded eye of the mind”, which presupposes mind-body dualism, and direct observation “the collapse of perception into pure sensation” (Jay, 2009, p.30). He notes the neo-Platonic tradition in medieval thought that distinguishes between the higher lumen, based on speculative observation and the inferior lux of mere sense perception.

Specifically in relation to film theory, Jay analyses the writings of Barthes, Metz, and the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, commencing with Barthes’ affirmation that “I crave, I long for Abstinence from Images, for every Image is bad.” (quoted in Jay, 2009, p.435).

Of crucial significance for the argument presented in this thesis of a second wave of auteur cinema that emerged in the late 1960s, Jay notes that it was not “until the amalgamation of structuralist, psychoanalytic and Marxist theory in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the critics of ocularcentrism devoted their full attention to photography and film.” (Jay, 2009, p.436).



Jay notes Barthes' initial schooling in phenomenology, which then evolved into a semiotic approach in which he focused on the image's denotative capacity to imitate the world, complemented by the connotations that we associate to the image, which he says is the source of its mythological potential.

Barthes states that he resists the attractions of the Imaginary but finds it difficult to leave behind: "when I resist analogy, it is actually the imaginary I am resisting: which is to say: the coalescence of the sign, the similitude of signifier and signified, the homeomorphism of images, the Mirror, the captivating bait" (Barthes, 2010, p.44).

Barthes attempted to maintain a critical distance from this "captivating bait". In relation to the personal photographs he shared in "Roland Barthes" he admitted that his hope of distilling the essence of the medium "is a phenomenological method, an entirely subjective one."<sup>172</sup>

At the same time he holds that the photograph creates a dualism between object and subject: "The Photograph is the advent of myself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity" (Barthes, 1981, pp. 11-12). He thereby becomes a spectre of himself, a kind of shade or "death in person".

Mirroring his distinction between a readerly and a writerly text, Barthes distinguishes between the "stadium" and "punctum" of the image, wherein the latter is the analogon of something prior to codification, or a Japanese Haiku, which can produce a higher order of emotional intensity. He says that the image of his five-year-old mother and her seven-year-old brother in a conservatory returns him to the "radiant, irreducible core" of his mother. He thereby attributes a phenomenological, magical power to the image. "the realists, of whom I am one and of whom I was already one when I asserted that the Photograph was an image without code—even if, obviously, certain codes do inflect our reading of it—the realists do not take the photograph for a 'copy' of reality, but for an emanation of past reality: a magic, not an art" (Barthes, 1981, p.88).

Barthes ascribes a magical power to images that he calls photographic ecstasy: "Ecstasy, the death of the centered self, thus follows when photography's madness punctures routinized, culturally coded perception and forces the viewer to confront the undialectical, unrecuperable, unintelligible annihilation awaiting us all" (Jay, 2009, p.456).

However by 1975 Barthes expresses the desire to escape from the hypnotic spell of the cinema.

Jay suggests that Barthes' new view of film, stated in a special 1975 issue of the journal he helped edit, *Communications*, devoted to "Psychoanalysis and Cinema" reflected the influence of

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<sup>172</sup> Barthes, "On Photography" (1980 interview), in *The Grain of the Voice*, p. 357.

psychoanalytic theory, in particular Lacan and Freud, which also influenced other writers in that issue, creating a hostility to the medium which Jay remarks is “astonishing in its intensity” and which is “not only evident in the texts by non-film critics like Félix Guattari and Julia Kristeva, it could also be detected, with varying degrees of ferocity, in those by theorists who devoted their entire professional energies to writing about film, such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, Thierry Kuntzel, and Raymond Bellour” (Jay, 2009, p.458).

This second wave in the studies of film and photography, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, in Barthes and other theorists is central to this thesis.

Jay notes how France has played a key role in thinking about film and notes how many early theorists, such as Blaise Cendrars and the Surrealists, saw the avant-garde potential of cinema.

During what is called in this thesis as the first wave of the avant-garde and of auteur theory, there was a strong link to a phenomenological view of film.

For example, Merleau-Ponty stated that “the movies are peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and the world, and the expression of one in the other.... The philosopher and the movie maker share a certain way of being, a certain view of the world which belongs to a generation” (Merleau-Ponty, 1991, p. 58).

Bazin advanced these ideas and said that the cinema provided an escape from “the tyranny of Cartesian perspectivalism, which dominated Western painting, was lifted as the picture frame, separating subject and object, was replaced by the movie screen, helping to bring them once again together” (quoted in Jay, 2009, p.459).

Jay notes how Truffaut and his young colleagues at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, embraced the phenomenological potential of cinema: “*Cahiers* would be filled with essays extolling the ability of Hollywood auteurs heroically able to transcend the commercial pressures placed on them by the giant studios” (Jay, 2009, p.461).

But in the early 1970s this outlook, both within the *Cahiers du Cinéma* and in French intellectual life in general, changed profoundly, ushering in what is called in this thesis the second wave of auteur theory.

Jay identifies various drivers of this change.

One was Brecht’s theory of distancing, which “inspired Jean-Luc Godard’s self-consciously political experiments in cinematic alienation, which held out the hope of realizing the dream of transferring Brechtian theatrical techniques to the screen” (Jay, 2009, p.463).

This involved a shift from a phenomenological view of film to a model that was more erudite and mistrusting of the image:

“The semiological attempt to expose the workings of cinema’s reality effect, which Barthes cautiously defended in his interviews of 1963 and 1964, went hand in hand with the Brechtian project of exposing devices and providing audiences critical distance from the spectacle before them. Rather than visual experiences based on the analogical redemption of physical reality, films became texts to be decoded. They were thus better understood as conventional languages than ontological revelations.” (Jay, 2009, p.464).

This involved a basic shift from a model based on the power of the image, and non-linguistic communication, to a model based on language and codes.

Jay notes that a new generation of critics came to dominate the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, such as Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni and Jean-André Fieschi, and in particular Christian Metz, who worked with Barthes in the journal, *Communications*.

They intensified the resistance to the cinephilic phenomenological and auteur theories of film. Moving beyond the semiotic decoding of filmic texts to a critique of the institutional, material, and psychological underpinnings of the cinema, they left behind the narrow focus on what Gilbert Cohen-Séat had once called the “filmic fact” for the “cinematic fact.”

When the ideological implications of the “apparatus” as a whole became foregrounded, it resulted in the post-1968 paroxysm of politically charged hostility that culminated in the famous issue of *Communications* devoted to psychoanalysis and the cinema. (Jay, 2009, p.464).

Jay notes that Metz, like Barthes, nonetheless “retained certain phenomenological assumptions, which surfaced whenever he wrestled with the relationship between denotation and connotation, analogical and coded signification.” (Jay, 2009, p.465).

Instead of a multi-sensorial approach, as recently defended by theorists such as Luis Rocha Antunes, Metz suggested that the spectator projected a reality effect onto the screen. In the mid-1970s he denounced “the widespread attitude of “loving the cinema” as nothing more than “a mirror reduplication of the film’s own ideological inspiration, already based on the mirror identification of the spectator with the camera (or secondarily with the characters, if any)” (Jay, 2009, p.469).

These ideas are linked to Lacan’s view of the mirror stage.

Jay says that this change, for which the ideas of Brecht paved the way, came in the wake of the events of 1968 and “the rapid absorption in film studies of Althusserian and Lacanian ideas, often filtered through the radical modernism of the Tel Quel circle around Philippe Sollers” (Jay, 2009, p.469).

In this new context there was a critique of narrativity, a turn away from Hollywood, a focus on the economic underpinnings of cinema as an institution and wider questioning of ocularcentric ideas in Western thought.

In a 1970 *Cahiers du Cinéma* essay, Serge Daney questions:

what both serves and precedes the camera: a truly blind confidence in the visible, the hegemony, gradually acquired, of the eye over the other senses, the taste and need a society has to put itself in spectacle, etc.... The cinema is thus bound up with the Western metaphysical tradition of seeing and vision whose photological vocation it realizes.”. (quoted in Jay, 2009, p.470).

The ideas proposed by the new editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and the journal *Cinéthique*, stimulated similar ideas in journals such as *Screen* in England.

Jay states that the critics:

Developed a critique of the pernicious implications of the medium that went beyond anything before in the history of film criticism. Neither specific films nor certain techniques nor idealist film theories like auteurism or phenomenological realism were the problem, but rather the very cinematic “apparatus” (*appareil* or *dispositif*) itself. (Jay, 2009, p.471).

This development was radically different from the situation occurring in the United States, where Hollywood had just escaped from the straitjacket of the Hays Code and was embracing the techniques of the New Wave filmmakers and subsequently migrated towards narratives inspired by the ideas of Joseph Campbell.

Whereas there was a shift towards the influence of Jung in the United States, the primary inspiration in these European theoretical circles were the ideas of Freud and Lacan.

Baudry in his seminal essay, *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus*, states that the spectator is “chained, captured, or captivated”<sup>173</sup> thus recalling Plato’s allegory of the cave.

The result was a state of consciousness simulating a dream, an old comparison in the history of film theory, but now given a more sinister twist, as it implied regression:

The arrangement of the different elements—projector, darkened hall, screen—in addition from [sic] reproducing in a striking way the mise-en-scene of Plato’s cave (prototypical set for all transcendence and the topological model of idealism) reconstructs the situation necessary to the release of the mirror stage’ discovered by Lacan” (Baudry, 1975, p.45).

That reconstruction takes place because, like the young child, the moviegoer suffers from limited corporeal mobility and becomes dependent on hypertrophied visual experience, which produces a superreal sense of reality that cannot be tested.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus” p. 44.

<sup>174</sup> Jay adds the note: This contention makes sense if it is understood to mean that the viewer is inhibited from testing the diegetic reality depicted on the screen—whether or not what is seen is a “real” plane crash or only a model—and not the

As a result, the reality effect of the film is ultimately based on the misrecognition of a reconstituted mirror stage, in which two types of identification take place. A secondary level based on the image of characters on the screen, similar to the type of identification that Brecht attacked in the theater, is grounded in a more primary level, unique to the cinema. Here the viewer identifies with the camera eye as transcendental, omniscient subject. "Thus the spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself," Baudry wrote, "than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees; this is exactly the function taken over by the camera as a sort of relay."<sup>175</sup> (Jay, 2009, p.475).

As a consequence the theorists stated that the cinema must be exposed as an apparatus destined to obtain a precise ideological effect.

Jay says that "Baudry and some of his followers in the early 1970s, who held out a faint hope for an alternative, modernist cinema that would bare the device, wake the spectator from his or her regressive dream, and break the spell of illusion." (Jay, 2009, p.476).

Certain filmmakers had been identified as achieving this in the past, such as Robert Bresson.

Other critics, such as Narboni and Comolli distanced themselves from this more extreme position.

Baudry also modified his views in an essay in the issue of *Communications* on "Psychoanalysis and the Cinema," in which he reanalysed the parallels between Plato's *The Cave* and cinema, and instead of identifying it with Lacan's mirror stage, suggested regression to the earliest psychic state of oneness with the world, the overcoming of subject and object in a kind of primitive narcissism.

Here the cave's obvious resemblance to the womb was important, as was the linkage between vision and the oral stage which the analyst Bertram Lewin had posited.<sup>148</sup> Such a utopia of archaic satisfaction, Baudry speculated, was "anterior to the *stade du miroir*, to the formation of the self, and therefore founded on a permeability, a fusion of the interior with the exterior."<sup>149</sup> As a consequence, "the usual forms of identification, already supported by the apparatus would be reinforced by a more archaic mode of identification, which has to do with the lack of differentiation between the subject and his environment, a dream-scene model which we find in the baby/breast relationship."<sup>150</sup> The cinema could thus be called an artificial hallucinatory psychosis in which perceptions and representations were confusingly intertwined. No liberating use of the cinema, he now tacitly admitted, could dismantle such an apparatus. (Jay, 2009, p.478).

This effectively marked a return to a vision of cinema linked to the "poetic path" with links to phenomenology.

Christian Metz focused on the implicit voyeurism of the film spectator and associated to the latter's disavowal that he is watching an illusion (i.e. suspension of disbelief) which according to psychoanalytic theory, is intimately linked to fetishism.

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experience of viewing a film as opposed to "real life," which can always be tested by such devices as sticking one's hand in front of the projector.

<sup>175</sup> Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," p. 44.

“The cinema fetishist,” Metz writes, “is the person who is enchanted at what the machine is capable of, at the theater of shadows as such... The fetish is the cinema in its physical state” (quoted in Jay, 2009, p.483).

Again this leads to a call to action – to disrupt the cinephilic love affair with the medium in order to overcome the ideological effects of the apparatus.

By the mid 1980s, the more severe dimensions of apparatus theory had fallen into disrepute. Jay notes, for example, that Gilles Deleuze stated that the linguistic approach had been “catastrophic”.

Beyond the new theoretical outlook in France, there was nonetheless a wider change in film theory which began in the 1970s.

Film critic James Naremore identifies the following key influences on his own work as a film critic:

- 1) New criticism. “what they most valued was linguistic complexity, irony, ambiguity and verbal skill. Their ideal was lyric poetry and modernism.
- 2) The ideas of F. R. Leavis. “What Leavis valued above all – and he often wrote like a passionate and brilliant preacher – was the nineteenth century realist novel plus the novels of D. H. Lawrence.
- 3) Auteurism: “What it valued was classic Hollywood and the international art cinema”.
- 4) Screen theory. “This sort of writing was often impenetrable but was always against both Hollywood and social realism. What it favoured was the “counter cinema” of Godard and the political avant-garde.
- 5) The cultural studies movement. “Reacted against the leftist theory of Screen by advancing a somewhat populist notion of movies and TV (...) its canonical texts are slasher flicks, soap operas and kick-ass action movies.” (in Rosenbaum, 2003, pp 120-121)

This summary is interesting because of its clear distinction between auteur theory and Screen theory, and that cultural studies which focus on a popular concept of film and TV tend to pay more attention to audiences than the formal qualities of film.

## **Transcendental Style**

Paul Schrader suggests in his book *Transcendental Style in Film* that the prison is one of the most frequently used metaphors for expressing mankind’s separation from divinity.

This can also be applied to metaphor such as Plato’s the Allegory of the Cave or the asylum in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.

In this context Schrader suggests that one of the key objectives of art is to overcome or attenuate this spiritual estrangement/imprisonment.

“Art” may be viewed as an outward movement towards the “other” and Schrader states that the transcendental style in film attempts to move towards the “Wholly Other” a term also used by Deleuze to refer to divinity.

Seen from this perspective the prison metaphor refers to a separation from the “Wholly Other” and escape from the prison involves re-establishing contact with this “Wholly Other”.

Plato describes the Wholly Other as Wisdom and says that although mankind can never comprehend wisdom it is possible to love wisdom which is the role of the philosopher.

The words “religion”, “yoga” and “yoke” are also associated to the concept of “re-linking”, re-establishing contact with the creator.

In Joseph Campbell’s monomyth structure, the stages of “Atonement with the Father” and “Meeting with the Goddess” are linked to this idea.

The reason why an orphan character is particularly useful in narratives is linked to the same idea – that the “orphan” must re-establish contact with the creator. The same idea is also found in the story of *Pinocchio*.<sup>176</sup> Consider the following diagram:

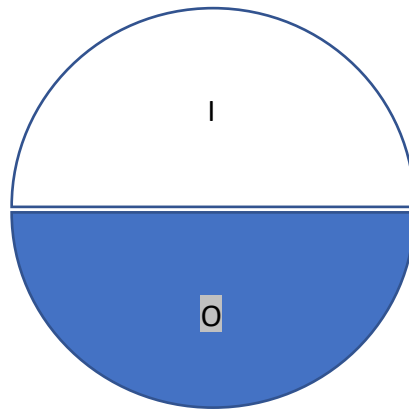


Figure 21 I/O diagram

The “I” and “O” can be interpreted in various forms. Either as letters, for example standing for “In” and “Out”, or as numbers, standing for one/unity, and zero/void. The contrast between the two halves can also be linked to two cognitive modes – rational thinking (I) and sensorial perception (O).

If we consider the concepts of the One and the Zero this can also be linked to multiple factors. An interesting aspect of the number “zero” is that it may be related to the concept of the “Wholly Other” a term also applied by Deleuze and Schrader.

Zero has significantly different characteristics from other numbers and wasn’t included, for example in the system of Roman numerals. Any number multiplied by zero becomes zero and any number divided by zero becomes infinity. Any number to which we add or subtract zero remains the same. Other numbers change within finite bounds when subjected to mathematical operations.

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<sup>176</sup> Incidentally, in this context, the name Gepetto may be linked to names such as Jupiter and “Deus-pater”, and Pinocchio may eventually be linked to names such as “Pan”, and “Punch”.

Whereas science is considerable with tangible measurements that can be tested empirically, there is a dimension of art which seems to go “beyond” this sphere and concerns questions that it is difficult to express in words (or in numbers).

As argued in this thesis, what has fascinated people about cinema since its invention is its powerful capacity to explore the non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, one description of which can be a “zero space” - that which the purely rational, intellectual mind has difficulty in accessing.

The “poetic”, “artistic” dimension of cinema is related to its capacity to explore what Joshua Ramey has called, in *The Hermetic Deleuze (2012)*, “the unthinkable, or indiscernible, that which *must* but *cannot* be thought.” (Ramey, 2012, p. 16).

The “zero” space is described by some, such as Paul Schrader, as a transcendental realm, and by others, such as Gilles Deleuze, as a plane of immanence.

Deleuze and Guattari write in *What is Philosophy?*:

The plane of immanence is prephilosophical and does not immediately take effect with concepts, it implies a sort of groping experimentation and its layout resorts to measures that are not very respectable, rational, or reasonable. These measures belong to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess. We head for the horizon, on the plane of immanence, and we return with bloodshot eyes, yet they are the eyes of the mind. Even Descartes had his dream. To think is always to follow the witch’s flight. (Deleuze/Guattari, 1994, p. 41)

This statement applies to all forms of philosophical thinking and the associated spiritual ordeal has links to hermetic traditions, as argued by Ramey, and also to “primitive” religious traditions, such as shamanism.

A work of art projects the spectator on a “witch’s flight” towards a zero space. A key moment in this projection is what Joseph Campbell called the “moment of aesthetic arrest”.

At the “moment of aesthetic arrest” time seems to stand still, instead of being linear, or circular, or measurable, it is eternal - past, present and future merge into one. We could say that it is zero and infinity at the same time. This is one of the core dimensions of the artistic experience.

The journey into a “zero” space can also be compared to the journey into a “dark forest”, either literally (as in many fairy tales) or metaphorically.

This journey involves passing limits/thresholds and also facing limit situations, which raise questions of identity. Two key drivers of this journey are the principles of love and death, which are linked to the principles of Eros and Thanatos, as described by Freud, and analysed later in this thesis.



In the world of sport we also find some parallels with these ideas as will be explained later in this thesis. For example in football, the teams pass from their half to the opponents half and play in “home” games and “away” games. The centre circle of the football pitch and the overall design of the pitch has parallels with the diagram presented above.

The use of a ball (wholeness) that must be placed inside a goal/hole is also reminiscent of the aforementioned dimensions of zero and infinity. The word goal, in the sense of sports and also attaining an objective, is believed to be linked to the Middle English *gol*, boundary, possibly from Old English \**gāl*, barrier.<sup>177</sup>

If we accept that one core dimension of the artistic experience is to foster a projection into a “zero” space, which belongs to the “order of dreams” then clearly projection into this space is not necessarily only achieved by non-linear narratives or one specific film form.

Ramey discusses the links between Deleuze’s philosophy and the ideas of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) in particular the “magical” power that Bruno attributes to images which are “not illustrations or examples but talismans and emblems, ensigns of reality.” He therefore contrasts between illustrative use of images - which was one of the main criticisms levelled by Plato against image makers - and their generative power:

Bruno’s poetics, essential to his understanding of magic (which works constantly with images to direct energy and to evoke the otherwise invisible) is thus a mannerist poetics, in the sense that the rules of decorum incumbent upon the superior fabulist (or magus) is not a matter of the imitation of generic conventions or repetition of codified natural resemblances, but of using images as projective or conjectural, as access to imperceptible forces. Bruno himself used images not only to remember (by constructing Lullian memory theatres) but also to attempt to access that which cannot be seen. (Ramey, 2012, p. 77).

These ideas establish a natural bridge with concepts associated to shamanism, as will be explained below.

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<sup>177</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=goal>

## Lacan and the originating unity

The question of the “one” and the “zero” raises the question of whether the originating power is an “originating unity” or an “originating zero”.

The need to re-establish contact with a Wholly Other or “originating unity” is found in Lacan’s idea of the “lack” and the progressive distancing from a sense of wholeness.

John Storey in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* explains this as follows:

With each new image we will attempt to return to a time before “lack”, to find ourselves in what is not ourselves; and each time we will fail. The subject...is the place of lack, an empty place that various attempts at identification try to fill (Lacan, 1993: 436) In other words, desire is the desire to find that which we lack, our selves whole again, as we before we encountered the Imaginary and Symbolic. All our acts of identification are always acts of misidentification, it is never ourselves that we recognise but only another potential image of our selves. “Desire is a metonymy” (Lacan, 1989: 193) it allows us to discover a part, but never ever the whole”. (Storey, 2006, p. 80)

Storey suggests that Lacan identifies the second stage of human development, which Freud calls the “fort-da” stage, in which the sense of “lack” and distancing from the original sense of wholeness is extended, is that of language development.

Lacan rereads this [Freud’s fort-da stage] as a representation of the child beginning to enter the Symbolic, and in particular its introduction into language: the moment when desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into language (113). Like the “fort-da” game, language is a “presence made of absence (71) Once we enter language, the completeness of the Real is gone forever. Language introduces an alienating spirit between being and meaning: before language we had only being (a self-complete nature), after language we are both object and subject: this is made manifest every time I think (subject) about myself (object). (Storey, 2006, p. 80)

This has parallels with the Cartesian cogito, as noted by Storey, and also with the approach presented in McGilchrist’s *The Master and his Emissary*.

In this regard Storey quotes Terry Eagleton who identifies the mother’s body with the “lost paradise”: “In Lacanian theory, it is an original lost object – the mother’s body – which drives forward the narrative of our lives, impelling us to pursue substitutes for this lost paradise in the endless metonymic movement of desire.” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 185)

Both religion and art share a common goal in this regard, of re-establishing a link with the creator.

Throughout most of human history, religion and art (often with the Church as the main patron of art) have been seen as means of attenuating suffering through love and re-establishing contact with the Wholly Other.

This involves an element of play and wonder. The meta-narrative of the *Fall* and expulsion from the Garden of Eden is linked to the idea of transition from innocence to experience, in the model proposed by William Blake. Art offers the opportunity to recover playfulness and innocence.

In the early years of children's education, there is a focus precisely on these elements of "play" often using art, music and games to foster a feeling of joy.

Over time during the educational process, elements of play and joyfulness are progressively eliminated from the education system as an increasing focus is placed on learning logic and reason.

### **Popular cinema vs. counter cinema - The "male gaze" and identity politics**

The counter-cinema approach of French high theory in the 1970s, as summarized above by Jay found parallels in a focus on new issues such as gender and other identity-related issues.

Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (Mulvey, 1975), published in *Screen*, criticised the "male gaze" in popular cinema and advocated a new film form.

Mulvey's core idea is that patriarchal society has unconsciously structured film form, based on the male gaze. She calls for "destruction of pleasure as a radical weapon" and states the need to destroy scopophilia – the pleasure of looking – and narcissism .

Like Baudry, Mulvey uses Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage" to suggest that our desire to watch films is associated to a childish stage of human development, which should be challenged.

From this perspective, popular cinema is based on narrative and spectacle, in which the spectator vicariously shares in the male gaze of the protagonist.

Mulvey praises the work of counter-cinema which challenges cinematic codes of visual pleasure:

Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. It is these cinematic codes and their relationship to formative external structures that must be broken down before mainstream film and the pleasure it provides can be challenged. (Mulvey, 1975, p. 836)

She concludes her essay:

This complex interaction of looks is specific to film. The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical film-makers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the "invisible guest," and highlights how film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret. (Mulvey, 1975, p. 844).

Mulvey's focus on the need to combat the male gaze reflects the emergence of new meta narratives in political thinking at the end of the 1960s, as the old left was replaced by the new left.

This has had a major impact on film theory and practise.

One of the core ideas of postmodernism (see below) is that all meta-narratives, such as Marxism, liberalism, Christianity etc, have lost their meaning.

This is one perspective. But in terms of political action in the late 1960s and early 1970s the key evolution was to discard certain meta narratives and replace them by new meta-narratives.

From the late 1960s onwards the meta-narrative of class struggle was progressively discarded by the Left in favour of a new meta-narrative, in which the oppressor and oppressed are no longer the patricians vs the plebeians as suggested by Marx, but is instead related to other issues such as patriarchy which Marx essentially overlooked.

The new meta narratives revolved around feminism, racism, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The New Left has structured itself around these core issues, which are often summed up as identity politics.

This has had a major impact on the way that film is interpreted and the priorities defined for state-supported film production.

Hollywood production has been criticised for stereotypes that perpetuate oppressive values such as patriarchy and racial and sexual prejudice. At the same time, and in part due to the pressure from such criticism, Hollywood production has also evolved to try to respond to this new social awareness, in terms of its presentation of women, different ethnic groups and sexual orientation.

In the European context, the question of identity politics has often gone hand in hand with questions related to the need for a new film form that challenges mainstream views, as identified by Mulvey. This is a key dimension of the second wave of auteur theory and has led to a new type of films that is very different from the films produced in Europe up until the 1960s in the context of the first wave of auteur theory.

The films of the Nouvelle Vague for example were criticised by some as reflecting the male gaze.

Mulvey's theory of the male gaze was subsequently criticised within the context of feminist film theory, and she herself says that her outlook has evolved and now focuses on an active role of the spectator.

Things have changed so much. In the old avant-garde days we would have felt that it was the responsibility of the director to both engage the spectators' interest and find a way of allowing the spectator to be an active spectator, So I think we would have felt that the onus was on the aesthetic, experimental strategy of the film to make a certain kind of spectatorship in the space of the cinema. But now of course when people watch films in so many different ways I feel it's turned upside down

and now the onus is on the spectator to be an active spectator and to engage imaginatively and poetically with any kind of film.<sup>178</sup>

This statement stands in line with the argument presented in this thesis – that a spectator can engage imaginatively and poetically with multiple types of films, including linear narrative films. In this regard, the theorists Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment defend the potential importance of popular culture:

It is not enough to dismiss popular culture as merely serving the complementary systems of capitalism and patriarchy, peddling “false consciousness” to the duped masses. It can also be seen as a site where meanings are contested and where dominant ideologies can be disturbed (quoted in Storey, 2006, p. 106).

### **Media literacy vs visual literacy**

Given the rising importance of sound and images in European society and the evident ascendancy (hegemony) of the United States over popular culture, it is necessary to address these issues in the educational context. A report from the OECD recently indirectly focused on this issue stating:

Students will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices).<sup>179</sup>

These issues are often addressed in classrooms from the perspective of media literacy rather than visual literacy. Such approaches tend to enhance students’ analytic capacities to identify the sources of media stories and be able to distinguish between genuine news and fake news.

Notwithstanding the importance of these approaches, which are firmly grounded in the rationalist tradition, it is also necessary to analyse other dimensions of visual communication including the power to engage with non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious.

David Buckingham notes this in his essay, *Digital Media Literacies: Rethinking Media Education in the Age of the Internet*.

There seems to be little place in some conceptions of media literacy for aspects of pleasure, sensuality and irrationality that are arguably central to most people’s experience of media, and of culture more broadly. For example, the emphasis on critical distance fits awkwardly with the experience of ‘immersion’ and spontaneous ‘flow’ that is frequently seen as fundamental to computer gaming (Carr et al., 2006); or indeed with the emotional intensity and intimacy of some forms of online communication. As such, the notion of literacy might be seen to sanction a narrow, rationalistic view of how a well-regulated individual should behave in relation to the media – a view that is arguably quite at odds with how the majority of users behave, or might wish to behave. (Buckingham, 2007, p. 5)

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<sup>178</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/vw-ps5mFQzA>

<sup>179</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20\(05.04.2018\).pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf)

In his review of Apkon's *The Age of the Image* (Apkon, 2014), Christopher Caldwell of the *Financial Times* emphasised the divide between the rationally-based academic world and the world view of students:

Our culture is growing more global. While it still relies on words, they are increasingly wrapped up with images, and it is the images people remember. Elizabeth Daley, dean of the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, believes writing today is like Latin on the eve of the Renaissance – the language of a scholarly establishment. YouTube clips and other visuals are the equivalent of vernacular Italian. They are the street language, and the medium for much new and creative thinking.<sup>180</sup>

Understanding the power of images to affect our view of the world is increasingly analysed from the perspective of cognitive film theory.

Given that films can be viewed as externalised sound and image sequences that have parallels with the workings of the human mind, including the process of dreaming, film offers a fascinating insight into human psychology and can be viewed from this perspective both in terms of the internal structure of the films and by analysing how audiences react to films, including analysis of brain activity when viewing films.

This link to the field of psychology once again opens up dichotomies, such as approaches inspired by the writings of Freud and those of Jung.

### **Myth as a new religion**

Freud's theories opened up the Pandora's box of the unconscious, but did so from the perspective of traumas, instincts and repressed urges. Using a dream dictionary, it argued that it was possible to provide a rational explanation of phenomena such as dreams or psychoses.

By contrast the approach defended by Jung draws closer to the poetic path and romantic tradition, under the terms explained herein, by exploring the collective unconscious and the world of archetypes.

The views of both Freud and Jung are seen by some commentators as a form of pseudo science, especially Jung, who explored questions of symbolism on the basis of mythology, mysticism and alchemy.

Thinkers inspired by his writings - such as Joseph Campbell or Gilbert Durand – are also dismissed by some as advocating pseudo science.

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<sup>180</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ft.com/content/79c6734a-9d3f-11e2-a8db-00144feabdc0>

These thinkers were linked to the Eranos intellectual discussion group and whose participants over the years have included other thinkers such as Heinrich Zimmer, Erich Neumann, Henry Corbin and Herbert Read.

The writings of Joseph Campbell in particular, and texts by other writers associated to this field are nonetheless particularly relevant for understanding contemporary Hollywood cinema, due to the application of their ideas to screenwriting. Whether or not one accepts that Campbell's theories have scientific value, they have had a clear social impact.

The capacity for films to create modern myths is analysed in Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America* focusing on the classical studio system.

In the contemporary era Hollywood has become even more explicitly "mythic", as a result of superhero and fantasy films.

*Star Wars* in particular is viewed by some as almost a "new religion", and superhero films have been compared to the interest in heroes and gods throughout human history.

Popular comedy series such as *The Big Bang Theory* have explored this almost "religious dimension" of modern popular culture.

The success of franchises such as *Harry Potter* are also linked to these mythological roots and the writings of theorists such as Campbell and Durand can shed light on the archetypes used therein.

The cross-referencing between different films, series and franchises that exists in popular culture films and series reinforces their cultural hegemony.

Once again in this regard, the fact that European cinema has largely retreated into an "auteur cinema" mode with little impact on popular culture means that the imaginaries of European citizens are increasingly framed by Hollywood models.

### **Popular cinema vs. slow cinema**

Theorists at the end of the 1960s identified the need for a new film form, distinct from Hollywood mainstream, and also distinct from the film form of classic European art cinema.

Paul Schrader's 1971 text *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, written when he was 24, and which was republished in 2018 with a new introduction, focuses on a specific film form that he calls the transcendental style which he says has grown considerably since the early 1970s as part of the slow cinema movement. In a 2017 interview he admitted that slow cinema seems to be suffering a slow death.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://nowtoronto.com/movies/features/paul-schrader-slow-cinema-is-dying-a-slow-death/>

Schrader notes in his new introduction that European art house cinema of the 1950s and 1960s morphed into slow cinema and suggests that two of the key persons responsible for this change were theorist Gilles Deleuze and filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky.

Schrader defends the body/soul dichotomy which he describes as a linkage made :

By the wellspring of Western thought: both Plato and the scriptures. Shortly before his death Socrates described his body as the “soul’s prison” To St. Paul the body of sin is prison, he is a man in “captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death (King James Bible, Rom. 7:2.3-2,4). (Schrader, 2018, p. 114)

Schrader suggests that this body/soul dichotomy underpins the austere film form used by Bresson, Ozu and Dreyer and by later filmmakers, which provides a spiritual dimension to their films.

He sees transcendental style as part of the wider movement away from narrative, and says that Gilles Deleuze played a key role in this development.

The directors in question use distancing devices, in the tradition of Brecht. But the objective is not to stimulate the faculties of reason, but instead the meditative power of the image.

He views this as a phenomenological approach and says that it concurs with the views of Deleuze.

Grossly simplifying, he says that Deleuze identifies narrative cinema as being based primarily on movement and action – movement-image – which is the dominant film form and keeps our attention engaged while watching the film but doesn’t allow us to appreciate the moment in time. The opposite model enables time to unroll on screen – time-image – which can thus foster a phenomenological experience.

As such although slow cinema could be considered to be “erudite cinema” it is not linked to the rationalist tradition or the power of reason, but is instead linked to the “poetic path” of direct experience, but with an austere approach.

The austerity is necessary in order to prepare the spectator for the decisive action or Decisive Moment (which is reminiscent of Henri Cartier Bresson’s term) which may be very sudden and fast-paced in contrast to the rest of the film.

Schrader says that “Deleuze feels that “mature cinema” (post-WWII) was no longer primarily concerned with telling stories to our conscious selves but now also seeks to communicate with the unconscious and the ways in which the unconscious processes memories, fantasies and dreams” (Schrader, 2018, p. 5).

This is the reason why the long take is important, because it allows time to unfold on the screen and be sensed by the audience.



Schrader says that the movement-image is about suspense and the time-image about introspection.

In relation to Tarkovsky he says that for him and Bresson “the keys to the artist’s kingdom lie in the application of style over content. It’s the form of things that make you free.” (Schrader, 2018, p. 7) (It should be noted that Tarkovsky says the opposite in his book *Sculpting in Time*).

Schrader says that a core aspect of slow cinema is dead time, which obliges greater viewer involvement than watching an action scene.

He views Tarkovsky as the tipping point for the new paradigm of art cinema.

Before [Tarkovsky] was art house cinema. After was film festival and art gallery cinema. Before was slow cinema predicated on paying viewers. After was slow cinema underwritten by arts organizations. Tarkovsky was not a pure slow cinema stylist—he was more interested in poetry than stasis—but he made slow cinema fashionable. He made Béla Tarr possible (Schrader, 2018, pp.9-10).

This statement massively over simplifies the situation for various reasons.

Firstly because art cinema in the 1950s and 1960s was often fast-paced, such as Nouvelle Vague films with rapid editing styles and Tarkovsky’s own films did not focus on dead time, quite the opposite.

Schrader identifies slow cinema as having minimal narrative, little action of camera movement and long running times. He cites Harry Tuttle who referred to the defining characteristics of plotlessness, wordlessness, slowness and alienation<sup>182</sup>.

Other adjectives used include “stasis, contemplative, austere, abstract, landscape, meditative, deliterate, organic, expanded, and, yes, transcendental” (Schrader, 2018, p.10).

Schrader argues that slow cinema is the opposite of the Hollywood action movie style and focuses on dissonance by:

- Holding the shot longer than the action itself merits
- Use of wide angles that doesn’t direct the viewers gaze and allows it to wander
- Static frame - locked off camera and long take
- Minimal number of different angles to cover the scene
- Offset edits, not cutting on action but only after the action has finished
- Images preferred over dialogue
- Highly selected composed music – favouring diegetic sound
- Heightened sound effects that emphasize the quotidian
- Visual flatness – eschewing drama
- Repeated compositions
- Reiterated information (doubling)
- Non-acting, barely moving

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<sup>182</sup> Harry Tuttle, “(Technical) Minimum Profile,” Unspoken Cinema (blog), January 18, 2007, Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://unspokencinema.blogspot.co.uk/2007/01/minimum-profile.html>.

- Black and white and restricted screen ratio – possible options used in slow cinema  
Author's summary from Schrader (2018)

Essentially this involves a counter cinema approach as defended by film theorists at the end of the 1960s.

Slow cinema works against the grain of cinema itself. It turns its back on what movies do best. It replaces action with stillness, empathy with distance. The techniques of slow cinema are all, to varying degrees, distancing devices. They push the viewer away from the "experience," that is, from immediate emotional involvement. This is different from modernistic distancing devices in the other arts to the same degree cinema is different from earlier art forms. Expectations are turned in on themselves. There is no music to guide emotions, no close-ups to indicate importance, no acting to affect feelings, no fast motion to distract the eye. Slow cinema is passive aggression par excellence. The slow cinema director says, "I know what you want; I know what you expect; but I'm going to do the opposite." Why? "Because I'm after something else and will use your expectations to get it." Roles are reversed. The film-maker, instead of creating a film world in which the viewer needs only to surrender, creates a world which the spectator must contemplate—or reject out of hand (Schrader, 2018, p.17).

As such slow cinema becomes a kind of test to the viewer, and establishes a clear distinction between erudite cinema and popular cinema. It is phenomenological, as mainstream cinema can also be, but is profoundly austere and achieves the immersion in the phenomenological world with a highly controlled level of emotion which to some may appear to be emotionless. It does not create either suspense or empathy.

This is linked to the eye that the spectator must be liberated from the spectacle. The slow long take enables what Bazin scholars call the democracy of the eye. Schrader also calls this the "cinema of boredom" but says that it comes close to the contemplative experience of going to church and in the best slow films includes an element of suspense, radically different from Hollywood suspense. In the finest slow films he says that

Boring morphs into mesmerizing. These are the truly important films. Why do we take it? The boredom. The distance. First, because effective slow cinema film-makers are masters of anticipation. Employing striking visuals and auditory tricks and bits of activity, the slow film director keeps his viewer on the hook, thinking there is a reward, a "payoff" just around the corner. It's adroit blackmail. If I leave, I'll miss what I've been waiting for. Even the seasoned viewer of slow cinema anticipates something. Some moment. Some unexpectation. The wait will be worth it. Second, because something is happening. Cinema lets us look around. Good slow cinema gives us something to see when we do. The third reason has to do with the act of theatergoing. Going to a film is like going to a church. A commitment is made. "I've come here of my own will and I accept the rules (Schrader, 2018, p.20).

Schrader describes the slow filmmaker as a "spirit guide" which recalls the figure of the shaman, but the performance of the shaman is extremely quiet. He says that Tarkovsky was more interested in passing through the portal to the Wholly Other world than to escorting the viewer.

Finally Schrader identifies three tangents of slow cinema:

- Surveillance camera based on observing quotidian reality, also known as cinema du reel, and including the walking cinema of Gus Van Sant.
- Art gallery, essentially experimental cinema wherein he cites Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* as an example
- The Mandala – meditative cinema, such as Abbas Kiarostami's cinema.

Author's summary from Schrader (2018)

Schrader explores the cinema of Ozu, as an expression of Oriental philosophy that doesn't separate form from content: "The ritual is not separate from the form, which is not separate from the content. In Ozu's films, as in all traditional Oriental art, the form itself is the ritual which creates the eternal present (ekaksana), gives weight to the emptiness (mu), and makes it possible to evoke the fury, the four basic untranslatable moods of Zen". (Schrader, 2018, p. 63). He defends a spiritual perspective of form: "a form can express the Transcendent, an experience cannot. A form can express the common ground in which all things share. An experience can only express one man's reaction to that common ground. Both form and experience can lead to experience, however." (Schrader, 2018, pp. 77-79). He adds: "Transcendental style is a form, not an experience. The purpose of transcendental style is not to get the viewer to share Hirayama's tears, but to purge those tears and integrate them into a larger form. This form, like the mass, can encompass many emotions, but it is expressive of something greater than those emotions." (Schrader, 2018, p. 77).

Schrader emphasises the importance of Bresson's ascetic style and says that: "Spiritual sentiments have often led to formalism. The liturgy, mass, hymns, hagiolatry, prayers and incantations are all formalistic methods designed to express the Transcendent" (Schrader, 2018, p.87). He continues: "In transcendental style the form must be the operative element, and for a very simple reason: form is the universal element whereas the subject matter is necessarily parochial, having been determined by the particular culture from which it spring." (Schrader, 2018, p.87). He quotes Bresson who said "I am more occupied with the special language of the cinema than with the subject of my films." (quoted in Schrader, 2018, p.88).

There is a clear neo-Platonic bent to this argument, which is linked to the power of contemplation.

Schrader states that slow film makers are interested in a phenomenological approach to film and at the same time upholds mind-body dualism which would appear to be the opposite approach. His emphasis on film form is linked to the question of film narration which will be described below.

In essence, filmmakers may be seeking similar objectives but the film form / narration they choose may lead to profoundly different results. In his new introduction to his *Transcendental Style in*

*Film*, Schrader identifies the trend for slow cinema filmmakers to move away from theatrical audiences, which he describes as follows:

In the last fifteen years slow cinema has exploded. Slow movies are now being made faster than we can see them. There are slow cinema websites, slow cinema conferences, slow cinema blogs, slow cinema books, slow cinema film festivals, and even a slow cinema VOD website. Forty to fifty slow films were premiered last year, primarily in festivals. They are rarely shown in theaters. Their reach extends to film schools, cinematheques, and art museums. They come from every nation in the world. Slow cinema has a fundamentally different attitude toward time. (Schrader, 2018, p. 10).

He provides the following chart in which he identifies the Tarkovsky Ring, with directors who work inside the ring closer to theatrical audiences, and outside the ring, closer to film schools, cinematheques, and art museums:

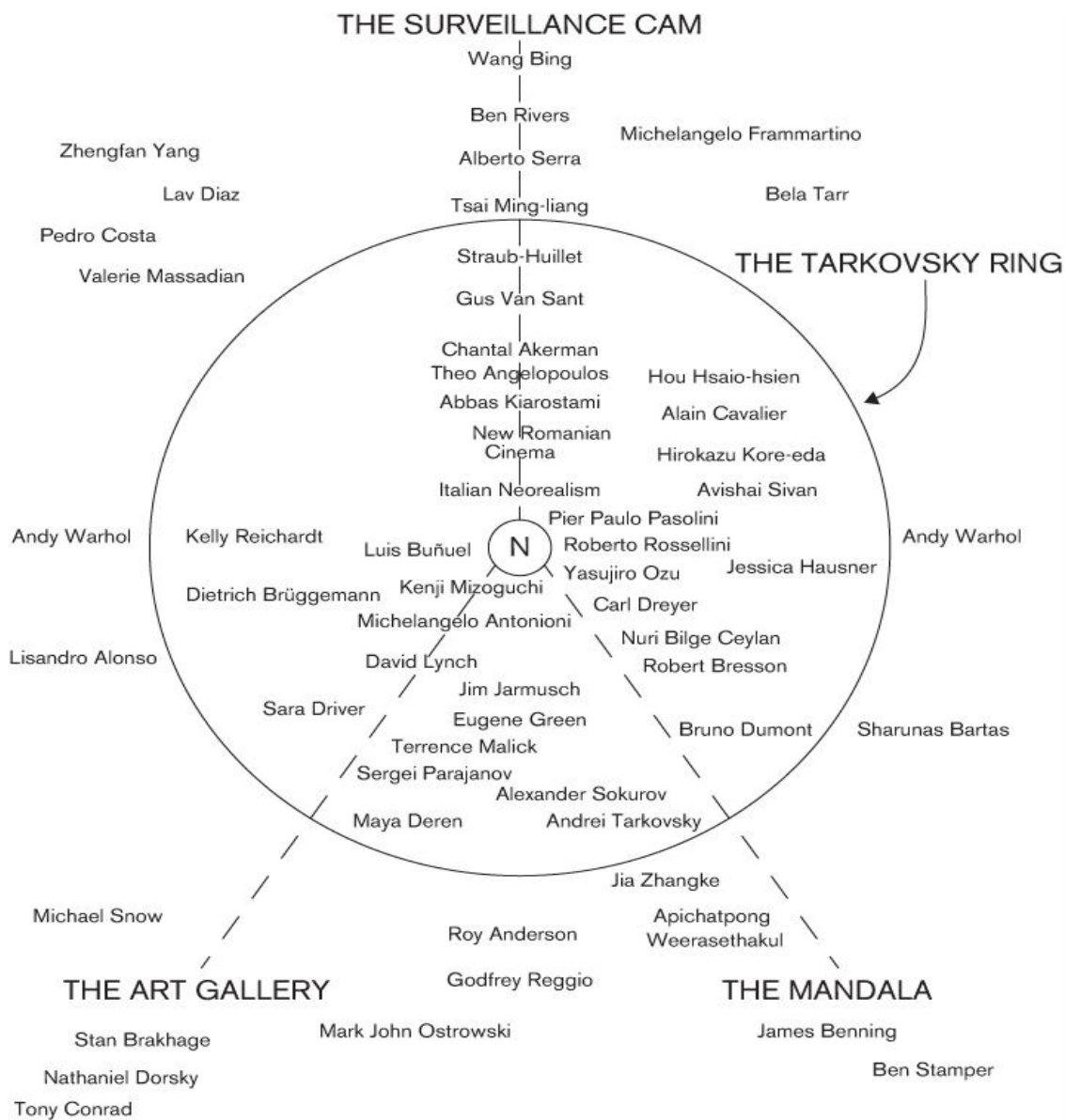


Figure 22 Paul Schrader – The Tarkovsky Ring

Source: Schrader, 2018, p. 32

As demonstrated in this chapter, directors such as Buñuel, Antonioni, Pasolini etc had very significant audience admissions levels at a trans-national level. Terrence Malick has also recorded significant admissions for his films.

If we look at some of the other names, we see Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet whose most successful film in the EU was *Sicilia! (1999)* with 49,000 admissions. Portuguese director Pedro Costa, who just won the Golden Leopard at Locarno is widely acclaimed internationally, and is a fan of the work of Straub-Huillet and has made a film about them, and has a similar profile in terms of admissions. His biggest “hit” to date was *Bones (1997)* with 41,000 admissions. As Schrader comments in his general remark, it would be inappropriate to focus on theatrical admissions since Pedro Costa has major exposure in film festivals and museums. He is operating at a different level.

Another example is Bela Tarr who has retired from filmmaking but has directed some of the most critically-acclaimed films in recent years such as the 2011 film *The Turin Horse*. Like Costa and Straub-Huillet his audience admissions in theatres have been very limited with 65,000 admissions for *The Turin Horse* and less than half this amount for his other 5 films.

Other directors with similar levels of EU admissions included on Schrader’s chart beyond the “Tarkovsky Ring” include Argentina’s Lisandro Alonso, with an average of 15,000 admissions per film in the EU for his 5 films, and Spain’s Alberto Serra with an average of just under 20,000 admissions per film in the EU for his 4 films.

It is difficult to find reliable data on the admissions for Tarkovsky’s films.

In terms of admissions in France, *Stalker* had 158,727 admissions, *Sacrifice* had 237,589 admissions (both data from <http://www.jpbox-office.com>). The EAO’s Lumière database with records from 1996 records a total of around 130,000 admissions for all his films since 1996.

The actual worldwide figures are higher but difficult to ascertain with precision. Nonetheless Tarkovksy is a clear example, along with filmmakers such as Costa, Bela Tarr, etc. of the need for alternative circuits to the mainstream theatrical circuit to ensure that their voices are heard.

## **Commodification of world cinema, art cinema and slow cinema**

Art cinema is often contrasted with commercial cinema because whereas the latter is subjected to commodification the former is somehow “purer” and not a commodity.

This can however be questioned. Even when circulating in film festivals or shown in art galleries there is still an economic dimension to this activity.

Categories such as world cinema (and world music etc) are also related to commercialisation and branding. They were particularly important in the context of arthouse cinemas and then the home video markets.

When it comes to film festivals there is a clear need to position festivals as being distinct from commercial circuits – otherwise they would be essentially providing the same offer. As a result, art cinema, auteur cinema etc also involves an element of branding and commodification.

This is particularly relevant given the collapse of the home video market, the decline of the arthouse cinema circuit and the rise of streaming services. Auteur films find it more difficult to find space on streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon.

To create a niche market for auteur films several streaming services have been launched, such as Mubi, Fandor.

Certain niche streaming services have found it difficult to survive – one example being FilmStruck—a combination of the Criterion Collection and the Turner Classic Movies archive— which ceased trading in November 2018.

Although it is possible to claim that auteur films are less impacted by commodification than Hollywood films, there is clearly a case of branding and the producers of these films are aimed at circuits, including festivals that tailor to this type of work.

## **Popular culture vs erudite culture**

This brings us to the wider question of popular culture vs erudite culture, which goes beyond the question of popular cinema vs erudite cinema.

The shift in film theory that occurred at the end of the 1960s, as outlined above, was heavily critical of popular cinema as a key constituent element of the society of the spectacle. To liberate spectators a new film form was required.

In the mean time there has been considerable evolution of film theory at multiple levels, including postmodernism (see below). But the basic shift away from an interest in popular culture and towards

erudite culture dates back to the late 1960s and is often underpinned by a suspicion of the power of the image, as explained above in relation to the analysis provided by Martin Jay.

The differences between high and low culture are increasingly blurred, as argued by postmodernism (see below), but in the case of European cinema the debate between popular and erudite cinema continues to be keenly debated and focuses on some of the classic distinctions between high and low culture, such as form vs function.

Pierre Bourdieu analysed this question in detail. Storey summarises his views as follows:

At the pinnacle of the hierarchy of taste is the “pure” aesthetic gaze – a historical invention –with its emphasis on form over function. The “popular” aesthetic reverse this emphasis, subordinating form to function. Accordingly, popular culture is about performance, high culture is about contemplation; high culture is about representation, popular culture is about what is represented.” He quotes Bourdieu “Intellectuals could be said to believe in the representation – literature, theatre, painting – more than in the things represented, whereas the people chiefly expect representations and the conventions which govern them to them to believe “naively” in the things represented. (Storey, 2006, p.159)

From this perspective, art tends to be displaced to the museum. In this process it loses all its function and becomes pure form.

The museum becomes the home of the pure gaze, which is contrasted to the naïve gaze of commercial distribution.

The migration of European cinema away from theatres and towards film festivals and museums can be seen as consolidating their superior form and the “pure gaze”.

Bourdieu views the struggle between erudite and popular culture as a struggle for social legitimation, echoing Gramsci’s idea of the struggle for cultural hegemony.

Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent...The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated. This means that the games of artists and aesthetes and their struggles for the monopoly of artistic legitimacy are less innocent than they seem. At stake in every struggle over art there is also the imposition of an art of living, that is the transmutation of an arbitrary way of living into the legitimate way of life which casts every other way of living into arbitrariness. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 56)

This echoes the idea of Plato’s “noble lie” in *The Republic*.

The background to this situation is the institutionalisation of the cultural field, including art in general and cinema, which is reinforced by the fact that the principal source of financing for European cinema is the state, either directly or indirectly.

In this context, Storey cites Paul Willis who states that aesthetic appreciation of art has undergone internal hyperinstitutionalisation – “the dissociation of art from life, a stress on form over function – in a

further attempt to distance itself and those who “appreciate” it from the “uncultured mass” (Storey, 2006, p.167).

### **Modernism vs postmodernism**

In addition to the influence of Freud and Lacan, as explained above, another significant body of ideas are those related to postmodernism.

The shift in film theory at the end of the 1960s coincided with the evolution from modernism to postmodernism.

Storey suggests that postmodernism emerged at this time “in revolt against the canonization of modernism’s avant-garde revolution: it attacks modernism’s official status, its canonization in the museum and the academy, as the high culture of the modern capitalist world” (Storey, 2006, p.130).

This development coincided with the emergence of “contemporary art” vs “modern art” whose objectives included breaking free from the confines of the museum and establishing contact with society at large.

Whereas in the case of literature, it makes sense to suggest that figures such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, or Bertolt Brecht had been adopted as icons of erudite culture, it is less clear that the modernist sensibility in cinema had completely lost touch with popular culture.

Indeed it was precisely at the end of the 1960s that there began to be a clear divergence between “art cinema” and “popular cinema”.

Storey identifies as key facets of postmodernism:

- Refusal of the “great divide” between high and low culture, and merging the two.
- Embracing of popular culture (unlike modernism)
- Rejection of the all meta-narratives such as Marxism, liberalism or Christianity.
- Inter-textuality, pastiche and reference to other works
- Media has become “hyper-real” (Baudrillard) the connection with any real world no longer exists, everything is relative.

(Author’s summary from Storey, 2006, ch. 8)

Frequently-cited examples of postmodern culture include music such as “rap”, TV series such as *Twin Peaks (1990)* and *Sex and the City (1998)* and films such as *Blade Runner (1982)* and *Pulp Fiction (1994)*.

In the context of European cinema, the impact of postmodernism includes films which consciously recognize the artifice of the film-making process, in Brechtian style and reflecting application of the apparatus theory cited above.



Certain post-modernist thinkers, such as Jean Baudrillard, were more open to popular film than many of their counterparts. Nasrullah Mambrol in *Jean Baudrillard and Film Theory*<sup>183</sup> notes:

Baudrillard's affection for New Hollywood is unusual in contemporary philosophy and cultural criticism. Interview material stresses the intuitive basis for his comments on Hollywood. "My relationship to the cinema is that of an untutored cinema-goer... and I have always wanted to keep it that way, never wanting to get into the analytic of it (Baudrillard quoted in Gane 1993, p. 67)."

Mambrol cites Kellner who argues that Baudrillard's analyses offer entirely different and contrary constructions of Hollywood as a variant of the pre-modern and the gateway to the postmodern. This is highly significant because it breaks the direct association between Hollywood and late capitalism that underpins apparatus theory and texts such as Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze:

Kellner thus positions Baudrillard's early work within a French tradition that valorizes features of "primitive cultures" Baudrillard's defense of symbolic exchange over production and instrumental rationality ... stands in the tradition of Rousseau's defence of the natural savage' over modern man [and] Durkheim's posing organic solidarities of premodern societies against the abstract individualism and anomie of modern ones (ibid.: 12)<sup>184</sup>.

The classic Hollywood era of the studio system is associated with pre-modern forms of ceremony and myth whereas the New Hollywood is considered to usher in the postmodern era of simulation through its role in the creation of the hyperreal.

In a 1982 interview Baudrillard stated: "The Cinema is absolutely irreplaceable, it is our own special ceremonial... The ceremonial of the cinema ... that quality of image, of light, that quality of myth, that hasn't gone. (Gane, 1993, p. 31).

Merrin says that Baudrillard recalled viewing *Star Wars* "in cinemas with 4,000 seats and everybody eating popcorn as a moment in which he "caught a very strong whiff of primitive cinema, almost a communal affair but strong, intense (Gane 1993, p. 67, emphasis added).

Baudrillard says that the cinema exercises a power of seduction over the general public, which is a cold form of seduction unlike the "warm seduction" of ancient myths, but it is not a mere delusion of dreams of mystified masses.

Baudrillard also suggests that modern technology, in particular computer imagery have made cinema hyper-realist and severed any tie to the real world thus making cinema the archetypal postmodern medium. He also contends that the mythic power of cinema has transformed our sense of reality itself, that life has been transformed into the cinematic image, as reflected in his own travelogues of America.

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<sup>183</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://literariness.org/2018/08/02/jean-baudrillard-and-film-theory/>

<sup>184</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://literariness.org/2018/08/02/jean-baudrillard-and-film-theory/>

Finally, Baudrillard considers that contemporary cinema has lost the pre-modern elements of classic Hollywood and therefore lost its magic:

As for the cinema, I am still very much in love with it, but it has reached a despairing state... Here, too, huge machines are set up which possess great technical refinement. This is a racket on images, on the imaginary of people. Cinema has become a spectacular demonstration of what one can do with the cinema... Everything is possible, it's obvious... there is no magic in it except, well, a mechanical magic... there are only superb demonstrations; it's performance, that is all. (Gane 1993. p. 23).

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the two dominant traditions, which can be categorised as the tension between paleface vs redskin which have structured film theory and film curatorial strategies in Europe.

During the 1960s cinema attendances fell dramatically in continental Europe as a result of the rollout of television and state funding for the film sector rose dramatically.

At the same time the first wave of auteur theory was superseded by a second wave which was highly suspicious of traditional linear narratives, standard genres which evoke emotions and the cinema of spectacle in general.

As a result there began to be a new emphasis on a more austere form of filmmaking which made extensive use of distancing mechanisms and veered away from classic narratives and genres.

This new approach to cinema had strong theoretical roots, and was aligned with the evolution from the Old Left to the New Left.

There is no monolithic theoretical perspective and theorists such as Laura Mulvey have evolved their position on these matters, with a more open perspective on different types of cinema, including traditional narrative cinema. In the context of postmodern theory there has also been greater openness to Hollywood cinema as a form of the hyperreal.

The fundamental divide between the Hollywood and European systems is associated to the funding mechanisms. Hollywood films have to generate audiences and profits. European films have cultural remits. For this reason Hollywood has increasingly invested in films based on special effects and fantasy and superhero themes – because they can earn more money that way. In the European thinking this would be an unthinkable development because it would be seen as a betrayal of the cultural remit.

This has led to an increasing divergence between the two models, accompanied by increasing institutionalisation of the two distinct approaches, as will be analysed in Part Three.

### PART THREE – THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AUTEUR AND GENRE CINEMA AT AN INSTITUTIONAL, THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL LEVEL

Having established the theoretical framework for understanding the first and second wave of auteur theory and their respective intellectual foundations, Part Three explores the manifestation of the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema at an institutional, theoretical and historical level, which is necessary to understand in comprehensive detail before being able to move beyond this dichotomy.

## CHAPTER EIGHT – INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AUTEUR CINEMA AND GENRE CINEMA

### Summary

The great divide between auteur cinema and genre cinema is institutionalised within the European film industry at several levels, including the film theory taught at film schools, the selection criteria used by funding agencies, the categories used in film festivals and the theoretical outlook of film critics.

Pam Cook highlights the distinct institutional framework for auteur cinema in the BFI's "The Cinema Book":

European art cinema, according to Bordwell, also has its own institutional structures for the consumption of films, notably a distribution and exhibition circuit which is separate from that of dominant cinema and is supported by certain kinds of film criticism. Audiences usually see the films in special places – art house cinemas and film societies, in particular. This, among other things, ensures that such films are commonly approached with different expectations and read differently from more mainstream films. In general, audiences anticipate being challenged or "made to think" by art cinema (Cook, 1985, p. 216)

The implicit suggestion in this statement is that mainstream cinema is less artistic and does not require audiences to think, whereas art cinema exists in a separate universe. This is very different from the situation up until the 1960s in continental Europe where genre films and auteur films were all shown in the same theatrical circuit. In the United States there was a separate arthouse circuit, but this was much less the case in continental Europe.

Whereas much of European New Wave art cinema was financed within the market, inclusively by the American Majors in the case of directors such as Fellini and Truffaut, European cultural cinema lives in a separate world and has intensified the dichotomy between American and European cinema.

Thomas Elsaesser summarises this dichotomy along five major axes of differentiation: cultural, institutional, economic, spatial, and political, which may be summarised in the following table:

Table 4 Difference between European cinema and Hollywood – Thomas Elsaesser

European Cinema	Hollywood
Cultural	
Art	Entertainment
Author	Star
Unique Work of Art	Standardized Commodity
Institutional	
Art-house cinema, festival, public TV	Multiplex cinema, DVD, pay TV
Mediated by film critics	Mediated by advertising and marketing
Independently produced, one-off	Serially produced within the studio system
European cinemas prove their value by critical acclaim and cultural capital,	Hollywood films have to prove themselves at the box office, through television rights, video rentals and DVD sales
Economic	
Financed through the government and the taxpayers	Made with risk capital or financed by banks and the studios
European cinema is based on film-school trained personnel and artisanal modes of production	Hollywood has craft guilds and an industrial mode of production
Spatial	
Films are place-based and context-dependent so that the films carry clear linguistic boundaries and geographic markers, their reference points are specific in location and time	Hollywood is less a particular place, and (as so often asserted) “more a state of mind”; rather than restricting access, its lingua franca is English, and it wants to be a site available to all, its films accessible from everywhere

Political	
European cinema is still beholden to the nation state	Hollywood is emphatically part of the American Empire
Europe responds to this with protectionist measures	Hollywood plays out its hegemonic position in the world of information, entertainment and communication

Source: Elsaesser, 2005, p. 491

### **Communication from the Commission on State aid for films: normal films vs. difficult films**

The development of major institutional structures to support film in Europe include the legal frameworks, film institutes, film festivals, film promotion agencies, film education and research.

The overall framework that enables state support for cinema is the EU's legal obligation under the 2005 UNESCO Convention to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, a principle also enshrined in the EU Treaties (art. 167 TFEU).

If state support was solely intended to create industrial players who could compete with Hollywood this would be viewed as unfair trade. There therefore has to be a cultural dimension. In the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Art. 8, audiovisual media services are defined "as vectors of identity, values and meaning".

Defence of the cultural exception has been defined as the "French model". It underpins the French system of state subsidies for the cultural sector, including cinema, and this basic model serves as the model for European film subsidy support systems.

In the context of the Communication from the Commission on State aid for films and other audiovisual works (European Commission, 2013) two terms are applied - normal works and "difficult audiovisual works". These two definitions are used in order to determine the maximum percentage of public funding that can be provided for such films. "Difficult works" are defined as follows:

Such as short films, films by first-time and second-time directors, documentaries, or low budget or otherwise commercially difficult works. Under the subsidiarity principle, it is up to each Member State to establish a definition of difficult film according to national parameters.

Films whose sole original version is in an official language of a Member State with a limited territory, population or language area may be regarded as difficult audiovisual works in this context.

In practise, the majority of European films fall within the category of “difficult films” because the average budget for EU films is €1.5 million and over half of EU films have audiences below 100,000 admissions (source for both figures: European Audiovisual Observatory, 2018).

The existence of two categories of normal and difficult film in its own right is not remarkable, precisely because it is normal to have a higher maximum funding threshold for categories such as shorts, first-time films, films in languages with limited number of speakers.

But this principle when combined with the theoretical framework outlined in Part Two, has in practise tended to reinforce the focus of a significant proportion of European cinema on the festival circuit rather than the theatrical circuit.

This may not be the intended result of the Communication, but in practise it has had this result. This is evident if we read the descriptions provided of difficult films.

The European Audiovisual Observatory’s 2019 report “Mapping of film and audiovisual funding criteria in the EU” (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019) provides information on the description of difficult films, which have a higher maximum funding threshold (above 80%) which include:

- “culturally sophisticated films” (Filmstiftung NRW, Germany),
- works of “remarkable artistic or cultural value” (VAF/Film Fund, Belgium)
- independent, audacious cinema beyond the demands of the market (Avance sur recettes scheme, CNC, France
- of special artistic and/or cultural value for national or European film art that contributes to cultural diversity and pluralism of artistic expression, as well as a work of high quality or creative risk, which for any reason is not commercially viable or which makes it difficult to access financing; and the work of demanding topics important for a cultural goal that is not commercially viable (Croatia)

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019

The institutionalisation of the divide between art cinema and popular cinema is also evident in the selection criteria of the leading film festivals, in particular in the parallel sections.

For example at Cannes, Thierry Fremaux, General Delegate of the festival, defines the criteria for the main sections as follows<sup>185</sup>:

- Main Competition, to select the Palme d’Or - arthouse cinema with a wide audience appeal
- Un Certain Regard - works that have an original aim and aesthetic, and are guaranteed to make a discreet but strong impact on screens around the world.
- Out of Competition - films that have a big impact on the cinematic calendar

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<sup>185</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/qui-sommes-nous/festival-de-cannes-1>

There is a natural tendency for films suitable for film festivals to be distinct from the commercial circuit. The issue at stake is the institutionalisation of “art cinema” vs. popular cinema, which is often accompanied by the idea that art and popularity stand at opposite poles.

In the other parallel sections at Cannes the selection criteria include the following:

- Director’s Fortnight – there is no specific selection criteria. The new artistic director Paolo Moretti explained that it was created as a “space for singular, daring visions within the more institutional Cannes Film Festival of the time, but that such visions could also have a commercial potential”. In 2019 he selected a mix of crossover films that combine genre elements with personal visions.<sup>186</sup>
- Critics’ Week - targeted at first and second features and young filmmakers. It cites as its genesis the screening of *The Connection (1961)* by Shirley Clarke (USA), based on Jack Gekber’s stage play, stating that “the film was part of a less popular wave of films, usually overlooked by production houses as well as film festivals.” There is no specific remit and the key goal is to reveal new talent, but special emphasis is placed on niche films which might otherwise go unnoticed, which indeed is one of the core goals of film festivals.

In the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) there is a clear commitment to auteur cinema and above all films that innovate film form, especial in the Forum sections. The goals of the main sections are as follows:

- Competition, which leads to attribution of the Golden Bear – screens “the best of established auteur cinema from around the globe and elevates new directors to the upper echelons of international filmmaking”
- Encounters – “a platform aiming to foster aesthetically and structurally daring works from independent, innovative filmmakers. Its goal is to support new perspectives in cinema and to give more room to diverse narrative and documentary forms in the official selection. Conceived as a counterpoint and a complement to Competition, Encounters is a competitive section devoted to new cinematic visions. The films selected will challenge traditional forms and ask viewers to reconsider their positions in relation to them.”
- Panorama - explicitly queer, explicitly feminist, explicitly political – and at the same time seeks to think beyond these categories - always looking for what is new, daring, unconventional and wild in today’s cinema (...) In terms of aesthetics and form, Panorama has its finger on the pulse of contemporary international cinema (...) The selection of films is simultaneously an invitation and a demand to see cinema in a different light.

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<sup>186</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/interviews/paolo-morretti-cannes-quinzaine-directors-fortnight-2019-artistic-director>



- Forum and Forum Expanded - expand the understanding of what film is, to test the boundaries of convention and open up fresh perspectives to help grasp cinema and how it relates to the world in new ways. The programmes can include anything that serves these ends: contemporary and historical, analogue and digital film, installation art, performance and music.(...) What fits into the programme is defined by the filmmakers' stance towards their medium rather than the question of what commercial potential a film may have. The cinematic form is never subordinate to the content.

The Locarno Film Festival defines itself around auteur cinema. The international competition is dedicated to contemporary auteur cinema. As in the Berlinale there is an emphasis on film form, especially in sections such as Moving Ahead that aim to explore film's frontier territories, engaging with new forms of narration and innovation in filmic language.

The Venice Film Festival, the world's oldest film festival, has recently offered more opportunities for more commercial films. It defines its goal as "awareness and promote international cinema in all its forms as art, entertainment and as an industry, in a spirit of freedom and dialogue."

As with the other leading festivals it has sections dedicated to more mainstream films and others for more auteur films.

In recent years Venice has used its timing in the annual calendar to serve as a platform for major films that hope to win awards. For example it has hosted the world premieres of the last five Best Picture Oscar winners.

In the 2019 edition it also extended its reach to high profile TV series, including episodes from two major Italian TV series - Paolo Sorrentino's limited series *The New Pope (2020)* and Stefano Sollima's cocaine-trafficking drama *ZeroZeroZero (2019)*.

### **The role of film critics: Movie Mutations**

In the heyday of high film theory in the 1970s the role of film critics within the overall European cinema eco-system played a decisive role, given that critics had significant influence on deciding which films had artistic value.

For multiple reasons, including the mushrooming of amateur film criticism on the Internet, the importance of film critics has been eroded.

But film theory continues to assume critical importance in terms of the curatorial strategies of the leading film festivals and the selection criteria used in funding systems targeted at auteur films.

There are also certain sections and prizes managed directly by film critics, such as Cannes Critics' Week and the FIPRESCI awards.

There is obviously no monolithic perspective shared between film critics.

The period of 1970s high film theory, as described above, has evolved into multiple approaches to cinema, but many film critics still adopt a clear dichotomy between commercial cinema and auteur cinema.

Useful insights on this subject are provided in the collection of essays *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia* (Rosenbaum and Martin 2003), Jonathan Rosenbaum is a leading international critic, whose analysis has focused on how the Hollywood system has attempted to create hegemony over the world's screens and undermine alternative filmmaking traditions.

Adrian Martin is an Australian film critic whose works include the 2006 PhD thesis *Towards a synthetic analysis of film style* and the book *Mise en Scène and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art* (Martin, 2014)

He resumes his thesis as follows:

This thesis aims to synthesise two, dominant modes of analysing film style: a traditional mode based on the precepts of classical aesthetics; and a modernist mode known as poststructuralism. Where classicism stresses order, coherence and control, poststructuralism encourages fragmentation, excess and playfulness. Rather than opting for one method over another, I attempt to combine the insights of both.<sup>187</sup>

This hybrid approach is reflected in his comments in his letter published in the book *Movie Mutations*, where he defines the period of 1970s high theory as a key formative period for him, above all because although he says he was initially swayed by high theory he then charted his own path:

"I remember this as the era of hard words, of viciously exclusionary intellectual sects, of the "necessary destruction of pleasure" and neo-puritanism of political correctness before its time and anti-humanism, of signs and meanings, interpretative grids and avant-garde holy grails" (Rosenbaum, 2003, pp.4-5).

He cites Nicole Brenez's survey *The Ultimate Journey: Remarks on Contemporary Theory* which he says "politely sidesteps this whole nasty legacy of the 70s and starts its story with the freer, more creativer intellectual moves of the 80s: for her that means Gilles Deleuze, Serge Daney, Jean Louis Schefer" (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.5).

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<sup>187</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.filmcritic.com.au>

Martin emphasises that the key change in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the films themselves such as Wim Wenders' *State of Things (1982)* and Raul Ruiz's *Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting (1978)* –

Suddenly here were the films playing right outside the maps of 70s theory: free, lyrical, tender, poetic films, but also touch, savage, cruel, perverse, sometimes violent; films that were open diagrams unashamed to link up raw fragments of human (or humanist) experience with the most severe or expansive kinds of experiment with form” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.5).

He emphasises the creation of impure cinema form and *arte povera* in the works of directors such as Cassavetes and Garrel and says that their films:

(...)herald some kind of primal, fundamental return to the body, to the body as the only remaining site of authenticity, of lived and verifiable experience, of sensation and desire. This has led filmmakers and film writers, into many eulogies on the flesh, the face, the mortal and vulnerable body fixed within the painfully perishable medium of celluloid...Yet the cinema of high technological artifice, of special effects, digitalisation and morphing, leads us to contemplate a radically different kind of cinematic body, a body created in and for cinema: the completely synthetic, prosthetic, retouched body, the body of action of horror, the hyper-sensate, super-tensile, immortal and imperishable body (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.7).

This quote is significant because Martin expresses his hybrid outlook which embraces both auteur cinema and genre cinema, in both real and fantasy settings.

I have always sought such life-affirming, life-enhancing energies and intensities from cinema. But I am aware that the energies that I like, the energies which feed me, do not come in just one form, from one stream. The *arte povera* of Cassevates and Garrel gives me a quite, clear, minimalist intensity. But I get a different kind of energy, no less necessary for the soul's survival, from a completely commercial kind of cinema, a cinema of spectacle decried still today by many of even a slightly Situationist bent” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.6).

Martin says that extremely artificial and technological mutated movies have “no small claim on the cinematic language of tomorrow. He states that “certain important directors of today – such as Assayas and Leos Carax – find their rich, distinctive, hybrid forms by crossing elements of the energetic American style (the style of Francis Ford Coppola or Martin Scorsese) with miniaturist and minimalist elements from Garrel or Hellman” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.6).

Martin admits that this hybrid attitude is rare in the world of contemporary film criticism:

There is a recourse to the high moral ground – and to a certain lamentable purism – in a lot of film criticism today, even some of the most advanced. We read far too often that there are only half a dozen directors working today who fulfil – or might one day fulfil, if we're all lucky the potential the promise of this dazzling medium...We keep looking for the authentic personal voice in film the true lone poet, the accursed seer and the discarded rebel, decades after the movies let us know that even the sleaziest, most ideologically compromised fantasies of Blake Edwards are also – and who can doubt it? Beautiful, moving, lucidly autobiographic testaments (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.7).

In the debate charted within the book *Movie Mutations* these views from Adrian Martin were certainly not consensual. Critic Alexander Howarth notes in this regard:

Adrian has already noted the tension between the radically authentic and the radically synthetic bodies in “our” movies. I have to admit that I perceive most pop blockbusters (which pursue a complete dematerialisation and virtualisation) as genuinely inhuman. *Independence Day (1996)*, *The Rock (1996)*, *Con Air (1997)* and *Batman & Robin (1997)* celebrate new bodies and new identities only in a fascist sense; they reduce these possibilities to dull and stolid phantasms of a slave society (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.17).

In the chapter *Movies go Multinational*, a debate between Rosenbaum and Natasa Durovicova, the latter states that US cinema:

Began reconsolidating its world power in the mid 70s with Lucas' double-pronged strategy: on the one hand with the a-local, proto-global, totally synthetic *Star Wars* (1977), on the other with *American Graffiti* (1973) with its hyper-precise time-space coordinates of Bakersfield, California, circa 1960. Whatever world there was between the moon and the West Coast gradually ceased to matter (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.143).

These debates highlight the ambivalent attitude from leading film critics towards contemporary Hollywood cinema.

Durovicova emphasises how the label “art cinema” has been used to pigeonhole films, noting that:

the long-standing strategy, at least since the mid 20s, of slotting into the “art” drawer anything foreign that moves on screen. The unchallenged consensus of our social tradition – formulated in a media driven exclusively by advertising- is that a cultural product's first obligation is to guarantee pleasure; that is to entertain, that is to avoid risk. The term “art” and ergo anything foreign – a strategy carefully and deliberately cultivated in both the American film trade press and by Hollywood to stand as an antonym to the idea of fun” – was tantamount to a label with a toxic warning (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.143).

Rosenbaum notes that New Hollywood films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* incorporated New Wave influences, which enabled American cinema to continue to pretend “it was the only game in town, a cultural monopoly that has remained in place ever since” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.145).

He refers to his book *Movie Wars* (Rosenbaum, 2000) and the trend towards an advertising-driven culture and McDonaldisation of the world: “The terrible fact is that we’re somehow letting the people who dream up the marketing campaigns tell us who we are – which also usually means who we aren’t supposed to be as well” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.145).

Durovicova echoes the idea that after flirting with New Wave cinema:

Hollywood gradually returned to conventionally American products, having regained its full self-confident contempt for “alternative” ways of thinking about film. That contempt, bred out of a vague film-school familiarity, came out in the ridiculous scenes of the 90s as Spielberg and company – all raised on a watered-down post Cahiers auteurism – repeatedly chastised the European filmmakers as milquetoast for wanting to retain some measure of protectionism around the state-supported European Union film industries (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.147).

In this context she cites how George Lucas “legitimised the predictability of his narratives with the help of his college-acquired Levi-Strauss, as served up by Joseph Campbell; “folk” me “market” at just the right time and angle” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.147).

In the same book, critic Catherine Benamou talks about what she calls the “cinema of disenchantment” coming out of Latin America, which adopts certain Hollywood filmic conventions but then turns them on their head:

You’re seeing it in Mexico, in Brazil (and to a lesser extent in Argentina and Venezuela, which also have very active audiovisual industries); it’s a kind of “in your face”, very gritty, Zola-type realism, combined with some post-modernist quotation and very different ideas about narrative continuity. In other words, an emphasis on narrative continuity means complicity; it means you’ve fully bought into the ingestion of the Hollywood model, which is inappropriate to these historical contexts. So yes, let’s have state-of-the-art production values, 35mm, large crews, and distribution from New Line and Miramax, but let’s insist on episodic structures, or at least imperfectly sutured narrative where the continuities and contiguities are used to foreground the contradictions: “seamy” films that show the seamier side of life. I’m thinking specifically of two Mexican films, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu’s “Amores Perros” (2000) and Alfonso Cuarón’s road movie “Y tu mamá también” (2001)... (these films focus on the micro level at the conflicts which take place in the everyday, and so they’re using a commercial veneer, well-known genres such as the telenovela and the road movie, to look at the same filmic objects that the radical New Latin American Cinema (such as Solanas and Getino’s “Hour of the Furnaces” (1968) would have looked at, only in a much more rough-hewn way. This aggressive post-modern cinema – the Argentine “Nine Queens” (2012) is also a good example – takes a very polished approach to very unpleasant situations, and I find it’s an entirely new cinema, which really hasn’t been appreciated because people are trying to evaluate it from the point of view of international box office and actors’ performances” (Rosenbaum, 2003, p.162).

This addresses the question of how Latin American cinema has moved beyond the dichotomy between genre and auteur cinema, and will be discussed later in this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this chapter was to provide a brief overview of the institutionalisation of the dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema which exists in funding systems, film festivals and film criticism. This is further complemented by statistical analysis in the Annexes, in particular Annex 2, which have been separated from the main body of the text to facilitate reading of the overall argument.

## CHAPTER NINE - EUROPEAN TRADITIONS OF POPULAR, QUALITY AND AUTEUR CINEMA

### Summary

European cinema is sometimes viewed as if it were a single monolithic tradition which can be contrasted with Hollywood entertainment, however beyond the more detailed question of genre we can identify three major (sometimes overlapping) film-making traditions: “quality”, “auteur” and “popular”.

### Introduction

Commissioning processes for European films, especially for “difficult films” require projects to exhibit “artistic” or “cultural” value rather than sole commercial value, on the grounds explained in the previous chapter.

There are various categories of film which qualify as having “artistic” or “cultural” value.

Using the table established above we can consider the following categories:

Redskin	Paleface
Popular cinema	Quality tradition
“Redskin” auteur cinema	“Paleface” auteur cinema

Table 5 Paleface and Redskin - Popular, Quality and Auteur cinema

The area that is often most difficult to justify as having “cultural value” is popular cinema, but in practise all four of these categories will receive funding, in different mixes in different countries.

The category of European films which may be termed the “Quality Tradition” have very different characteristics to auteur films. Truffaut was particularly critical of this tradition in his text, *A certain tendency of French cinema* (Truffaut, 1954).

Quality tradition films tend to use classic narrative structures and have more linear horizontal development. Examples include literary adaptations, biopics and historical epics.

The three broad traditions: popular, auteur and quality overlap.

This relationship can be represented using a Venn diagram:

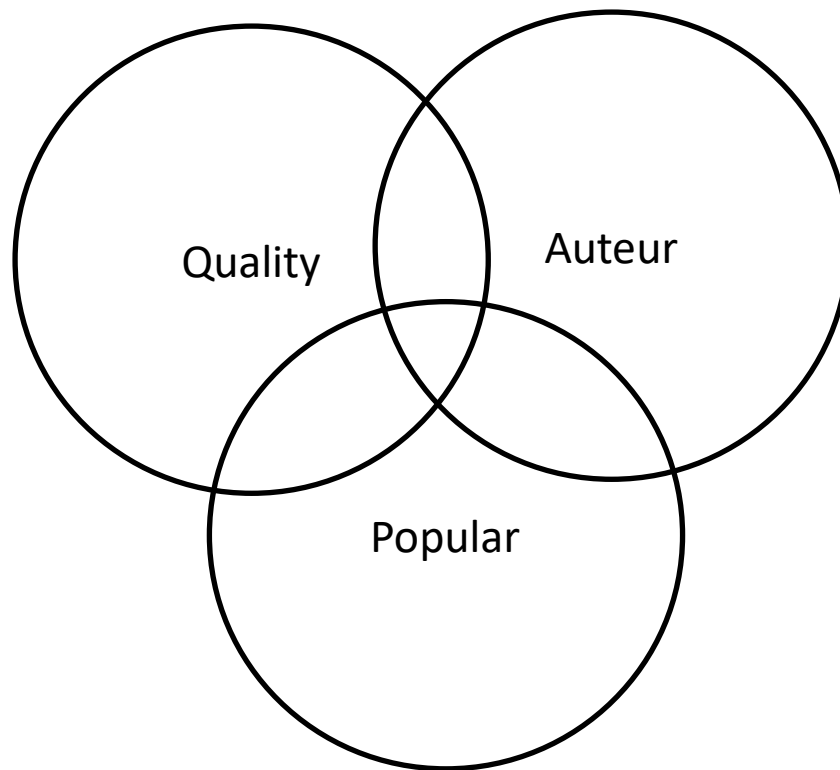


Figure 23 – Overlapping areas of Popular, Quality tradition and Auteur cinema

Genres may be positioned within the above diagram on an overlapping basis. For example, we may find Comedies within all 3 traditions – auteur films, Quality tradition films and popular films. Science Fiction films are primarily found amongst popular films but may also be found in the other 2 categories (e.g. Tarkovsky's *Solaris* or *Stalker* are science fiction films and also auteur films). By contrast, certain genres are more closely linked to one tradition, e.g. Action/Adventure films are primarily linked to popular films.

The three traditions – popular, quality and auteur – are overlapping and involve a mixture of tensions and affinities. For example, the first wave of auteur cinema, felt greater affinity with popular cinema than with the Quality tradition. Many popular filmmakers, such as Spielberg or Hitchcock have also cited influences from directors of both the Quality tradition (e.g. David Lean) and auteur cinema.

In practice most directors of “Quality tradition films” are also considered to be “auteurs”. For example, David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) or Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear* are clearly auteur films, but also could be considered to lie within the quality film tradition. The same is true of countless other films, including, for example, Claude Chabrol's *Madame Bovary* (1991) based on Gustave Flaubert's classic novel.



## **Genre**

The term “genre cinema” is associated with popular film categories such as comedies, action/adventure, fantasy and science fiction, and “auteur cinema” is normally considered to constitute a separate category of film and is either defined as a genre in its own right (for example by Bordwell) or is not included within the category of “genre cinema”.

Within the Hollywood system, genre plays an important role since the key consideration when commissioning a film is its potential audience, matched to the budget – i.e. the possibility of recouping the investment. Different genres have different audience profiles and their popularity tends to come in cycles. For example, when there is a major hit, such as the *Twilight (2008)* franchise, studios try to emulate its success by producing films within the same genre, that will thus benefit from a bandwagon effect.

In the case of the European system, although the commissioning process is not oblivious to the question of the potential audience, it is far more weighted to cultural considerations – i.e. the potential of the commissioned films to provide an accrued cultural and educational benefit, in addition to any economic benefit.

Between the 1970s and 1990s there appeared to be a polarization between the Hollywood and European systems, with the former focused almost exclusively on building audiences and the latter on “creating culture” (while often apparently turning away from the audiences).

Since the mid 1990s there has been increasing interest in Europe in producing films that will both serve a cultural remit and also reach an audience. This has also coincided with a revival of interest in genre films in Europe.

## **Demographics for genre films**

Each genre has a distinct audience demographic and films in general have an overall demographic. Before the advent of television, films attracted a very broad audience across all social classes. We don't have precise audience data from this pre-television period, but it's safe to assume that the overall audience demographic was broadly comparable with the demographic profile of the general population. During the pre-television era, “popular films” secured a broad audience spanning all social classes and income groups, wherein studios particularly aimed to win over lower middle-class and working class audiences, that constituted the majority of the audience.

“Quality tradition films” were considered to be more targeted at middle-class audiences, which had greater interest in genres such as literary adaptations and biopics.

“Auteur films” were much rarer, at least until the late 1950s and also tended to generate their main audience response amongst middle class audiences, but in this case those who were more interested in alternative approaches.

In the modern filmgoing era, these distinctions acquire very different meanings. The overall film audience demographic is very distinct from that of the general population. Film audiences are skewed towards younger and middle class audiences.

Therefore even “popular films” are no longer necessarily films that appeal to all sections of the general population. Instead popular films are those which appeal to avid filmgoers, who tend to be young and often come from middle-class backgrounds. This phenomenon, complemented by the fact that distinctions of social class have been significantly diluted over recent decades means that the contrast between “popular films” and “Quality tradition films” is now based primarily on age group rather than social class – i.e. “Quality tradition films” are targeted at a more mature audience – 25 years and up, whereas “popular films” are targeted at younger audiences – especially 14-25 year olds. Over recent decades “auteur films” have lost some of their core audience, due to changing viewer patterns and also because some of the ideological foundations of the avant-garde movement, related to forging a new revolutionary social outlook, have waned.

A few demographic statistics can help illustrate these distinctions. According to 2016 data from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) the % distribution of the US population and the movie audience is as follows:

	2-11	12-17	18-24	25-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Population %	13	8	10	21	13	14	21
Moviegoers %	14	10	12	23	13	13	15
Tickets sold %	11	13	17	24	11	12	13

*Table 6 – US population and filmgoing audience*

Source: Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Theatrical Market Statistics 2016 <sup>188</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2016\\_Final-1.pdf](https://www.motionpictures.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2016_Final-1.pdf)

This table demonstrates that 41% of tickets sold are to persons aged under 24 and 65% to those under 39, compared to 31% and 52% of the population respectively. The highest ratio between tickets sold and population size is for the age group 12-24.

This is the broad demographic of the audience, however there may be significant fluctuations. For example, MPAA data has shown that as the overall population ages, the average moviegoing age is also increasing.

Gender plays little impact on the overall audience demographic with a 51/49 female/male split of the total population and a 50/50 split of tickets sold. Obviously gender does have an impact on specific genres (see below).

Ethnic origin, by contrast, is of significance for the audience demographic. MPAA data shows that Caucasians represent 62% of the total population, and 59% of tickets sold, whereas Hispanics represent 18% of the population and 20% of tickets sold. Given the slightly higher filmgoing tendency of Hispanics, studios have also made sure to woo these audiences through the types of films made and also through casting.

In relation to demographics based on social class, the MPAA does not publish audience demographic data on filmgoing statistics broken down by social class or household income. But this data is available from other sources. For example, the Arbitron *Cinema Advertising Study* (Arbitron, 2003) stated the following:

Moviegoers are a younger, affluent, active consumer group representing an extremely attractive advertising target. By virtually any dimension, moviegoers make an attractive advertising target. Moviegoers are much more likely to be younger than 35 years of age. They are much more likely to have high household incomes. They go outside the home for entertainment and participate in sports and other active lifestyle activities. They are more likely to spend more on advertising categories such as automotive, telecommunications, travel, financial services and entertainment technology. The desirable demographic profile of moviegoers, combined with the significant reach, represents a tremendous opportunity for advertisers (Arbitron, 2003, p. 4).

The Arbitron study demonstrated that adult moviegoers are 35% more likely to have a master's degree and 35% more likely to have household income over \$75,000 than the average American. Indeed, the study showed that 62% of adult moviegoers earn \$50,000 or more (compared to 50% of the population) and 48% have either a bachelor's or master's degree (compared to 35% of the population). The study also stated that regular moviegoers watch 15% less television than the average population.

The digital marketing technology company, AudienceScience, provides audience demographics by genre<sup>189</sup>. The Audience Targeting data provides the following audience profile (which it should be noted

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<sup>189</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://audiencetargeting.net/entertainment.jsp>

differs from MPAA data):

	Male	Female	18-24	25-54	55-64	\$40-60K	\$60-75K	\$75-100K	\$100K+
Films in general	54.59	45.41	22	54.6	6.8	22.5	11.3	14.6	21.6

Table 7 US cinema audience profile

Source: AudienceScience<sup>190</sup>

In this case, the data suggests that men are more frequent filmgoers (although MPAA and other data suggests an equal mix between men and women). 22% of the audience lies in the 18-24 age group.

The data provides the following audience profile for key genres (note Drama and Comedy include TV and not just film):

Genre	Male	Female	18-24	25-54	55-64	\$40-60K	\$60-75K	\$75-100K	\$100K+
Action films	65.3	34.65	18.7	55.9	9.5	22.6	12.3	19	24.3
Comedy	56.85	43.15	25.2	54.8	4.8	22.2	12.7	15.4	22.9
Drama	56.77	43.23	28.1	49.1	5.1	18.4	12	17	23.4
Horror films	54.98	45.02	22.4	53.4	8.6	15.8	13	15	21.7

Table 8 Audience profile for different genres

Source: AudienceScience<sup>191</sup>

The data suggests that the Action genre is particularly appealing to male viewers and also to

<sup>190</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://audientargeting.net/entertainment.jsp>

<sup>191</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://audientargeting.net/entertainment.jsp>

wealthier viewers (with more than \$100,000 household income). Horror films are particularly appealing to younger audiences, but Comedy and Drama (including TV) is even more appealing to this segment.

### **Demographics for auteur films**

Demographics on auteur films or Quality tradition films are less readily available. In general, “art films” (auteur films and Quality tradition films) are considered to be targeted to a niche audience rather than a mainstream audience.

This means that in terms of the propensity to watch art films, there is a much higher per capita propensity to watch popular films, in contrast to Quality tradition films or auteur films. This propensity changes over time. For example, the propensity to watch popular films was completely transformed by the advent of television, with audiences dropping 80% in the US and 90% in most of continental Europe. The propensity to watch auteur films (“classic art films”) fell with the advent of TV and has also fallen much further due to changing audience interests, the rise of DVD and subsequently streaming.

The rise of the festival circuit, described above, has provided a new audience for auteur films, but films that play in festivals often find it difficult to “cross over”.

The propensity to watch Quality tradition films has followed a similar trend. However, there is evidence that Quality tradition films continue to enjoy stronger audience interest than auteur films.

Auteur films in practice also tend to be aimed at better educated, higher income audiences. However, given that today’s film audience is also much better educated and with higher average income than in the pre-TV era, the audience profile of a mainstream film, in terms of its percentage breakdown, is likely to be similar to that of an “auteur film”. The main difference is the size of the potential audience, i.e. the propensity of the audience to watch such films.

The audience for auteur films by gender, age and social class is likely to be similar to that of mainstream films, but in absolute terms represents a much smaller sub-section of the total filmgoing audience.

In the case of “Quality tradition films”, the audience segment is also much smaller than the mainstream audience, but probably with a similar percentage profile in terms of gender and social class, but a significantly different percentage profile in terms of age.

We may summarise these differences as follows:

	Potential audience	Male/Female (%)	Age profile (%)	Social class profile (%)
Popular films	High	50/50	Primarily under 25	Tendency to be educated with higher income
Quality tradition films	Medium	50/50	Primarily over 25	Tendency to be educated with higher income
Auteur films	Low	50/50	Primarily over 25	Tendency to be educated with higher income

*Table 9 Audience profile of Popular, Quality tradition and Auteur films*

Obviously it should be noted that the specific audience profile of different genres or types of films within each category will be different, as stated above.

### **Quality tradition films**

In the early years of cinema, the middle classes were horrified by popular films and wanted a separate category of cinema that could be defined as “national” culture. Hitchcock commented on this in his interview with Truffaut:

If you examine the history of the cinema, you will see that the art of film-making was often held in contempt by the intellectuals. That must have been true in France, and it was even truer of the British. No well-bred English person would be seen going into a cinema; it simply wasn't done (Truffaut, 1985. p. 124).

Hitchcock adds in the same interview the prejudice against Hollywood films and the portrayal of “foreign films” as being intellectually superior:

Around 1925-26, certain young university students, mostly from Cambridge, began to take an interest in the cinema, particularly in the Russian films or such foreign pictures as René Clair's Italian Straw Hat. Out of this was born the London Film Society, which put on special shows on Sundays for a coterie of intellectuals. Their enthusiasm, somehow, didn't project them into the creative end, but they were film fans, particularly in respect to foreign films.

Even today, foreign films get the largest coverage in the Sunday papers, while the Hollywood product is relegated to the bottom of the page. You must remember also that British intellectuals traditionally spend their holidays on the Continent. They go into the slums of Naples to take pictures of the starving kids. They love to look at the wash hanging out between the tenements, the donkeys in the cobble-stone streets. It's all so picturesque! (Truffaut, 1985. p. 124)

The solution to the “low class image” of the cinema was to produce an autonomous circuit of cinemas showing “Quality tradition films”. In France these cinemas were known as “salles d'exclusivité” that were distinct from the more popular “salles des quartiers”.

The birth of the “Quality tradition” was the establishment of the Film d'Art company in France in 1908 that produced *The Assassination of the Duke de Guise (1908)* written by Henri Lavedan, a member of the Académie Française. But the movement really took hold in the 1920s, as part of a general campaign to “clean up” French national culture.

The objective was to adapt prestigious stage plays to the screen and thereby make films that would be appreciated by France's cultural elite, while potentially attracting larger audiences. The fixed camera position, costumes and sets observed the historical tradition of the French theatre. A key objective was to “legitimate” this new art form and endow it with the same artistic pedigree as theatre. The essential thrust behind this movement led to what later became known in many European countries as the “Quality Film”.

As Jean-Claude Carrière explains, “After a quarter century as peepshow entertainment, generally denigrated by the arbiters of taste, the cinema was finally hailed as the latest art form” (Carrière, 1995, p.41).

In the early decades of the twentieth century the “quality” label was used to distinguish “suitable” newspapers, books, theatre and films from “popular” genres such as tabloids, penny bloods, vaudeville and the vast majority of films. During the authoritarian regimes of the 1930s, the “quality” label became the key consideration in securing state funding. This label was judged by the official critics and confirmed by state prizes.

The quality tradition is linked to the “heritage film” genre, with films such as *Passage to India (1984)*, *Howards End (1992)*, *Henry V (1989)*, *Indochine (1992)*, *Jean de Florette (1986)* and countless TV costume dramas.

The “Quality Film” genre includes literary adaptations of acclaimed novels and stage plays, biopics of distinguished historical and cultural figures and recreations of major historical events.

During the “propaganda cinema” period associated with dictatorships in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and wartime France, the production of Quality tradition films was one of the main priorities.

In the postwar period in France, the new public-private support structure overseen by the CNC, focused on producing films in this “Tradition of Quality” who came under criticism from Truffaut. The leading Quality tradition filmmakers included accomplished directors such as Julien Duvivier, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Claude Autant-Lara and Yves Allégret, who were severely criticised in the 1960s. Bertrand Tavernier has argued in his documentary *My Journey Through French Cinema* that the criticism was often excessive.

The “Young Turks” associated with the *Cahiers du Cinéma* were severely critical of many of the films being produced in France, under the auspices of the CNC. By contrast they emphasised their love of certain American films which were generally disdained by the French cultural establishment. François Truffaut published his 1954 essay *Une Certaine Tendence du Cinéma Français (1954)*, when he was 21, in which he made a major attack on the “cinema de papa” (Daddy’s cinema). Truffaut criticised the school of psychological realism, the lack of innovation, the barriers to entry for new directors, emphasis on great works of the past rather than present-day experimentation. His essay effectively provided both a summary of his critique of the “quality tradition” and simultaneously a defence of an alternative model of auteur films. Film historian Ginette Vincendeau summarises Truffaut’s position as follows:

	Quality Tradition	Auteur films
1	Cinema of scriptwriters	Made by “men of cinema”
2	Focus on psychological realism – often pessimistic, anti-clerical and anti-bourgeois	Existential, romantic self-expression
3	Mise en scene was too polished – (studio sets, scholarly framings, complicated lighting, classical editing)	Casual, improvised cinema of the “open air”
4	Mass-appeal cinema, relying on genres and especially stars	Films based on the personality of the auteur

*Table 10 – Truffaut – the difference between Quality tradition and auteur films*

Source: Vincendeau, 1995, p. 427



The attack on Quality tradition films was further inspired by the “neo-realist” films being produced in Italy, which in turn had been inspired by an attack on comparable “Quality tradition films” in Italy, including the so-called “white telephone” films.

Although the term “Tradition of Quality” applies to a specific country and historical period – France in the 1940s and 1950s, the generic term “Quality tradition films” can also be applied to films from other countries and other periods.

For example, Italian director Luchino Visconti clearly shared some of the attributes of the quality tradition in films such as *Senso (1954)* and *The Leopard (1963)*, which led him to be criticized within some circles because his films were so different from his neo-realist colleagues, notwithstanding his early contribution to neo-realism via films such as *Ossessione*. “Forerunner and practitioner of neo-realism, Visconti was instrumental in transcending its limitations by incorporating influences from the other arts (primarily literature, but also opera and theatre) as well as legitimizing forays into historical subject matter” (Vincendeau, 1995, p. 445).

Visconti had a major influence on other film directors who also straddle the camps of popular, quality and auteur cinema, such as Bernardo Bertolucci and Stanley Kubrick.

In the case of the UK, a filmmaker such as David Lean also shared comparable characteristics with the French directors of “Quality tradition films”. Just as the French films projected a “quality” image of their national cinema through “expertly crafted pictures with high production values and often derived from literary sources” (Vincendeau, 1995, p. 427) the films by David Lean can also be described in similar terms.

Lean’s obsession with “quality” also led to detractors. David Thomson wrote in his *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film, 2002*:

I am more than ever of the opinion that Lean became lost in the sense of his own pictorial grandeur. *The Passionate Friends* and *Madeleine*, for instance, stand up so much better than those battleship pictures that came later. Not even the re-release of *Lawrence* - beautiful, and with some lost material restored - could furnish any sense of ideas behind it... I challenge anyone to see *Oliver Twist* and *Dr. Zhivago* and not admit the loss. It will take a very good biography to explain that process.<sup>192</sup>

As in France, Britain also attempted to forge a “quality film” tradition in the 1940s and 1950s based on big-budget “prestige” pictures that flaunted British national values, financed primarily by the Rank Organisation that aimed to become a worldwide major.

This tradition also faltered in the 1960s, as it did in France and other European countries, as

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<sup>192</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.theyshootpictures.com/leandavid.htm>

audiences began to erode and “New Cinema” filmmaking began to take over.

The phenomenon of New Wave cinemas throughout Europe resulted to a large extent from a reaction against Quality tradition films, rather than a reaction against popular film genres. Indeed, many New Wave films encountered inspiration in American popular filmmaking traditions and the New Wave directors were critical of the reinforced control by state film agencies such as the CNC at the end of the 1960s. The boycotting of the Cannes Film Festival in May 1968 and the launch of the Director’s Week sidebar by the French Director’s Guild in 1968 reflected these tensions.

Nonetheless, given this complex historical background it is highly misleading to identify all European “art cinema” with the New Wave movements or to gloss over the tension between one strand of art cinema (i.e. “new cinema”, with strong modernist roots) and other major strands, such as Quality tradition films and also the second wave of auteur films. The quality tradition continues to be an important strand of contemporary European film (and television) production, but obviously incorporates elements from popular genres and new wave traditions. For example, UK films such as *The King’s Speech* (2010) or the two *Elizabeth* films or French films such as *Jean de Florette* or *La Vie en Rose* (2007) essentially lie within the “Tradition of Quality”, while incorporating modern cinematic techniques.

A considerable amount of European public television drama, in particular BBC period dramas, also lies within the Quality Tradition.

The quality tradition doesn’t fit into the formalist distinction between “genre cinema” and “auteur cinema”, since the narrative structures used in Quality tradition films tend to be classic linear structures, driven by character development and the filming devices (image composition, editing) also tend to comply with the classical canon.

### **Auteur Films**

Auteur films have been directly linked to avant-garde movements, especially in the first wave of auteur cinema, up until the 1960s.

The first wave avant-garde artists saw themselves as being at war with bourgeois values and were deliberately provocative and condescending towards national “quality” productions. First wave avant-garde films usually provoked public outrage. For instance at the Parisian premiere of Buñuel’s *L’Age d’Or*, the audience ran rampage, and reportedly cried “Death to the Jews” and destroyed the exhibition of modernist paintings on display in the lobby. *L’Age d’Or* was subsequently banned by the French authorities, as were films such as *Atalante*, *Zero de Conduite* (1933) and *Rules of the Game* (1939).

The core drive of the avant-garde movement was to achieve a total break with “classical” art. For example, the 1910 manifesto of futurist painters declared: “we will sweep the whole field of art clean of all themes and subjects which have been used in the past...the dead shall be buried in the earth’s deepest bowels, the threshold of the future will be swept free of mummies...make room for youth, for violence, for daring”.<sup>193</sup> Marinetti continued this line of thought in his Manifesto on Futurist film in 1916, “The cinema is an autonomous art. It must therefore never copy the stage. The cinema being essentially visual, must above all fulfil the “evolution” of the painting.”<sup>194</sup>

However avant-garde cinema wasn’t always anti-regime and certain avant-garde artists such as Marinetti, Ruttman and Cocteau were attracted by the mythic dimensions of the new authoritarian regimes.

### **Popular Films**

Much of Europe’s high culture - from Shakespeare to Mozart - has been closely linked to popular traditions, and the “arts” in general owe a huge debt to popular roots. Nonetheless “popular” is often a mark of condescension in Europe.

Europe’s powerful traditions of popular culture have been generally undervalued. In its pioneering days, cinema was identified above all with the masses and began as a fairground attraction, shown in music halls or fun fairs. The cinema thus went hand in hand with other popular traditions such as pulp literature, music, vaudeville, café-theatre, stand-up comics, the circus, magic shows and comic books.

“The cinema has always had this urge to jump in with both feet, this eager acceptance of the unplanned, of the impulsive, of the vulgar.” says Jean-Claude Carrière, “It goes back to the origins, to the first unfettered twenty years before fashion (once the so-called Great War was out of the way) got its hooks into the “seventh art”. Before the intellectuals (starting around 1925) launched into long, subtle analytical treatises which by now would fill several gigantic and occasionally fogbound freighters” (Carrière, 1995, p.23).

### **European “Popular” film genres**

European cinema is so often associated to art cinema and auteur cinema the strong traditions of European genre cinema is often overlooked, although over the last two decades there has been increasing interest in these traditions.

Europe continues to produce many genre films, in addition to auteur films, and comprehensive

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<sup>193</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.unknown.nu/futurism/painters.html>

<sup>194</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.unknown.nu/futurism/cinema.html>

data is provided in Annex 4.

The leading popular film genres included comedy, science-fiction, horror, epic action, erotic, spaghetti westerns, and film noir. A brief summary of some of the key aspects is provided in the following table:

Comedy
One of the earliest film comics was Max Linder who played the role of the French dandy and was a great inspiration to Chaplin. The Europeans have constantly broken new grounds in comedy, whether the acrobatics of Chaplin, the surreal humour of <i>Monty Python</i> , <i>Mr Bean</i> , France's <i>Les Visiteurs</i> and <i>Welcome to the Sticks</i> . Comedy films are the main reason why European cinema still has any audience at all, and yet are often derided by the critics and rarely play in film festivals.
Science Fiction
From the beginning, the cinema inspired magicians and illusionists such as George Méliès who were fascinated by the special effects that could be achieved within the camera. Many of the early silent films were science fiction tales such as the <i>Voyage to the Moon</i> . Recent European science-fiction films are relatively rare, especially in continental Europe. One of the main directors working in this genre is France's Luc Besson.
Horror
European film-makers were quick to conjure up visions of golems, vampires and werewolves. The German Expressionists were particularly interested in horror themes, partly because of the deadly atmosphere in Germany after the 1918 revolution. As German film-makers fled to Hollywood in the wake of rising National Socialism, they played a critical role in the making of Hollywood horror films such as <i>Dracula</i> and <i>Frankenstein</i> . In the immediate post-war period, horror traditions included Hammer Films in Britain and film-makers such as Mario Bava and Dario Argento in Italy. Recent European horror films include the cluster of films from Spain, such as the "Rec" franchise.
Epic Action
Films like <i>Quo Vadis</i> and <i>Cabiria</i> in Italy provided the inspiration for later American films such as <i>Ben Hur</i> and <i>Intolerance</i> and also created characters such as Maciste which later gave rise to muscle men heroes in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. Europeans have often proved very adept at exciting action sequences to rival Hollywood. Recent epic action films are rare however.
Suspense/Thriller
European audiences love fantasy and mystery stories. France has a strong tradition in this field. A classic example was the French character Fantomas, whose films were hugely popular but which were banned by many local authorities.

Film noir
The dark atmosphere of many European films was a fundamental inspiration for American film noir, which later proved to be a major influence on the Nouvelle Vague. “Noir” films included Visconti’s <i>Ossessione</i> (based on Postman Always Rings Twice) the works of Hitchcock and the French “policier” tradition.
Crime drama
Crime drama is another staple genre in Europe, especially strong in France and more recently in Scandinavia. France’s “polar” crime genre was a mixture of crime drama with film noir.

Table 11 Brief summary of characteristics of European auteur films

In Ginette Vicendeau’s “Encyclopaedia of European Cinema”, the following European film genres are identified:

Genre category	National examples
Action/Adventure	British (James Bond), German (mountain films),
Thriller	Various countries
Historical epics	Italian peplums
Comedy	British (incl. Ealing comedies, Carry On), French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese
Melodrama	Germany (e.g. Rural melodramas, street films, Doctor’s films,
Drama	Various countries
Biopic	Various countries
Romance	Various countries
Religious	Various countries
Propaganda	Various countries

Horror	Expressionism (esp. German, French, Danish, British). British horror (incl. Hammer films). Italian horror. Spanish horror.
Crime (including Police/Gangster)	French policiers
Film noir	Various countries
Sci-Fi	Various countries
Western	Italian spaghetti westerns
Musicals	German musicals, Spanish (españoladas)
Heritage/period	Heimatfilms
Art film (excl. New Wave)	Soviet montage, surrealism, poetic realism, "Cinema du Look"
New Wave	French Nouvelle Vague, German New Cinema, British New Wave, Portuguese Cinema Novo
Realism	Neo-realism, Cinema verité
Documentary	Various countries
Erotic	Various countries
Gay and lesbian cinema	Various countries
Political	Soviet agit films
Social problem	Germany
War films	Various countries
Children's (including animation)	Especiallly France, Spain
Family	Various countries
Other animation	Especiallly Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Poland

*Table 12 The main European film genres (Ginette Vicendeau's "Encyclopaedia of European Cinema")*

Source: Vicendeau, 1995

Prior to the 1960s, it was commonplace to have European films produced using “mainstream” genres.

In the UK, the switch to “New Cinema” was more muted and many mainstream genres were preserved.

Even on the continent, mainstream genres such as comedy, heritage films, war films and children’s films continued notwithstanding the impact of the New Wave.

The rich popular heritage of European cinema was often overlooked by theorists for many years, but over the last two decades an increasing number of texts have been dedicated to this subject.

James Chapman in *Cinemas of the World* states that: “European genres were regarded – quite unfairly – as lacklustre imitations of Hollywood” (Chapman, 2004, p. 269).

He quotes Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau: ‘The popular cinema of any given European country is not always acknowledged even in the general national histories of film in that country. When it is, it is generally marginalized in favour of the often little-seen but critically- acclaimed art film traditions.’ (Chapman, 2004, p. 270).

Chapman identifies five key popular European film genres:

- War film
- Comedy
- Spy thriller
- Peplums/spaghetti western
- Horror, exploitation and sex films.

Source: Chapman, 2004

Other prominent popular European film genres include the Crime/Detective genre, Children’s Films and more recently Fantasy and Sci-Fi.

Thomas Elsaesser analyses the tendency to overlook the importance of European popular cinema in his book *European cinema: face to face with Hollywood* (Elsaesser, 2005) and notes how these genres largely disappeared in the 1960s:

The sub-categories of European popular cinema are stars and genres, and the mode of production is closely modelled on Hollywood. Popular European cinema historically came to an end in the late 1960s, when almost all film industries collapsed and the audiences (but also the themes and genres) of this national cinema moved to and relocated on television (soaps, series, cop-shows) and the video rental circuits (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 489).

Elsaesser notes how interest in popular European film genres has revived in recent years, precisely in the wake of the demise of these genres:

The critical recovery of popular European cinema thus has something antiquarian and nostalgic, mixed with a camp appreciation of its insouciance, energy and naivety, and bolstered by a righteous indignation at the “neglect” it has suffered too long: by film scholars, avant-garde critics and even by those cinephiles who profess a love of Hollywood. (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 489).

Anne Jackel in her essay *Les Visiteurs: a popular form of cinema for Europe?* (in Everett, 2005) highlights how popular genres have been largely overlooked within film theory: “Two thirds of the box office successes of the last forty years have been comedies. Despite this the genre has been consistently snubbed by cinéphiles, neglected by historians and, more often than not, ignored by film critics.” (Everett, 2005, p.41)

The work by Bertrand Tavernier in his documentary *My Journey Through French Cinema* and his activity as president of the Institut Lumière is also aimed at rehabilitating directors and genres who have been sidelined in the history of French cinema.

In overall terms, European popular film genres use a comparable canon to that of classical Hollywood cinema, but at the level of individual genres and specific filmmakers developed innovative ideas that in turn inspired Hollywood directors. For example, Alfred Hitchcock stated in relation to French director Henri-Georges Clouzot: “I admire him very much and am flattered when anyone compares a film of mine to his” (Chandler, 2006, p.239).

## **European art cinema**

European art cinema is by far the best-known type of European filmmaking and is typically described as the binary counterpoint to Hollywood cinema.

Thomas Elsaesser, for example, emphasises how European art cinema offered a new dignity for European filmmakers, especially after the dark years of dictatorship and propaganda cinema:

From being tainted by the double vice of propaganda and mindless entertainment, cinema in Europe could emerge as “art,” and it gradually won back the prestige, by re-establishing the principle of authorship, but now on a different basis (European *caméra stylo* plus Hollywood *auteurism*), and by a new stylistics: not only of originality, innovation or experiment, but of *mise-en-scène* and the *punctum* (understood here as the light personal touches of the *metteur en scène*, as the “excess” produced by the system itself, or the felicities of chance and contingency) (Elsaesser, 2005, p 490).

The term “auteur film” or “film de auteur” comes closest to capturing the notion of European art cinema, as defined by David Bordwell and the concept of “new cinema” that emerged in Europe in the post-war period.

However, as mentioned above, there is not a perfect match between the term “auteur film” and a “new cinema” film, because of the two waves of auteur theory and the fact that the original texts



associated with the “politique des auteurs” identified auteurs working within the popular film tradition, e.g. Hitchcock and auteurs can also be found within the quality film tradition.

Truffaut established a dichotomy between Quality tradition and auteur cinema, stating “I do not believe in the peaceful co-existence of the Tradition of Quality and an auteur’s cinema”. However, in recent years there are increasingly blurred lines.

### **A Special Case: Social Realism And The Social Problem Film**

Social realism is intimately linked to European art cinema and is considered by David Bordwell to constitute one of its defining characteristics, as distinct from Hollywood’s “make believe”.

Contemporary auteurs working within this tradition include Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and the Dardenne brothers. However, although social realism is distinct from the Europe’s Quality tradition films, this tradition of films, which includes “social problem” films, cannot be identified exclusively with auteur cinema. Indeed, the vast majority of television drama, in particular soap operas or *telenovelas* lie within the field of social realism, social problems and melodrama and yet clearly are not produced within an auteur style. Social problem cinema, focusing on a wide array of issues such as abortion, homelessness, drug abuse, sexual harassment and prejudice, unemployment and ethnic minorities have become mainstays of the programming of public service television.

If the Quality Film tradition is extended to include all films which are deemed to be “culturally worthy”, while achieving a popular reach and being distinct from popular film genres such as thriller, action, fantasy etc, the “social problem” film can also be viewed as being partly integrated within the tradition of “quality film”.

In Italy during the fascist regime, social realism was defended as one possible approach in order to produce Quality tradition films that could highlight core values of national identity. Other dictatorial regimes, spanning the Soviet Union, Germany, Spain and Portugal promoted social realism and social problem films as a means of establishing a distinctive national cinema.

Once public service television was introduced throughout Europe, social realism drama was viewed as one of the centrepieces of cultural drama production.

Italian neo-realism, for example, is normally associated almost exclusively with the post-war regeneration period, but its seeds were laid during the fascist era, as is noted by Simona Monticelli in her essay *Italian post-war cinema and Neo-Realism* (Hill, 1998):

Throughout the early 1940s Visconti and the screenwriters of *Ossessione*, Giuseppe de Santis, Mario Alicata and Gianni Puccini, were writing articles for the specialist film journal *Cinema*, edited by Benito Mussolini’s son Vittorio. Their articles (...) insisted on the necessity of using realism in the development of a national film language. In doing so, they suggested models from both an

indigenous tradition of high cultural literature and painting and from film styles, such as French poetic realism, and even, on occasions, from Hollywood film genres, such as the 1930s gangster film. The strongest emphasis however was placed on the power of landscape – and the human presence within it – to act as signifiers of Italian cultural identity (Hill, 1998, p. 457).

Social realism and social problem encompass a broad range of films, including middle-class melodramas. However, the term normally focuses on real-life stories in lower middle-class, working-class or ethnic community settings. This terrain is always a potentially explosive area, in the case of cinema, since it may identify issues that are considered by many people to be downbeat or detrimental to national values. In the case of television soap operas a set of conventions ensure that these environments are addressed in a manner that normally doesn't generate major criticism, at least from a political perspective.

The filmmaking conventions used in the majority of “social realism” films tend to be linear narratives, but with a looser structure than the classical Hollywood canon.

### **New European Genre Movies**

In recent years in Europe there has been revived interest in producing “genre films” rather than “auteur films”. One of the best-known examples is Luc Besson whose recent productions include *Valerian (2017)*. Other examples include filmmakers who combine auteur and genre elements.

This new outlook requires new theoretical models as Thomas Elsaesser has suggested:

My contention has been that the hierarchical model which implicitly aligned the director as author, the art cinema as high culture, and the nation represented through its artists in widening but concentric circles has to be revised, if one wants to understand the present reality of European cinema in its own terms (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 491).

He then adds:

The reliance on realism in European cinema used to go hand in hand with a character psychology based on individual subjectivity, interiority, spiritual alienation, and social anomie – at the expense of fantasy, interpersonal conflict, action, and interactive communication, all seen as either “commercial” and low culture, or typical for Hollywood (action, spectacle). The Dogma manifesto has, by seemingly re-affirming realism as Europe's doxa, shown how much in fact it had by become a mere set of conventions that could be performed, prescribed, or abrogated (thus implicitly doing away with any special ontological status) (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 487).

### **Counter-cinema**

In the case of counter-cinema, narrative conventions may be used to deliberately surprise and disturb the audience. Conventions of cause and effect, establishing-shot and final resolution may be applied and then turned in on themselves. The audience may be set up to expect certain events, and

then be frustrated by the turn of the plot. This is often the technique of surrealist cinema, and also some modernist cinema. Godard, for example, has regularly used this technique his films. The audience is continually struggling to find the narrative, and sometimes appears successful, and then immediately becomes lost again. This form of counter-cinema becomes self-referential and forces the audience to think about the conventions that they normally take for granted. This approach ties into the ideas of the Russian Formalists whose objectives included “laying bare the device.”

Counter-cinema may also violate other classical conventions, such as those of editing or composition. Examples of these are breaking the 180° rule, jump cuts, breaking the direction of movement and non-classical framing. This can have two effects. Firstly, in some cases it can more effectively convey a specific emotion. Secondly, it can again make the medium self-referential and force the viewer to think about conventions.

An alternative technique is to use classical conventions to surprise the audience. Surrealist cinema often uses classical conventions such as eyeline-match and point of view shots to connect different locations and events. One example is the woman in *Le Chien Andalou* who closes her front door, and then runs out into the beach. "Unreal realism" also uses these techniques. Maya Deren makes use of match-on-action cutting to connect different locales. One example is in *At Land (1944)*, when she reaches up from the beach, to a tree in the desert.

Peter Wollen provides the following summary of the subversive approaches available to counter cinema:

Classical Cinema	Counter-Cinema
Narrative transitivity	Narrative intransitivity
Identification	Estrangement
Transparency	Foregrounding
Single diegesis	Multiple diegesis
Closure	Aperture
Pleasure	Unpleasure
Fiction	Reality

*Table 13 Counter cinema – key characteristics (by Peter Wollen)*

Source: Cook, 1985, p. 220

On this basis, while “classic cinema” can be divided into film genres, “counter-cinema” defies such classification, or at best might be described as a genre itself.

## CHAPTER TEN – KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF EUROPEAN AUTEUR CINEMA

### Summary

The new paradigm of auteur cinema that dominated European film industry from the 1970s onwards is based on a set of ideas and operational principles, such as focus on the director above all other members of the creative team, movement away from classic linear narratives and the idea that popular cinema and auteur cinema stand at opposite poles.

### Introduction

The main elements of the new auteur cinema that evolved at the end of the 1960s include the following:

- the birth of “Modern Cinema”
- auteur cinema vs narrative cinema
- the death of the producer
- alternative narrative structures
- alternative themes
- alternative technical styles
- the social hierarchy of directors
- the disappearance of the screenwriter
- the impossibility for art to be popular
- national films
- public service cinema

### The birth of “Modern Cinema”

French theorist Jean-Michel Frodon argues that European cinema passed a threshold in 1959 which launched a new type of cinema, inevitable dependent on the state.

It is undeniable that there was a huge creative rupture at this time. As the late French producer Anatole Dauman stated “Alain Resnais with his film Hiroshima mon Amour destroyed one of the columns of the temple of cinema, that was then razed to the ground by Godard with A Bout de Souffle.”<sup>195</sup>

Jean-Claude Carrière adds:

In the 1950s we had a conventional, technically flawless cinema which it suited us to call traditional, but which very soon seemed to be repeating itself....in those days the director was just one worker among many....the French New Wave at the end of the 1950s, rose in determined revolt against this systematic anonymity, against this surface similarity among films distinguished by nothing except perhaps their actors and the story they told (Carrière, 1995, p.41).

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with the author, Paris, 13/7/1994

Bertrand Tavernier in his documentary series, *My Journey through French Cinema* has emphasised how dangerous this movement was, by ignoring or sweeping aside important films and filmmakers prior to the French New Wave.

The new narrative and cinematic techniques introduced by the Nouvelle Vague, have been used by some to suggest that it was the birth of “modern cinema”, just as Picasso gave birth to “modern art”. Truffaut commented in a 1966 text entitled: *Jean-Luc Godard - Two or Three Things I know about Him* “Godard blew the system up, he messed it up, just like Picasso did with painting; and like Picasso, Godard has made everything possible.”<sup>196</sup>

The new cinema was described as being “modern” which also implies that anyone using the “classical” form is somehow antiquated.

Jean-Pierre Jeunet, whom I interviewed in the Marrakech film festival, said that the late Daniel Toscan du Plantier compared him to Marcel Carné, the director of *Les Enfants du Paradis*, admitting in the same breath that Jeunet is out of time with the current shape of French cinema.

Jean-Michel Frodon in his book *L'âge moderne du cinéma français: De la Nouvelle Vague à nos jours. Histoire du cinéma français* (1995) suggests that “modern cinema” represents a new type of production, intimately linked to state support and the search for a “new language”. But there are innumerable exceptions to this “modern age”, most notably Truffaut, who Frodon describes as follows: At a time that was no longer of classicism, he was a classic, the last of the French cinema, and this “historical aberration” capitalised on the interest, and all the ambiguity, of his position.<sup>197</sup> (Frodon, 1995, p. 50) He added that Truffaut was “the symbol of the end of a certain unitary but already melancholic idea of cinema”<sup>198</sup> (Frodon, 1995, p. 644).

In fact the New Wave was only one of a series of talent renewals that had occurred in French cinema, and also mirrored previous movements abroad such as Hungary in 1919 and Italy in 1944 that had begun with a film journal and then spread to the cinema. Several French producers and directors questioned the idea that there was a “renewal” of the cinema at the end of the 1950s, that exceeded that of previous decades. Chabrol said: “There is no new wave, only the sea”<sup>199</sup>.

Ironically what distinguishes the Nouvelle Vague is that since then there have been fewer significant talent explosions in European cinema, and it has even been called the “Last Wave”.

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<sup>196</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://connormartinsmith.blogspot.com/2010/06/>

<sup>197</sup> (my translation) A une époque qui n'est plus celle du classicisme, il sera un classique, le dernier du cinéma français, et cette “aberration historique” fera tout l'intérêt, et toute l'ambiguïté, de sa position.”

<sup>198</sup> (my translation) symbole de la fin d'une certaine idée, unitaire mais déjà mélancolique, du cinéma.

<sup>199</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/claude\\_chabrol\\_462231](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/claude_chabrol_462231)

The list of great French directors and films prior to 1959, as noted by Bertrand Tavernier, means that it makes no sense to claim that the French New Wave represents Year Zero, particularly since the movement drew much of its inspiration from the silent era, American genres and Italian neo-realism.

A far more appropriate assessment of the French New Wave is that it should be understood within the wider tradition of “auteur cinema” that encompasses America and Europe and both mainstream and niche traditions.

### **Auteur cinema vs. Narrative cinema**

The “politique des auteurs” was initially the result of admiration for Hollywood and used to demonstrate that studio directors could cast a signature over their films. Godard once explained “The dream of the Nouvelle Vague, which it will never achieve, is to shoot Spartacus in Hollywood, with 10 million dollars. As far as I’m concerned, I don’t mind making small inexpensive films, but people like Demy are very frustrated.”<sup>200</sup>

Despite these origins, the auteur theory quickly started to be used to undermine the credibility of “capitalist” Hollywood and advocate a “new cinema”. In the late 1960s this evolved into profound disdain for Hollywood cinema and the fight for third cinema designed for national and popular liberation. Although five decades have passed since then the discourse about European vs Hollywood cinema still seems to echo some of these ideas.

In the context of the second wave of auteur theory, traditional narratives were considered to be a capitalist mode of communication, and that “informed viewers” must “decode” these stories and thereby neutralise their propaganda.

### **Death of the Producer**

European cinema’s most dynamic creative periods have also been those with strong producers. The producer is the heart of the editorial system. He provides a bridge between the audience and the film-maker, and between commerce and art.

The Nouvelle Vague was critically dependent on producers, in particular Georges Beauregard, Pierre Braunberger and Anatole Dauman. At the same time, the “Young Turks” felt uncomfortable with the debt they owed to such patrons. For instance, Godard’s described his producer in *Le Mépris* as a little roman emperor. Anatole Dauman suggests that this resentment is perfectly natural since the producer-director relationship is comparable to that of father and son, and therefore the inevitable desire

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<sup>200</sup> Godard, interview by Collet et al., in Godard on Godard, ed. Narboni and Milne, p. 192.

of any director is patricide<sup>201</sup>.

Fellini summed up the mixture of exasperation and gratitude he felt for producers saying that their stupidity and mediocrity helped him become aware of the nature of his work and find a kind of equilibrium without which he would abandon himself to idealism, and the avoidance of all the daily banal problems which are the essence of cinema, of art and of everything:

The producer is an authoritarian figure who risks nothing, presumes to know public taste, and always wants to change the end of the film. If the film is a hit, he makes even more money while the film author receives nothing in addition. Personally, I am still subjected to the fascination of the producer as a boss or “padrone”. For many years, my conflicts with producers have at least obligated me to keep my work in sharp definition against their spurious judgements, betrayals and clumsy interference. But it also helped me generate an extra measure of energy to keep going (Cardullo, 2006, p. 81).

The new auteur cinema tradition undermined the traditional role of the producer and replaced it with dependency on state subsidies. The eco-system of producers such as Carlo Ponti and Georges Beauregard disappeared. But the new philosophy of “art for art’s sake” removed from commercial pressures did not please everyone. Tarkovsky, for example, stated:

I simply cannot believe that an artist can ever work for the sake of “self-expression”. Self-expression is meaningless unless it meets with a response (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.40)... I cannot believe those directors who say that they do not care how the audience will react. Every artist - I have no hesitation in stating - thinks of a meeting between his work and the audience; what he thinks, hopes, believes is that this production of his will turn out to be attuned to the times, and therefore vital to the cinema-goer, touching him in the innermost depths of his soul. There is no contradiction in the fact that I do nothing in particular to please an audience, and yet hope fervently that my picture will be accepted and loved by those who see it (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.170).

In recent years there has been a revival in the emphasis on the producer.

### **Alternative narrative structures**

The Nouvelle Vague placed great emphasis on the very many different ways that a story can be told cinematically. This led to invention in narrative structure, editing and cinematic technique that has had a great effect on both American and European cinema.

The “Young Turks” believed in the value of great stories, but they wanted to experiment in the way they were told. Godard summarised this famously when he said “a story has a beginning, middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.”<sup>202</sup> Godard nonetheless emphasised that he believed in the importance of story-tellers.

Jean Claude Carrière says in *The Secret Language of Film*, that the films made in the 1960s

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<sup>201</sup> Interview with the author, Paris, June, 1992

<sup>202</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jul/12/jean-luc-godard-film-socialisme>



were dynamic and innovative but that this daring was lost: "Film language - common to everyone and peculiar to each individual, like all language - reappeared on the agenda, for the greater good of film. It emerged from the shadows: you began to see it on the screen, you followed its progress, its maturing, its repetitions, its aberrations, sometimes its disasters." (Carrière, 1995, p.50).

But the subsequent auteur tradition transformed such language games, into experimentation for its own sake. Carrière continues, "In just a few years an idea had been lost. It had slipped from the initial rigor of an exacting theory, which film-makers instinctively applied, to the banality of daily (and rote) implementation" (Carrière, 1995, p.51).

Today "alternative" narrative structures are indiscriminately used to define an "auteur film".

Pam Cook in the British Film Institute's "Cinema Book" analyses David Bordwell's definition of the modes of art cinema as based above all on its:

Tendency to eschew linear cause-effect relationships between narrative events. Rather, narratives are frequently motivated on the one hand by a realism of topic, setting or character, and on the other by an "authorial expressivity" – a series of "puzzling" or apparently unrelated events in the narrative may be understood or explained by reference to the artistic concerns of the director (Cook, 1985, p. 216).

From this perspective auteur cinema thereby undermines the traditional techniques of popular cinema - stories, stars and emotion - and replaces them with intellectual constructions which are claimed to represent an alternative non-capitalist ideology.

Examples of narrative "rule breaking" include non-linear stories, open endings, pauses in the narrative, long intellectual discourses, slow pacing and non-stories. These techniques are believed to be both more "intelligent" and "artistic" and bring film closer to the modern novel.

Alternative narrative structures can be a rich source of inspiration. But they can easily become an excuse for self-indulgence as Jean-Claude Carrière explains,

From the splendid declaration we all applauded - "a film must bear the mark of its director" - the formula in fairly short order entered its decadent phase and became more or less "an author's film is one in which a director talks about himself" Between the two approaches the gap is narrow, the difference barely palpable. Yet it is complete and it is most often unbridgeable. Slide into the self-indulgence of the second definition, and the great door swings open to reveal the endless fevered imaginings that swamped us in the 1970s. This was especially the case in France where so many voice-overs - usually monotonous - droned in slow accompaniment to anemic images. Everyone wanted to "express" his fantasies, his memories, even his personal thoughts. Everyone felt theoretically entitled to do so, and was later painfully surprised to see his work enjoy at most two or three days' screening in a small, empty theatre". (Carrière, 1994, p. 50.).

The Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky also highlighted this dangerous tendency in contemporary art:

Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake. What purports to be art begins to look like an eccentric occupation for suspect characters who maintain that any personalised action is of intrinsic value simply as a display of self-will (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.38).

By the 1970s many European filmmakers suggested that notwithstanding the importance of the revolution in film language ushered in by the New Wave, a new shock to the system was required, associated to a cinema that explores emotions and non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious.

To a certain extent such desires ultimately fuelled the production of new European genre films.

### **Character without clear goals**

Linked to the idea that linear narratives are less artistic the second wave of auteur theory also suggested that audience should identify more with the director than with the actors. This is expressed by Pam Cook as follows:

In art cinema, then, the informed, educated audience looks for the marks of authorship to make sense of the film rather than to the rambling story of the characters, who are often aimless victims rather than controlling agents. Audience identification shifts from characters to author (Cook, 1985, p. 116).

She continues:

“Fictional characters in art cinema films often seem to lack “defined desires and goals” and the relationship between character motivation and narrative events may not be immediately apparent. A looseness of causality may open up spaces for “digressions” within the narrative in the form, for example, of expression by characters of their psychological states (as in Bergman and Antonioni) or perhaps of some commentary by characters on incidents in the story (as in early Godard) (Cook, 1985, pp. 216-217).

It is by no means clear that characters cannot express their psychological states in linear narrative structures but the emphasis on digression in the narrative is clear. The downplaying of the importance of strong characters and strong actors in the first wave of auteur cinema is not at all evident.

Pam Cook notes for example that:

Fellini’s “personal cinema” contain a strong autobiographical element; although Bergman can be seen to “speak through” his characters he is never directly autobiographical. Fellini’s films often take up a non-intellectual, even anti-intellectual position, whereas Bergman is concerned with the problematic position of intellectuals in society. If Fellini identifies with “wise fools” the outcasts of society as offering insight and truth, Bergman identifies with the alienated intellectual, another kind of social cast” (Cook, 1985, p. 118).

This is a tremendous over simplification of the characters that appear in Bergman’s and Fellini’s films. In the case of Bergman, who is noted for his portrayal of strong female characters, it is by no

means clear that these characters are predominantly alienated intellectuals. Also in the case of Fellini's films the characters are also extremely complex and clearly have a life of their own that goes well beyond the autobiographical element.

### **Melancholic themes**

Genre films are based on goal-oriented characters wrapped up in a narrative journey. In this context, a good story is one in which we can identify with the main character and feel a sense of resolution at the end.

Auteur films, in particular second-wave auteur films tend to veer away from characters who have clear goals that they aim to attain. Hollywood films are sometimes derided for their childish enthusiasm and "happy ends".

By contrast many recent auteur films have a realistic setting often combined with a sad, melancholy atmosphere. This tradition is often claimed to have begun with the first wave auteur cinema, such as Italian neo-realism and the Nouvelle Vague. But whereas these movements sometimes attempted to revel in the absurdity of life, there was nonetheless a clear vigour, sense of humour and romanticism in many of the films.

There is often a much heavier sense of gloom and doom in more recent European auteur films.

The assertion that all Hollywood films have a "happy end" is also misleading. During the Hays Code the vast majority of films did have happy ends, but this changed radically from the late 1960s onwards. One only has to think of the tragic endings in Hollywood films such as *The Godfather*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)*, *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Thelma and Louise (1991)* which provide "catharsis" for the viewer.

There nonetheless remains an optimistic mood to Hollywood films which is typical of popular culture, with its roots in redskin approach, as explained above. This contrasts with the more subdued paleface approach. Hollywood emphasises that people's dreams can actually come true, which is a message that American society embraces.

As Max von Sydow explains:

Movie stars exist in America because there also exists the very legitimate dream of success. The American dream of climbing from total anonymity overnight to becoming something very exciting, successful and very rich is absolutely legitimate. Everybody wants or would like to experience this. And they are also generous enough to enjoy others who succeed at it. People somehow secretly identify themselves with this experience and dream about it. In my country [Sweden] you are not allowed to do that (Finney, 1993, p.7).

The melancholy atmosphere of many European films was also a typical characteristic of Eastern

European state cinema. As Polish director Jiri Menzel, comments:

“Regimes are afraid of humour because it’s more direct, clearer to the audience. Small nations and societies survive through humour. Sometimes it’s all they have. Look at Jewish humour. When I was a small boy, my mother used to scold me with humour, not anger. Irony is more painful; criticism by humour cuts straight into the conscience, wakes it up. It’s a much better way of communicating important things... Humour, satire doesn’t appear to threaten or destroy; it demolishes from within. It’s the ultimate subversion” (European Film Academy, 1994, p.38).

In Eastern Europe, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, state-sponsored cultural productions reflected the character types and settings which are considered appropriate for national behaviour.

In contemporary European cinema it is strange that art films tend to eschew comedy, but this may simply reflect the malaise facing the modern world.

### **Alternative technical styles**

Europe once had an elaborate “studio system” of production crafts which was devastated by the New Wave cinema, but has begun to recover in recent years, with higher investments in studio facilities that are used for shooting larger budget European films and also American productions attracted by tax incentive schemes.

The first wave of auteur films, including the Nouvelle Vague took to the streets, just as the neo-realists had before them, because it was the only way they could get their films made and because they wanted to show the “real face” of Paris and were influenced by new lightweight camera and sound equipment that made location shooting much easier.

The “Young Turks” paid great attention to the technical elements of their films and worked with Europe’s finest film craftsmen - such as Raoul Coutard who shot Godard’s early films. These techniques had a huge influence on the movie brat generation and the New Hollywood.

New Wave films were often fast-paced and revelled in film technology whereas many second wave auteur films tend to adopt a more austere filmmaking approach.

For example, on a purely technical level, film-makers such as Luc Besson, Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jean-Jacques Annaud or Jeunet and Caro were criticised for their style, identified as the films du look” or “advertising generation” directors.

The tendency to criticise high production values continues to be commonplace in European film criticism, as noted by Jeunet above.

### **Alternative acting styles**

In the early twentieth century Europe had a thriving theatrical community with figures such as

Max Reinhardt and Constantin Stanislavski who loved to experiment with acting technique. Stanislavski's theories of acting have had a particular significant effect on twentieth century film and theatre, but mainly in America rather than Europe.

European acting technique continues to be dictated by the national conservatories and places a far higher "cultural value" on theatre than cinema.

Immediate post-war European cinema gave tremendous opportunities to new actors and emphasised a more realistic, "redskin" style of acting. The success of leading directors was often linked to specific stars such as Anna Karina with Godard, Jean-Pierre Léaud with Truffaut, Ingrid Bergman with Rossellini, Liv Ullmann with Bergman, Monica Vitti with Antonioni, Marcello Mastroianni with Fellini and Hanna Schygulla with Fassbinder.

With the second wave of auteur films, many European actors complained that the number of interesting roles declined. This led French actress, Sophie Marceau to try to move to Hollywood because she believed that: "French films follow a basic formula... husband sleeps with Jeanne because Bernadette cuckolded him by sleeping with Christophe, and in the end they all go off to a restaurant. How many times can you act in that kind of film? The French cinema is in a deplorable state."<sup>203</sup>

The type of actors who are selected for the cinema is also severely limited. In the immediate post-war era, many actors were from humble origins such as Sophia Loren who grew up in a Naples slum or Lino Ventura who was an ex-boxer. Loren wrote in her autobiography, "I was born wise, street wise and with wisdom of the people. My wisdom. This was my birth certificate. I was born old too. And a bastard. But I had two privileges: to be born wise and poor."<sup>204</sup>

### **The social hierarchy of directors**

The "Young Turks" used the auteur theory to establish a pantheon of their favourite directors. These included many great names, but often led to disputes as to who should be included or not. One of the most controversial was Truffaut's choice of Sacha Guitry, who was claimed to be a "notorious collaborator" during the Nazi Occupation and was dubbed by leading critic Georges Sadoul as a "morose boulevardier". Other controversial choices were Antonioni, who Truffaut admitted he did not understand at all.

From the late 1960s onwards, with the second wave of auteur theory, the term "auteur" altered and effectively started to be used to determine which authors are appropriate to receive state funding.

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<sup>203</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/31/movies/at-cannes-synergy-is-a-no-show.html>

<sup>204</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1301908/Sophia-Loren-I-was-born-wise-Street-wise-people-wise-self-wise-This-wisdom-was-my>

Once accepted as a national “auteur”, a director could often receive state funding for life. This is despite the fact that many in the film industry, such as Jean Renoir and Pierre Braunberger have emphasised that most directors only have ten years of peak artistic performance.

In the new critical framework, fewer and fewer Hollywood directors were accepted as auteurs.

Directors who are disliked by the critics are sometimes accused of being “without culture”. For instance, the French critic Michel Ciment suggested that there is a “common practice of amnesia which goes in hand with an anti-cultural, anti-intellectual attitude... Luc Besson, an immensely popular director, admitted along the same line, that he had no particular knowledge about the history of his art.” (Finney, 1993, p.27).

Wim Wenders extended this cultural ignorance to the majority of American writers and directors: “The Young American film-makers’ background is less about learning film culture, but knowing about the marketplace” (Finney, 1993, p.7).

This emphasis on culture, has created a Gentlemen versus Players dichotomy in Europe. This is an old tendency in European cinema, as pointed out in 1957 by the British magazine, *Films and Filming*: “The reason so little new talent is being discovered here in Britain lies in the appalling delight the British take in being amateur. “Amateur” clouds the half hearted, the fear of the unconventional, the satisfaction with the second rate and the zest the British show for forming little societies in which they can exert their own authority.”<sup>205</sup>

Many of Europe’s directors feel alienated by the present cinematic environment. Jean-Jacques Annaud stated: “I come from a country which has the ultimate elitism, where it is a way of life. I’m a kid from the suburbs - an Alan Parker kind of boy....I was always criticised for my attitude. Criticized because my movies were doing well, criticized for apparently always picking easy subjects...I’m a threat in my own country” (European Film Academy, 1994, p.38).

### **The disappearance of the screenwriter**

The emphasis by the “Young Turks” on the role of the director, tended to underplay the role of the screenwriter. Nonetheless Truffaut was an avid screenwriter and Godard prepared extensive notes for his films, especially his early films.

The “Young Turks” were in fact very open to collaboration. Godard’s *À Bout de Souffle (1960)* was based on a treatment by Truffaut and Godard later admitted that all the phases of his creative activity had been the result of teamwork.

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<sup>205</sup> *Films and Filming*, June 1957. London: Brevet Publishing Limited

Nonetheless with the New Wave it became fashionable to believe that films were the product of the author-genius and could be made through improvisation, and this idea was further reinforced in the second wave of auteur films. This idea was associated with Godard, but he actually paid extreme attention to structure and preparation:

I improvise, certainly, but with material I've been working on for a long time" he said. "You collect many things over the years, and then suddenly bring them together. My first short films were extremely well planned and shot very quickly. A bout de souffle began in the same way. I had written the first scene (Jean Seberg on the Champs-Élysées) and for the rest I had a huge collection of notes, corresponding to each scene....it is not improvisation, but implementation at the last minute. Obviously you must know where you're going and stick to it...and once shooting begins, it must change as little as possible, otherwise it's catastrophic (Godard, 1957, p.29).

This emphasis on storyline and structure was inherited from Italy, whose leading directors had begun their careers as screenwriters and were complemented by great scribes such as Cesare Zavattini (who worked two years in Hollywood), Mario Camerini and Ennio Flaiano as well as writers such as Alberto Moravia.

The "Young Turks" were evasive about their scripts, above all as a defence against the French censor, who had the right to read and veto all scripts before they went into production. This was the flip side to France's famed respect for the "final cut". For instance, Godard had been forced to cut a shot of General de Gaulle from *À Bout de Souffle* and when asked about his scripts, generally replied, "sorry all materials lost during production".

By denying the existence of the script it was much easier for the "Young Turks" to slip under the censor's net. Examples included Godard's *Un Petit Soldat (1963)*, which was banned on completion in 1961 because it was considered to be an allegory of the war in Algeria (and was later released in 1963). Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* was also banned to all those under 18, and banned outright in Italy. Most famously, Rivette's *La Religieuse (1966)* was banned and only released after huge protest.

Subsequently, the role of the script and scriptwriter almost disappeared for several decades. Directors were encouraged to write their own scripts - in order to protect their "vision" and their "author rights" - and subsidies were granted on the basis of treatments and general confidence in the director.

The lack of concern for script tied in with the general contempt for narrative cinema. It started to be considered more artistic to write scenes the day before shooting or even better invent them on the spot.

Since the 1980s there has been a return to greater discipline in script-writing, particularly for "quality tradition" heritage films, but there remains widespread confusion about what European films should be about and how they should be told.

## **The “impossibility” for art to be popular**

Perhaps the most damaging of all the theories associated with auteur cinema is that art cannot be popular.

This required a significant rewriting of film history. It is sometimes claimed that all of Europe’s “art films” were commercial failures, and only made possible because of state subsidies and wealthy patrons. But in fact, as indicated in the annexes, the films of the Nouvelle Vague were highly profitable because of their low cost and healthy returns. In the case of Godard, it was the financial success of “A bout de souffle”, with 2.2 million admissions in France alone, rather than its critical acclaim which launched his career. Anatole Dauman, who produced many of the most important art films, emphasised that they were all commercially successful because they became “classics” and therefore had an extremely long shelf life.

The antithesis between art and popular success, nonetheless became widely accepted in the late 1960s. Anatole Dauman recalls the ideas of Volker Schloendorff (former head of Berlin-Brandenburg studios) in 1972, “the memory of May 1968 continued to haunt certain spirits. Suddenly, Volker evoked the theory that the artistic value of a film is inevitably compromised by its theatrical distribution, and that the higher the level of success, the greater the contamination” (Dauman, 1972, p.154).

The conflict between art and the “masses” was used to justify state funding of the cinema, even if the result was marginalisation.

Pam Cook explains this process in the BFI Cinema Book:

Since artistic activity cannot be totally rationalised according to the laws of profitability governing commodity production, if it is to survive at all it can only do so through state intervention in the form of subsidies, in which case the artist is guaranteed a minority prestige status, subsidised by a society of which only a tiny part represents his or her audience. The minority status of art can be seen to perform a double function: to guarantee critical approval for those who control it (the subsidising agencies) and to provide a safe, licensed space for artistic activity, necessarily marginalised. This marginalisation effectively neutralizes the potentially critical voice of the artist in society (Cook, 1985, p. 115).

## **National cinema**

Cinema is one of the most international media known to man, and yet in Europe it has become highly parochial. At one level the major domestic hits, primarily comedies, do not travel to other countries. At a second level, auteur films which do travel to foreign film festivals find it very difficult to cross over into the theatrical circuit. This is explained as a result of the inevitable minority appeal of art cinema and has led to the situation in which many European citizens and film-makers reject many of their “national films”, and yet these films are still called “national” because they carry the seal of the state.



Much of Hollywood was built by emigrant Europeans, and European talent continues to fuel Hollywood productions. But there is a risk that after becoming “exiles” filmmakers will be stripped of their right to be considered as an “artist” or part of “national heritage” because they abandon the state funding mechanisms.

The identification of “art cinema” and “national cinema” is thus not a quality judgement on European films but an expression of public policy, which tends to encourage specific types of film.

### **Public-service cinema**

Since the early 1970s the state has significantly increased its support for European cinema, bringing the cinema into the realm of “public service”.

The notion of public service fiction is strongest in the television sector, but is also extended to film since public service broadcasters and national film agencies are the main source of financing for European feature films.

The need for state support is claimed to derive from the “Young Turks”, but they were in fact strongly opposed to state control of the cinema. Truffaut was opposed to a subsidy dependent system and stated that he preferred a capitalist system. Many other filmmakers echoed this sentiment, such as Germany’s Fassbinder.

One of the problems is that without state funding Europe’s film industries would collapse.

Jean-Claude Carrière suggested that “If [the French production system] collapses not only will French cinema disappear, but with it the last vestiges of European cinema: farewell Wim Wenders, Andrzej Wajda, Pedro Almodovar, Theo Angelopoulos and so many others. And along with them every other maker of ambitious, poetic innovative cinema (cinema still coproduced on the French model) across the world: farewell Kurosawa, Mikhailov, Yi Mu and Souleyman Cissé.” (Carrière, 1994, p. 204).

The main risk with a state funded industry is that it may censor truly controversial and irreverent films. The powerful irreverence that was typical of film-makers such as Bergman, Fellini, Godard and Truffaut resulted from a market cinema and such irreverence, at least that which attains a broad audience, is now much rarer.

In the words of Istvan Szabo: “There is nobody in Europe who represents our feelings or insecurities. We don’t have any new ideas. When we have problems with our world, writers and film-makers don’t know what to represent, partly because Europe does not know how to live, or what to do. There are no European faces that capture a new idea, because we don’t have them” (Finney, 1993, p.19).

## **Fusion of Fiction and Documentary**

There are other important changes underway in European and worldwide film production. Antonio Weinrichter (Weinrichter, 2010) identifies several key trends in the field of documentary:

- Documentaries represent a kind of "narrative film".
  - There is a growing "hybridization" between "fiction cinema", "non-fiction cinema" and "experimental cinema" and between "commercial / industrial documentary" and "traditional documentary".
  - One of the great sources of cinema vitality has always been the relationship with the real world ("reality is stranger than fiction"), and the ability to leave the studio and film on the street was one of the great stimuli of New Wave and of cinema vérité.
- The digital revolution has had a huge impact on the field of documentary, with an explosion of distribution channels (thematic channels of television, the Internet, cinemas museums) and widespread access to the medium. ("The digital revolution seems to have brought more consequences for documentary than for fiction." (Weinrichter, 2010, p. 268).
- The documentary is at the center of a moving image revolution with a tremendous vitality: "We are living through a genuine renaissance of the relationship of the moving image with the real world, which goes beyond the scope of the conventional documentary to become a paradigm that is interdisciplinary and inter-institutional." (Weinrichter, 2010, p. 267)
  - The "documentary style" is increasingly used in fiction films, for example in series such as "The Office" or in horror films, where Weinrichter notes: "the horror film no longer needs to be gothic and expressionist; the simulation of reality is far more frightening " (Weinrichter, 2010, p. 273).
  - Techniques of fiction films are increasingly used in documentaries - music, special effects, sound effects, docudrama.
  - The documentary film paradigms, defined by such theorists as John Grierson and institutions like the BBC are in deep revolution.
  - Documentary and "documentary style" are increasingly used by independent film and experimental cinema - "the" mixed "terrain of non-fiction ... offers them more freedom than they would find in the rigid codes of fiction film.

Source: Weinrichter, 2010

These trends have important examples in Spanish and Portuguese cinema. In Portuguese cinema examples include Pedro Costa, Miguel Gomes and Catarina Mourão.

Given that Portuguese cinema is mostly "independent" cinema with a strong "experimental" tendency, these tendencies may be especially important for Portuguese cinema. Some of the biggest successes at international festivals have been in this fictional cross-documentary style, including the above-mentioned filmmakers.

The resurgence of documentary is also particularly important in a resource-poor country. In part, it is aligned with the digital revolution and a "punk" media use.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this chapter was to highlight the key characteristics of the second wave of auteur cinema, which are distinct from the first wave and have led to an effective marginalisation of the impact of European art cinema in European society. The next chapter will analyse the broader historical context to these changes.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DIVIDE BETWEEN AUTEUR AND GENRE CINEMA IN EUROPE

### **Summary**

This chapter aims to provide a broad historical overview of the attempts to use public policy to influence forms of cinematic expression and examples of films or filmmaking movements that have occupied a middle ground between auteur cinema and genre cinema. This is highly relevant for European cinema, given the high dependence upon public funding and is also relevant for American filmmaking, as explained below. It is important to underline that the chapter does not attempt to provide a comprehensive film history, which would require a separate volume in its own right. Instead it aims to identify specific examples of relevance for the overall argument presented in this thesis.

### **American Kulturkampf**

European cinema and culture in general has been subject to huge intellectual debate ever since the birth of the seventh art at the turn of the twentieth century.

By contrast, many Europeans have the impression that there is a calm consensus within America concerning the types of films that are produced in Hollywood. This is far from being true.

In order to gain a better understanding of some of the issues that have dogged European cinema over the last 100 years, it's useful to analyse the debate that has taken place in America concerning the role of the movies.

In the present context of the Trump presidency, much of the criticism from the right is focused on the news media, under the banner of "fake news". But Hollywood is also the target of fierce criticism.

In the late 1990s there were a series of texts criticising Hollywood in certain cases including a certain amount of anti-semitism – an issue that has dogged cinema since its birth on both sides of the Atlantic. They are referred to herein since they are of relevance to understand the turbulent history of the film business and attempts at state control.

Hollywood is the epitome of the American dream - where a nobody can rise from rags to riches - and is also perhaps the nation's best ambassador, selling America abroad and attracting new immigrants to her shores, as highlighted in David Puttnam's *The Undeclared War (1997)*.

But the movie colony has always been subject to severe criticism from the American Establishment and at various times been subject to a political and moral straitjacket.

In the 1920s many politicians believed a Federal Motion Picture Commission should be

established, and when the world slid into Depression and authoritarian regimes, a rigorous Hays Code was introduced.

The Catholic Women's Association announced its desire in 1933 that “the pest hole that infects the entire community with its obscene lascivious moving pictures, be cleansed and disinfected.”<sup>206</sup>

The Hays Code was distinct from European structures in that it did not involve state ownership or state subsidies. It was nonetheless a powerful form of censorship which was maintained until the mid 1960s. Its restrictive measures were amplified by the McCarthy witch-hunt, which led MPAA president Eric Johnston to affirm in 1947:

We'll have no more Grapes of Wrath. We'll have no more Tobacco Roads. We'll have no more films that show the seamy side of American life. We'll have no more pictures that deal with labour strikes. We'll have no more pictures that show the banker as villain.....[Hollywood] is entirely devoid of ideological leaning or sermonizing... we make light and frothy musicals, comedies, yes and sure “bang bang” pictures too, in which rustlers bite the dust when the brave cowboy takes after them.<sup>207</sup>

In the immediate post-war era, America was far stricter in moral censorship than Europe. The Old World's “sophisticated decadence” helped European films compete with their Hollywood rivals and was an important incentive for the Majors to invest.

Italian spaghetti western director, Corbucci, commented in the early 1960s “Our westerns are more emotional and more realistic, but let's face it, they are also more perverse. There is everything: drugs, savage cruelty. We kill babies too. Soon the Americans will understand how things are. For the time being, they remain attached to honest fights and legal duels.”<sup>208</sup>

By 1965 the restrictions of the Hays Code had brought Hollywood to a state of crisis. The average audience per film had dropped from 16 million in 1945 to little over 5 million. This was partly due to the impact of television and the freedom delivered by the automobile. It was also because Hollywood seemed to be out of touch with the times.

One of the first actions of incoming MPAA President Jack Valenti in 1965 was to abandon the Hays Code and introduce a self-imposed ratings system. This opened the floodgates to independent production and the “new Hollywood”.

Movie brats such as Coppola, Scorsese and Spielberg drew their inspiration from previously forbidden fruits - European art films and American exploitation pictures. Independent producers pumped

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<sup>206</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7EUG03/comedy/historicalcontext.html>

<sup>207</sup> John Steinbeck on the political capacities of everyday folk: moms, reds, and ma Joad's revolt.(Critical Essay) Publication:Polity Publish date:July 1, 2004 Author: Zirakzadeh (Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [//www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-123079658.html](http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-123079658.html))

<sup>208</sup> Cited in Leone's Lone Lady: A New Perspective on Women in *Once Upon A Time In The West* Mary Ann McDonald Carolan Fairfield University (Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [//tell.fl.purdue.edu/RLA-Archive/1999/Italian/MCDONALD.HTM](http://tell.fl.purdue.edu/RLA-Archive/1999/Italian/MCDONALD.HTM))

new talent into the system and Hollywood underwent a managerial and talent revolution that cut back production levels and boosted the average audience per film back towards 10 million. As a result they halted the slide in admissions and, perhaps inadvertently, paved the way to the construction of new media juggernauts.

The American New Wave was further fuelled by a migration of talent from Europe who felt unwelcome in the new subsidy regimes and helped Hollywood maintain her vitality and international appeal. As a result, Hollywood's "name" talent includes a high proportion of directors, in particular, and also of actors.

During the 1980s, the Majors began to re-establish the dominance over the business they had enjoyed during the Hays Code years. In the context of the digital revolution they became integrated within larger media conglomerates, as new players such as Apple, Amazon and Netflix have entered the fray.

As a result, there has been progressive shifting of economic power away from the old industrial powerhouses, and a new establishment based on hi-tech and the media has emerged.

These underlying developments are some of the key factors underpinning the "moral debate" which has raged in America over the last two decades. In the early 1990s, as the New Right began to consolidate its voice, several commentators began to accuse the movie colony of contaminating America (i.e. echoing views previously expressed in the late 1920s and early 1930s) and some went so far as suggesting that a modified form of the Hays Code should be re-imposed.

A particularly vocal expression of this campaign was a 1993 book by Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs America (1993)* in which he accused Hollywood of un-American activities. His attack was reminiscent of that by Reverend Martin Quigley (*Decency in Motion Pictures*) in the early 1930s which led to the formalisation of the Hays Code. Medved believes that in the transition from Old to New Hollywood between 1965 and 1969, "some unanticipated and still unidentified hydrogen bomb exploded on Hollywood - wiping out more than 60 per cent of the previously stable audience" (Medved, 1993, p. 277)<sup>209</sup>. He identifies "the bomb" as a tribe of subversive baby-boomers, "driven by some dark compulsion beyond simple greed" (Medved, 1993, p. 286). He suggests that they are fighting a culture-war against Middle America and that the only possible defence is public and corporate lobbying to take control of what he calls the "poison factory" (Medved, 1993, p. 12) and stamp out its pollution.

Medved is conscious that such theories usually result in anti-semitism. He urges Hollywood to clean up its act, and suggests that since the movie colony already imposes self-censorship on certain themes, such as "Holocaust revisionism" (Medved, 1993, p. 32), it should also bring back the family

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<sup>209</sup> This is a bogus statistic, for which Medved provides no evidence.

values that were defended by the Hays Code.

While the logic of Medved's arguments are sometimes dubious, he powerfully reveals the "civil war of values" (Medved, 1993, p. 23) that persists in America almost 20 years later. Medved's campaign against Hollywood is constructed as a populist plea to bring back Middle American values. He blames the "baby-boomers", but does not go any further in defining such a group or explaining how they seized power. He suggests that there is a huge ignored audience, but offers no explanations as to why nobody caters for it.

Other commentators have been explicitly anti-semitic. American mainstream media generally shun racial prejudice, but in Europe there is far greater freedom for such views to be expressed.

In the mid-1990s the British magazine *The Spectator* published several anti-semitic tracts in relation to Hollywood. A clarion call was a 1994 article by Tory MP and leading Euro-sceptic, William Cash, entitled *Kings of the Deal* (1994, article), in which he claimed that America is now being led by a "New Establishment" headed by the Jews in Hollywood and Silicon Valley. "Govern they always have" he stated, "That every major studio head is Jewish today is no different from sixty years ago" (Cash, 1994, article).

The main source of concern for Cash is that the old "military-industrial" elite based on the "old boy network and elitist WASP mentality" is being usurped by a Jewish "cabal" who run the information super-highways. He believes that the old elite must re-establish their social control over the communications media, asserting that: "The whole point of the "Establishment", as Henry Fairlie noted when coining the phrase in *The Spectator* back in 1955, is that its power is exercised socially." (Cash, 1994, article).

Cash defines the new Jewish elite as a "socially maladroit and culturally nihilistic white-sock meritocracy" (Cash, 1994, article) in contrast to the old "white-shoe" Establishment which he suggests are creators of culture. He mourns the era when moguls such as Louis B Mayer tried to emulate the behaviour of the aristocracy, albeit "comically".

This contrast between "old" and "new" values is also found in Medved's book, where he asserts that "In every society, ordinary folk have been able to cultivate a sense of style by aping the airs of the aristocracy; in this stubbornly democratic culture, the only aristocracy that counts for anything is the world of "celebrities" who appear on the tube and in the tabloids" (Medved, 1993, p. 261).

In moments of severe crisis there is always a strong tendency to search for a single scapegoat, or Judas. In 1995, senator Bob Dole claimed that "Hollywood's dream factories turn out nightmares of depravity" and asked entertainment executives, "you have sold your souls, but must you debase our

nation and threaten our children as well?"<sup>210</sup>.

Hollywood's creative community was appropriately horrified by these attacks. Milos Forman stated, "The first thing the Nazis and the Communists attacked were sex, deviation, pornography. Prostitution's older than censorship, you'll never beat it, but it was an excuse to inflict fear and impose power; everything else followed"<sup>211</sup> Kathryn Bigelow added: "They're using the movie industry in a political game. Rather than turning their attention to the cause of the social ills that are being represented in a film, they fault the errand boy."<sup>212</sup>

Inevitably, if art is going to play a central role in society than it is going to raise issues that many prefer were hidden away. The Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky once said, "the artist cannot express the moral idea of his time unless he touches all its running sores, unless he suffers and lives these sores himself" (Tarkovsky, 1989, p.168).

This is why artists have always been feared by the authorities, and why it is important to keep the state at arms length from all forms of personal expression.

Many people would agree that there has been a breakdown in moral and community values throughout the world and that although we've entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are still suffering from a "fin de millenium" malaise.

The "culture war" that still rages in America – and if anything was amplified by the election of Barack Obama as President and then further amplified by Trump's election - is merely one manifestation of a general identity crisis the country is undergoing.

History has nonetheless shown that state censorship in the name of "wholesome" values has usually been a cloak used to introduce dictatorial measures. But the growing fears of Middle America, and the willingness of politicians to fuel these anxieties, are an ominous sign that such censorship may still be just around the corner.

### **The Most Important Art**

The idea that Europe's culture is in peril and that the continent is on the brink of barbarism was a constant theme throughout the twentieth century and continues today.

Many cultural commentators – from all sides of the political spectrum - suggest that modern capitalism is incompatible with culture, and therefore the destruction of European cinema is yet one

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<sup>210</sup> Time Magazine: Dole Defends Attack On Hollywood Thursday, June 01, 1995 [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,3972,00.html#ixzz1NfhfHo28](http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,3972,00.html#ixzz1NfhfHo28)

<sup>211</sup> Milos Forman: Defender of the Artist and the Common Man by Kevin Lewis, Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/milos\\_forman.htm](http://www.zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/milos_forman.htm)

<sup>212</sup> Index on Censorship: The Subversive Eye, 1996, p. 80



more example of the world's degeneration into barbarism.

The cultural policy of Eastern Europe in particular, placed a particularly high value on culture and cultural education. As Polish director, Kiesloswki explains "Paradoxically, people engaged in cultural censorship have an interest in maintaining a culture of quality because their own role depends on its existence. Without culture, censorship loses its *raison d'être*"<sup>213</sup>.

Censorship in authoritarian regimes aims to create the illusion of freedom through what may be termed as "positive censorship". Films are not rejected because they are politically incorrect, but because they are branded as un-artistic.

In authoritarian regimes, the author is adulated as long as he meets certain cultural criteria. Such regimes distinguish themselves from capitalist systems that relegate the "author" to a mere employee.

"In Eastern Europe it was like being kept in a zoo" says Milos Forman, "you were in a cage but there was a roof over your head and someone fed you every day. In the USA, it's the jungle: you're free to go wherever you like, but everyone's out there trying to kill you. In Communist countries there's a recipe, a formula for everything. There are no signs hung out in Hollywood. You make what people want to see and what market forces determine they want"<sup>214</sup>.

When Polanski moved from Poland to Western Europe in the 1960s, a film critic highlighted the "immense difference in the situation of a creative film-maker in Eastern Europe and in the West... In the East... if one chooses to avoid all political taboos and is able to keep within the confines set by the budget and limited technical resources, practising the profession is certainly much easier, at least for the film-makers already established. In the West, a much more aggressive attitude to one's potential public is demanded, in putting across whatever attractions the film means to offer" (Polanski, 1975, p. 8).

Today, a considerable proportion of European cinema has been removed from market forces and a new line of cultural fortifications have been established – that some commentators have described as "Fortress Europe". The new cultural division is not so much East-West, but rather Europe vs America.

In the immediate post-war period, the liberalism of European cinema was a key propaganda tool in undermining the Communist regimes, but after 1968, Europe shifted to the second wave of "auteur cinema", with television catering for popular culture.

What is rarely recognised is that this change occurred on both sides of the iron curtain. For instance, Zsolt Kezdi-Kovacs, manager of the Magyar film export agency complained "The problem is that there are really no producers here, in the way it's known in America. It's still the director who

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<sup>213</sup> Index on Censorship: The Subversive Eye p. 110

<sup>214</sup> Index on Censorship: The Subversive Eye p. 133

completely controls the film. With the government still subsidising the industry through the HMPF, there's no challenge, no competitiveness. Just look at the audience numbers for Hungarian films"<sup>215</sup>.

The "political" role of culture is nothing new in Europe. Ever since the age of Louis XIV, the propagation of national culture has been considered to be the prime mission of the state and at the social level, "possession" of culture has been used to separate the social classes.

As new nation states emerged from the fifteenth century onwards, the legitimizing justification provided for the aristocracy shifted from military might, towards "culture" and "enlightenment". The concept of the aristocracy as "patrons of the arts", was used to justify their superiority over the uncultured masses.

Possession of culture is particularly important in Europe and is used to distinguish between patricians and plebeians and in general between Europeans and Americans.

It is not only Americans who are accused of being barbarians. Commentators are quick to blame Europe's own "TV generation" or "trash generation" and several critics have suggested that "national cinemas" are on the decline because of the general ignorance of the younger generation, many of who seldom read film criticism and seldom go to the cinema unless it is to see Hollywood products.

Hollywood films are typically defined as visceral thrills contrasted with Europe's more "intelligent entertainment". According to Maria Pia Fusco, jury member for Europe's Felix Awards:

European film is not concerned with the powerful emotions of astral wars, of infantile stories set in the future, of soft eroticism, of basic drives or of spectacular bloody battles between avenging policeman and ferocious criminal gangs...European directors are concerned with emotions that are less sensational and not so vociferously expressed. They narrate the fears of real life and move between values and feelings shared by all human beings: they follow the difficult path of poetry. (Finney, 1993, p.28)

French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière suggested that "our two traditions, which have always co-existed, most often in total harmony, cannot possibly be amalgamated. It would be like asking a soccer team and an American football team to take the field together. Clearly impossible... two radically different conceptions are at war" (Carrière, 1995, p.195-197). This argument is used by some to justify the creation of a separate state-sponsored distribution network for European films but is only a very partial view of Europe's cinematic heritage.

As a result of this dichotomy between American commercial cinema and European "art cinema", Europe's media groups have made major investments in Hollywood films to fill their mainstream screens. They have also attempted to finance domestic productions with equivalent appeal, including some

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<sup>215</sup> *Variety*, 16 August, 1993

copycat films, while also nurturing new talent.

European directors who do not feel comfortable working within “cultural cinema” orient themselves towards Hollywood. However, since the mid 1990s, many commercially-minded European directors such as Luc Besson, have succeeded in consolidating a European base while continuing to tap into US financing.

Colin Young when working at the European Film Studio suggested, “I think we can all agree that somewhere along the line something went wrong after the Nouvelle Vague - somehow the roles of the writer, director and producer were confused, often rolled into one”<sup>216</sup>.

The Nouvelle Vague had a very specific historical context, which included a massive admiration for American literature and cinema and a strong identification with the spirit of rebellion, youth and “modernity”.

The cinematic techniques and themes of the Nouvelle Vague are in fact rarely present in contemporary European “auteur films”. The Nouvelle Vague is also not very popular with European programmers, despite the fact that it is alleged to be the heart of European culture. For instance Spanish rights buyer, Pere Fages claims that he suffered by buying up the rights to many Nouvelle Vague films, “I never imagined that the tastes of both the television companies and perhaps the public would move so violently away from these classic art films and prefer the type of films that were made in the 1950s.”<sup>217</sup>

To understand how the Nouvelle Vague evolved into a more erudite “cinema de auteur” requires a fuller understanding of Europe’s film-making traditions.

### **Propaganda Cinema (1920s-1945)**

The birth of cinema took the European Establishment by surprise. They ran screaming from the first projection at the Grand Café, not only because of the shock of seeing a train arrive in a station but one could suggest, metaphorically, also because of fear of what might follow.

The Russian writer, Maxim Gorky wrote in his 1896 article, “Life Devoid of Words” that “Yesterday I was in the kingdom of the shadows...Terrifying to watch, it is the movement of shadows, mere shadows. Curses and ghosts, evil spirits that have cast whole cities into eternal sleep...you feel as though Merlin is casting a malevolent spell upon you” (Gorky, 1896, article) .

Tsar Nicolas II wrote in 1913, “I consider that the cinema is an empty, totally useless and even harmful form of entertainment. Only an abnormal person could place this farcical business on a par with

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<sup>216</sup> Interview with me while writing *The Movie Game*, Cannes, May 12, 1996

<sup>217</sup> Interview with me while writing *The Movie Game*, Cannes, May 15, 1996

art. It is commonplace rubbish and no importance whatsoever should be attached to such stupidities” (Taylor, 1979, p.1).

Lewis J. Selznick replied with a telegram immediately after the Russian revolution: “When I was a poor boy in Kiev some of your policemen were not kind to me or my people. I came to American and prospered. Now hear with regret you are out of a job over there... if you will come to New York, can give you fine position acting in pictures. Salary no object”<sup>218</sup>.

The invention of the cinema sent shock-waves throughout the European establishment. It appeared to be a “universal language” and a “pretender to culture”, which cut through illiteracy and would rob the European elites of their power base over the masses. As a result cinema was quickly considered to be “propaganda” and as such should be controlled by government authorities.

The campaign to assert state control over “national culture” increased after the German and Russian revolutions, and was intensified by authoritarian regimes. These regimes focused on certain popular and modernist films as examples of “degenerate art” which they claimed to be undermining the social fabric. Above all they identified this “degeneration” with the Jews. This initiated a migration of creative talent towards France and Britain and for many, then on to America.

This exodus played a key role in revitalising British and French cinemas, as a result of producers such as Korda, Pressburger, Mnouchkine, Siritzy, Deutschmeister, Hakim, Dorfmann and the Salkinds. But the arrival of these “foreigners” also polarised the political debate. Both Britain and France were caught between their instinct for social conservatism and their commitment to laissez-faire liberalism.

In Britain, the 1936 Moyne Report (Report of a Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the position of British films) concluded “the propaganda value of the film cannot be over-emphasised. It is rivalled only by that of broadcasting and the press”<sup>219</sup>. These views helped convince the British authorities that national cinema was best kept in the safe hands of Methodist flour miller, J. Arthur Rank.

In France, the MPPDA had concluded at the end of the 1920s that France was the only European country who would never introduce film subsidies. But by the late 1930s there was an increasing admiration for the New Germany amongst some segments of the French educated classes and German films enjoyed close to a third of the French box office.

An official report on the film industry published in 1936 by the Conseil National Économique,

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<sup>218</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.seraphicpress.com/hidden-hollywood-casting-call-for-tzar-nicholas/>

<sup>219</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.terramedia.co.uk/reference/law/official\\_british\\_media\\_reports\\_film.htm#Moyne](http://www.terramedia.co.uk/reference/law/official_british_media_reports_film.htm#Moyne)

and coordinated by the Inspector of Finances, Guy de Carmoy<sup>220</sup>, suggested the creation of a national cinema centre, on the lines of that introduced in Germany.

The authoritarian fascist and communist regimes placed a great emphasis on cinema as a means of uniting the nation. Ironically it was these regimes which built the infrastructures that paved the way to the flourishing popular cinema in the immediate post-war era.

Propaganda cinema emphasised “quality” and “national” films. These included some explicit propaganda, but the vast majority focused on “culture” and certain populist genres.

Goebbels emphasised that “there is no particular value in having our stormtroopers march about on stage or screen. Their place is on the streets”.<sup>221</sup> Hitler said, “It makes me sick when I see political propaganda hiding under the guise of art. Let it be either art or politics.”<sup>222</sup>

Popular success was particularly important to authoritarian regimes in order to draw in crowds to watch propaganda newsreels. Many of the fiction films produced were melodramas and light comedies, which in Italy were dubbed “white telephone” films. This emphasis on “populist cinema” (sometimes with modernist undertones) established a surprisingly vibrant talent community, which later spawned Italian neo-realism.

In Portugal, the comedies produced in the 1940s followed a similar vein – creating a mythical view of Portugal of picturesque villages and streets with white linen hanging at the windows.

During the war, the Germans extended their system of state subsidies, regulation and film education to all occupied territories. Goebbels was particularly obsessed with breaking French cultural hegemony in Europe and wrote in his diaries 1942-43<sup>223</sup> that his cinema strategy was identical to that of the USA in relation to South America, wherein Germany aimed to become the leading cinematic force on the European continent.

Despite Goebbels instructions, the Occupation led to a surprising “golden age” of French cinema, and several classic films were produced during this period. Some of these films – such as Henri-Georges Clouzot 1943 film, *Le Corbeau* - criticised the values of bourgeois France.

### **Hollywood in Europe (1945-1960s)**

The Liberation brought a new spirit of freedom and cultural renewal that enabled Europe’s creative community to re-establish creative links with the pre-fascist era and build new creative bridges

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<sup>220</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://howlingpixel.com/fr/Centre\\_national\\_du\\_cin%C3%A9ma\\_et\\_de\\_l%27image\\_anim%C3%A9e](https://howlingpixel.com/fr/Centre_national_du_cin%C3%A9ma_et_de_l%27image_anim%C3%A9e)

<sup>221</sup> Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema* (New York, 1975), p. 35.

<sup>222</sup> David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema: 1933-1945* (London, 2001), p. 37

<sup>223</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.amazon.com/Goebbels-Diaries-1942-1943-Joseph/dp/0837138159>

to America.

This “cultural renewal” began in Italy, partly due to the fact that Benito Mussolini had been committed to building a powerful film industry, urged on by his son Vittorio who was a producer and editor of the main film magazine, *Cinema*.

The *Cinema* magazine had been the meeting place of most of the important figures of post-war Italian cinema - Visconti, Rossellini, Fellini, de Sica and Antonioni.

Their “manifesto” was Visconti’s *Cadaveri* (1941) which attacked Italy’s geriatric producers: “If you are ever in the obligation to confer with one of these gentleman” he wrote, “and expose your dreams, illusions, faith, as they stare at you through sleepless eyes accustomed to sombre orbits, you have the impression of witnessing the cold opaqueness of the dead.”<sup>224</sup> “Their time is over” ...will the day never come when the young forces of our cinema can say clearly - put the corpses in the cemetery.” (Visconti, 1941, article).

The *Cinema* group’s references came from European modernism, high culture and popular culture and also included a strong admiration for contemporary American writers and film-makers. The group had already started making dynamic films during the war years, such as Visconti’s *Ossessione* and exploded onto the world scene in 1944 under the banner of “neo realism”.

The creative flowering of Italian neo-realism ran parallel with a rising interest by the Hollywood Majors in financing and distributing European films.

Europe had become by far the largest theatrical market in the world and the Hollywood Majors had blocked currency in Europe and also the right to access automatic subsidies. This led to many Hollywood productions in Europe and also significant backing for “foreign language” films.

The Majors had production agreements with Europe’s adventuring producers such as Sam Spiegel, Emeric Pressburger, Raoul Lévy, Alberto Grimaldi, Dino de Laurentiis and Carlo Ponti.

Producer Piere Braunberger had family links with Hollywood and started his career as assistant to Irving Thalberg.

By the 1960s in France, the Majors were actually earning more revenues from distributing European films than their own in-house product (Dale, 1997). Hollywood in Europe focused on popular genres and was attracted by looser censorship restrictions, which allowed “racy” European films to compete with Hollywood films produced under the more straitlaced Hays Code.

The support of the Hollywood Majors helped local films secure a stronger market share in their

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<sup>224</sup> Se vi si è mai presentata l’occasione di dover conferire con qualcuno di codesti signori e di dover esporre, con un filo di ripugnanza, i vostri sogni, le vostre illusioni, la vostra fede, vi avranno contemplato con l’occhio assente del sonnambulo, e in fondo alla loro orbita opaca vi sarà parso affiorasse il freddo della morte.

home territory and boosted exports within Europe and to the United States. By the mid 1960s, non English-language films from Europe had 5% of the US market – well over ten times their present level (source: *Variety*, author's analysis).

But the new liberated atmosphere brought a series of complaints from the state authorities that too much “dirty linen” was being shown. As early as 1949, Andreotti had introduced a law intended to prevent neo-realists from “washing dirty linen in public” and “slandering Italy abroad”<sup>225</sup>. The last straw was the explosion of popular culture in the 1960s which was the fruit of Europe's creative renewal and the presence of Hollywood in Europe.

Many critics focused on the fact that it was American “runaway finance” which was producing scandalous films such as Roger Vadim's *And God Created Woman* (1956).

In fact Hollywood was actually a key supporter of both Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave, as French critic, Jean-Michel Frodon notes “It was the advances paid by the American distributors which, paradoxically, enabled the new talents of French cinema to make their films, and gave Truffaut the means of his independence” (Frodon, 1995, p.13).

France and Germany were still in a state of shock in the immediate post-war years - France because of the humiliation of the Occupation, Germany because of the shame of military defeat and the Holocaust.

France seemed paralysed in comparison with her neighbour Italy, but during the 1950s a “new” culture began to emerge which spanned cinema, literature and the arts. In 1951 André Bazin set up the *Cahiers du Cinéma* which was the breeding ground for the “Young Turks” - Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Rivette and Chabrol. Bazin had great respect for Hollywood and aimed to break the elitist stranglehold over the cinema which reigned in France. “The American cinema is a classical art” he declared, “so why not admire in it what is most admirable, not only the talent of this or that filmmaker, but the genius of the system” (quoted in Schatz, 1993, p. 10).

The “Young Turks” shared Bazin's love of Hollywood films, silent cinema and Italian neo-realism. They used it to begin attacking the “cinéma de papa” that dominated in France. Truffaut's “A certain tendency of French cinema” (Truffaut, 1954), was reminiscent of Visconti's *Cadaveri*. He believed that French cinema was mediocre, bourgeois, out-dated and lacking in psychological subtlety.

Many European critics at the time, had a literary background Truffaut considered that they had a blinkered view of cinema, only reserving mild approval for the “Quality tradition films” produced nationally. Hollywood was often dismissed by Establishment voices as pandering to the lowest common

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<sup>225</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://savageminds.org/2009/02/21/washing-dirty-linen/>

denominator, and was also criticised by the Marxists as being classic expression of monopoly capitalism. The *Cahiers du Cinéma* staff loved Hollywood films, especially westerns, gangster films and film noir. Godard and Chabrol even worked as press attachés for Fox.

The “Young Turks” traced the personal and aesthetic roots of many Hollywood films to Europe, and praised Hollywood’s “bad boys” - who rode a fine line within the Hays Code. Their heroes included John Ford, Frank Capra, Howard Hawks, Joseph Mankiewicz, Nicholas Ray, Orson Welles, Aldred Hitchcock as well as European emigré directors, such as Ernst Lubitsch, Billy Wilder and Fritz Lang who had fled to Hollywood to escape from fascism.

Today it is difficult to imagine the sense of outrage that the “Young Turks”’ praise of Hollywood provoked.

The general climate of “cultural renewal” in France, led to an explosion of new literary and cinematic talent in the late 1950s. A breakthrough film was *And God Created Woman*, directed by Roger Vadim and produced by Raoul Lévy and co-financed by Columbia, which grossed over \$50 million in the US (at 2019 prices, source: *Variety*) and encouraged a new young breed of low budget film-makers.

This talent explosion included “mainstream” film-makers - such as Claude Zidi, Claude Lelouch, Jacques Demy or Edouard Molinaro – and also the “left bank” group of Resnais, Varda and Marker and the “right bank” “Young Turks” who were the heart of the Nouvelle Vague.

In Germany, the Nouvelle Vague inspired a new generation of German film-makers who wanted to explore similar themes and techniques. These include Kluge, Herzog and Wenders who were greatly influenced by Lotte Eisner at the French Cinémathèque. Eisner came from a German Jewish family and had fled to France to escape the Nazis. She sought to re-establish links with German’s pre-Nazi era and also cement cultural ties between France and Germany.

The new German film-makers signed the Oberhausen manifesto in 1962 in favour of a new cinema, which included the following statement:

Film needs to be more independent. Free from all usual conventions by the industry. Free from control of commercial partners. Free from the dictation of stakeholders.  
We have detailed spiritual, structural, and economic ideas about the production of new German cinema. Together we’re willing to take any risk. Conventional film is dead. We believe in the new film.<sup>226</sup>

The 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto helped justify the introduction of federal cultural subsidies in favour of this new “art cinema”.

It also coincided with an attack on the old generation of film-makers who had links with the Nazi

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<sup>226</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://nickvdk.tumblr.com/post/15582086642/oberhausener-manifesto>



era. A prime victim was Veit Harlan, who had risked execution after the war for having made *Jud Suss (1940)*, but then went on to make nine films in the 1950s. Harlan was a classic example of the Quality tradition that was overthrown by the new critical consensus.

### **The Nouvelle Vague**

In May 1958, in the midst of national crisis, a military putsch by French officers in Algeria, overthrew the Fourth Republic and placed General Charles de Gaulle at the head of a military junta. In December, he stood for election and was voted the first president of the Fifth Republic.

De Gaulle aimed to give France a new sense of restored pride, by breaking with the memory of the Occupation years and defining a new post-colonial role for France, intimately allied with Germany. One of his initiatives was to encourage the injection of fresh blood into the cinema.

The Nouvelle Vague coincided with the “cultural revolution” launched by General de Gaulle in 1958. But although De Gaulle encouraged the 170 young film-makers who made their first films between 1958 and 1963, the core of the Nouvelle Vague was surprisingly capitalistic and dependent on Hollywood financing and classic creative producers such as Pierre Braunberger, Anatole Dauman and Georges Beauregard.

“At the beginning of the 1960s, a glorious fanfare heralded in a new era in the history of cinema” writes French critic, Jean-Michel Frodon, “waged by a group of self assured youngsters... but ultimately, despite glorious battles and many conquests, their victory was hollow. The art of the twentieth century has lost her throne. Betrayals and compromises have forced the deposed hero to fight a guerilla resistance in order to survive” (Frodon, 1995, p. 3, my translation).

De Gaulle’s ascension to power coincided with the premiere of films such as *Hiroshima mon Amour* and *Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959)*, but as Jean-Michel Frodon explains there were more important structural changes underfoot:

“It is not only a new style of cinema which was born at this time, but a new organisation for the entire film industry, in tune with overall changes in society. In transferring the CNC from the Ministry of Industry, to the new Minister of Cultural Affairs, the state showed that in its eyes...cinema should be considered first and foremost as “culture”. This was a fundamental break with the past, offering a new vision not only of cinema but of the entire role of culture within society” (Frodon, 1995, p. 13, my translation).

De Gaulle himself had demonstrated an ambiguous relationship towards the control mechanisms set up by the Germans. After the Liberation he had decided to keep the state apparatus established

during the Occupation, and also maintained some of the key personnel including Louis Daquin who had been head of the news service 1940-41 and Robert Buron who was a leading anti-semitic at the COIC and was then made Minister of Public Works.

After 1958, de Gaulle inspired a concerted effort amongst the French establishment to “spring clean” French culture. This was linked to his overall vision that “order” in France required the cultivation of powerful technocratic elites, furnished by elite “grandes écoles”.

The Nouvelle Vague was actually a term invented by the journalist, Françoise Giroud, and was only a pawn in this wider battle. Claude Chabrol commented at the time, “The quality press has spent so much time talking about us because they want to identify de Gaulle with renewal. In the cinema as in other areas. The General arrives, the Republic changes. France is reborn... and we’ve been promoted like a new brand of soap” (quoted in Frodon, 1995, p.40, my translation).

During the 1960s, all expressions of popular film culture came under attack. A prime target was Henri-Georges Clouzot, who was renowned for his cutting observation of bourgeois morals. Clouzot suffered a stroke in 1961 and only made two more films. Another victim was Marcel Carné who made *Les Enfants du Paradis* under the German Occupation and later claimed that he was assassinated in the press and that the Nouvelle Vague wanted to destroy existing cinema in order to replace it with their own ideas (Frodon, 1995).

The leading French producers were shocked by this press campaign against their best directors. In 1961 Pierre Braunberger actually threatened to resign from the committee dealing with *art et essai* films, because the judges considered Godard’s films to be lacking in any artistic merit. He had to write to the Minister of Culture, André Malraux to get the decision overturned.

### **The second wave of auteur theory (late 1960s-1990s)**

By the late 1960s, the Nouvelle Vague began to lose steam and was superseded by a second wave of auteur cinema. When Godard was asked what he thought about the new breed of French directors he said, “They act like bureaucrats, they make bureaucratic drama, and then call themselves “auteurs... The Centre is the kapo, and filled with people who know nothing about cinema. The fewer films we make in France, the more bureaucrats there are at the Centre. It is a political organisation which acts to the detriment of both the industry and the aesthetics of cinema” (Godard, 1991, p. 38).

Godard was even more critical of the intervention of state television in the cinema and directors dependent on television and the CNC.

They prefer begging from a boss to give them the money to make their next masterpiece. They act like civil servants. They have the dramas of civil servants. They claim to be "auteurs": I have my own language that just belongs to me, I'm going to study on my own, I don't need to listen to neighbours. Well as for me, after working for 10 years in the cinema, I realised that if I didn't have a neighbour, I wouldn't have anything less to say! (Godard, 1991, p. 65)

Truffaut considered that he did not belong to the new state-supported cinema developing in France. Nevertheless, Godard and Truffaut were often cited as the canonical references - "a new cult complete with gods and high priests" in the words of Jean-Claude Carrière (Carrière, 1994, p. 32).

In this manner a new theory of erudite cinema was created that had a major impact on European film genres and narrative codes.

The second wave of auteur theory aimed to control all the bastions of film discourse - from the quality press to the most erudite film journals. As the *Cahiers du Cinéma* adopted a new theoretical paradigm this created an increasing distance between itself and the "Young Turks". But this reflected a wider frustration felt by film-makers with the entire political and cultural climate in Europe, which had come to a head in May 1968, where the "Young Turks" expressed their total opposition to the new measures being introduced by de Gaulle which they perceived as authoritarian.

May 1968 was also a turning point in Europe, and led to a fundamental shift in US-European relations. It was also a revolutionary outburst which struck fear into the authorities and heightened the demand for social control.

Theories of erudite cinema had already established an elitist cultural outlook for European cinema which was now used to direct state cultural subsidies towards niche "culture" films. State television began investing in cinema within the same remit. This meant that there was growing state control of the film industry - at the very time that censorship was officially abandoned.

Of equal importance was the change in ownership of Europe's leading film companies that occurred between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s, with rationalisation programmes that drastically reduced the exhibition sector.

Simultaneously, the critics, fuelled by high theory, stepped up their attack on Europe's most successful film-makers. Even Ingmar Bergman suffered from extreme criticism. He decided to leave his native Sweden in 1976 claiming that he was being unjustly hounded. Film critic Peter Cowie explained that Ingmar Bergman touched the delicate nerves of morals and religious conservatism that led Swedes to denounce him (Cowie, 1992).

## Reluctant Exiles (1960s Onwards)

Flamboyance, irreverence, non-conformity are the key attributes of interesting film characters, as well as the ingredients for a healthy creative community. Historically the type of individuals that are needed to create a vibrant film industry have come under criticism.

The New Wave films were pioneered by many individuals who had been directly affected by the horrors of the second world war, such as Polish-born producer Anatole Dauman who lost several members of his family in the Holocaust and fought in the Resistance.

It is no accident that Hollywood was built by moguls that were virtually all born within a 500 mile radius of Warsaw - the epicentre of the Holocaust. The movie colony was driven by first generation Europeans, and has been constantly renewed by European "exiles" who felt frustrated in their home territories.

European cinema in its most vibrant periods - the silent era and the immediate inter-war years - was also led by producers and talent very similar in mix to that found in Hollywood. Many were what Raoul Levy called "Livoniens", described by his biographer as "producers who had come in the main from central Europe, all of them Jewish, flamboyant, and bankrupt. Examples included Deutchmeister, Bokron, Gordine, Berscholtz, Mnouchkine, Siritzki. "Most of them with heavy French accents reminiscent of railway porters. Some of them completely uncultured, apart from the mental arithmetic needed to calculate a profit in a couple of seconds. But all with this crazy industry in their blood." (Bauby, 1995, p. 30).

Hollywood is continually accused of raiding European talent in order to undermine Europe but there were a series of talent drifts during the twentieth century. The first was during the First World War, with actors such as Max Linder and Charles Chaplin heading for America in order to carry on working.

The second was during the 1920s as talent such as Ernst Lubitsch and Pola Negri, emigrated to Hollywood because of the rising tide of censorship in their home territories. They were recruited by fellow Europeans.

The third - and greatest exodus - was during the 1930s after the election of the National Socialists. Hollywood began to resemble the atmosphere of *Casablanca* (1942) (directed by Hungary's Mihaly Kertesz, aka Michael Curtiz).

In the immediate post-war period there was unprecedented level of freedom of expression in Europe. There was also a flood of talent from Hollywood to escape from the McCarthy witch-hunt and the straitjacket of the Hays Code.

From the late 1960s onwards the tide moved back in America's favour. Hollywood withdrew its

production presence from Europe, and many European film-makers such as Antonioni, Costa-Gavras, Louis Malle, Roman Polanski and Milos Forman, as well as producers such as Dino de Laurentiis, John Daly and John Heyman shifted their attentions to America.

Some left for reasons of personal safety. For instance Jiri Menzel suggests, "Milos [Forman] had to go. He made different, very good movies out there he couldn't have made if he'd stayed. After the Firemen's Ball, they were after him. Like Chagall, if he hadn't gone - (making a graphic slice with his forefinger across his throat) - they might have killed him."<sup>227</sup>

Since the mid 1990s there has been greater opportunity to work on both sides of the Atlantic and several leading directors and actors have succeeded in forging careers between these two poles.

### **Discordant Voices (1990s)**

By the mid-1990s European cinema was in the doldrums. Hollywood seemed to have won the audience battle hands down and the downward slide of national cinemas seemed to be irreversible.

The critical consensus was that film was "dead".

During this same period, the European Community, via the newly launched MEDIA programme, was encouraging debate on how to reverse this situation and rebuild at least some of the floundering European film industry.

European production was often described at the time as if it were identical to the films produced in the 1960s, and that the only change had been that the public has lost its appetite for such intelligent entertainment. Many commentators derided the Americanised tastes of the younger generation – in terms of both critics and audiences.

One of the main targets of frustration for young European film-makers were the Kafkaesque bureaucratic structures and what appeared to be a "cultural fortress" sealed in bureaucratic barbed wire, that makes it very difficult for genuine talent to break through.

As Caitlin Buchman of Film Strategies argued, "I don't think you're going to get great visionaries emerging from a system that rewards being part of the gang, or gives praise for playing it safe and kissing ass. Bureaucracy is traditionally unkind to people who are truly revolutionary" (Finney, 1993, p38).

Time and again, critics of the European system identified the tendency to "think small" and mediocrity.

John Heyman added, "In our Nescafé society, mediocrity is spreading everywhere. In Europe it's rife. The Americans are probably as mediocre as the next man, but by God they've got energy. In Europe

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<sup>227</sup> Index on Censorship, 6/1995 p. 120

there's a terrible creeping lethargy"<sup>228</sup>.

Cinema was recognised in America from the very beginning as a "popular" and "democratic" art that cut through social divisions and illiteracy. It was precisely this character that led the state to insist on government regulations to preserve "culture". Robert Sklar explains in *Movie-Made America* how the movies were the first medium of entertainment and cultural information to be controlled by men who did not share the ethnic or religious backgrounds of the traditional cultural elites.

Hollywood vaunted the democratic aspect of film whereas Europe has always remained ambivalent. In 1972 Truffaut commented, "A few years back, cinematographic audacity - eroticism, violence, politics - came from European productions. Today, American cinema has gone way beyond Europe in terms of insolence and freedom of expression"<sup>229</sup> (Truffaut, 1985, p. 334).

Costa-Gavras concurred in 1982 after making *Missing in the US*:

Thank God we can still make films like this in this country...There aren't too many countries in the world in which you can do that. My film *Special Section* was received with extreme coldness in France. It touched a painful spot, especially since the judicial system in the country hasn't changed much since the 1940s. The same goes for films about the harsh treatment of the Jews during the occupation. By contrast in America I see a question of regeneration.<sup>230</sup>

Godard stated in 1980:

I have now reached the conclusion that if the United States dominates the world, it's because it's the only country where there still exists, or comes closest to, democracy (...) American cinema is strong because it represents that spirit. That's the only reason why American films are so loved throughout the four corners of the world. (Godard, 1991, p.182, my translation)

It was the "democratising" and "universal" quality of cinema that caused it to be quickly identified in Europe as a dangerous invention to be controlled at all costs. By the mid-1990s many commissioning editors in public service broadcasters in Europe, had a clear cultural remit to focus on auteur films. This situation began to change with the growth of private broadcasters on the continent (see below).

Dimitri Balakoff of the European Academy for Film and TV stated in 1996:

It is unrealistic to consider the sector of art films as the future of European cinema. It is morally and intellectually dangerous to isolate the European cinema in this "elitist" sphere, implying that the majority of the European audience is stupid and ignorant because it prefers American movies. (Finney, 1993, p.29).

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with the author for the "The Movie Game", in London, April 12, 1996.

<sup>229</sup> Hitchcock: Truffaut p. 334.

<sup>230</sup> Film Comment Mar-April 1982.

Author Angus Finney concurred:

Popular film-making and cinema at its most potent and effective is a direct relation of the society we live in, with all its dysfunctions, obsessions, trends, myths and cultural reference points. If European films are to expand their audiences, then our film-makers need to increase their relevance, and Europe's cultural curators must cease confusing mass audiences with mob rule (Finney, 1993, p.14).

A 1995 BFI documentary by Stephen Frears, *Typically British (1995)*<sup>231</sup>, suggested that the British film industry has always been run like an elite public school, and in essence represents middle class cinema.

Commentators suggested that by the mid 1990s film-makers and commissioning editors throughout Europe were overseen by benign "trustees" who keep a careful eye for anything that might be construed as "unfair" or to cause "public offence". Many of Europe's commissioning editors were given a brief to produce "small films" which could be celebrated as "art". For instance, one of Europe's leading TV drama chiefs stated in an interview with me in 1996:

I am in the perfect position to build up a really dynamic film community here. I could use short films to find new talent, use my script development teams to get the best scripts and I'm sure I could attract the country's best directors many of whom are working in Hollywood. But the powers that be don't want me to even begin moving in that direction.<sup>232</sup>

The loss of popular and mythic roots in European cinema, means that the continent is no longer able to tell its own life story. Jean-Claude Carrière suggested that this is comparable to a man suffering a nervous break-down:

Should the individual story-link be shattered, for whatever mental or psychological reason, [the man/society in question] would be ejected from time's flow. He would cease to know anything, to know who he was or what he should do. He would clutch at the appearances of existence as at a straw. From a medical standpoint he would be adrift. His bodily mechanisms would still function, but he would be lost along the way. He would no longer exist. (Carrière, 1994, p. 226).

This raises the issue as to whether state support for European cinema may lead to forms of censorship, which has long been the bane of European art. Tolstoy once wrote:

You would not believe how, from the very commencement of my activity that horrible censor question has tormented me! I wanted to write what I felt, but all the time it occurred to me that what I write will not be permitted and involuntarily I had to abandon the work. I abandoned and went on abandoning and meanwhile the years passed away.<sup>233</sup>

When the cinema was invented there were strong demands for censorship as a result of its universal appeal. The Hays Code emphasised:

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<sup>231</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://mubi.com/films/typically-british-a-personal-history-of-british-cinema-by-stephen-frears>

<sup>232</sup> Interview with the author, for The Movie Game, 15 May, Cannes, 1996

<sup>233</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/the-cause-of-it-all/0/>

Most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at one to every class - the mature and the immature, the cultivated and the rude, the developed and the undeveloped, the self-respecting and the criminal...it reaches places unpenetrated by other forms of art...the latitude given to film material cannot, in consequence, be as wide as the latitude given to book material."<sup>234</sup>

During the 1970s, official state censorship was abandoned in most of Europe, but the rise of state funding for film and television, introduced the potential to influence free expression.

By the 1990s, politicians and political parties had secured unprecedented control over European society which extended to cinema, television and the press.

### **Re-orientation of public policy (2000s onwards)**

In line with the need to reconquer some of the market, state editorial policies have shifted towards more "commercial" genres such as comedy and reinforced automatic support systems.

The widespread implementation of tax incentive schemes have also benefited local films aimed at the market. The US majors have also increased their distribution of European films and many of the top national films in each market are actually distributed by the US Majors. The main exception is France which has strong local distributors such as Gaumont and Pathé.

This has been particularly evident in Germany, where starting in 1995 *Der Bewegte Mann* and a number of other local comedies helped the country recover from disastrous performance in 1994. Since then Germany has released a regular series of local comedies, such as the *Suck Me Shakespeare (2013)* franchise.

Back in 1996, Dieter Koslick, future head of the Berlin Film Festival, expressed pride in the results: "We're seeing a renaissance of German films. We're now getting good stories, new stars and backing from American distributors. We've seen a change in focus toward entertainment for the audience, toward faster, livelier stories that have something to do with the real world people live in."<sup>235</sup>

Since the late 1990s Europe's younger generations of filmmakers have been producing films that have clicked with national audience and even secured a certain degree of critical praise. Films such as *Le Gout des Autres (2000)*, *The Lives of Others (2006)* or *The Last Kiss (2006)*.

There have also been movements of contemporary "Young Turks", such as the Danish filmmakers associated with the "Dogme 95" movement, led by Lars von Trier.

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<sup>234</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://nhdmoviecensorship.weebly.com/hays-code.html>

<sup>235</sup> *Variety* 1 January, 1996



Beyond Europe, countries such as South Korea have developed commercially and culturally vibrant film industries and even in countries such as Morocco and Turkey films have served as an outlet for tackling national taboos and forging a new sense of national identity.

Key changes include the following:

- 1) The EU Commission's 2001 communication on state film funding introduced the "aid intensity" rule, which obliges state funding to be limited to 50% of production budgets except for "difficult films" in an attempt to foster market processes.
- 2) Member States have switched the emphasis towards automatic subsidy systems, complemented in many countries by tax breaks that have increased market-orientated films.
- 3) Pay TV channels, in particular the Canal- pan-European web have played key role in fostering the production of market-orientated films.
- 4) TV channels in general, in particular private TV channels have increased their investment in feature films, often due to legal impositions and have encouraged the production of market-orientated films.
- 5) Several media groups have attempted to build pan-European Majors – notably the PolyGram initiative in the 1990s, which ultimately failed, and Studio Canal.
- 6) State funding agencies have been restructured and made more commercially-orientated.
- 7) The MEDIA programme, followed by Creative Europe, has fostered the circulation of European films.
- 8) The MEDIA programme/ Creative Europe and national funding agencies have made a much greater commitment to training and script development, that has played a role in increasing the number of genre films produced in Europe.
- 9) The younger generation of filmmakers have focused on producing market-orientated films.
- 10) There is greater movement back and forth between Europe and Hollywood. European directors and actors alternate between Hollywood and national films.
- 11) There are stronger links with Latin America – which has been important for Spanish films. The LA-based "Tres Amigos" – 3 Mexican filmmakers - Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón, and Alejandro González Iñárritu – have been involved in productions with Spain, thus fostering new trends.

## Crossover films – les films du milieu (2010s)

Many European filmmakers have attempted to move beyond the codes of auteur cinema, and Europe has produced films that try to emulate the success of Hollywood blockbusters. European companies such as StudioCanal have also invested in films in partnership with the US Majors. The existence of tax incentive schemes across Europe has also attracted many Hollywood productions to Europe.

There are also French directors such as Luc Besson (*Valerian*) who try produce European blockbusters.

In the middle ground between auteur and genre cinema there has also been some interesting developments, including “les films du milieu” movement in France and crime drama films and TV series produced in Scandinavia, with films that combine genre and auteur elements.

In the context of European cinema, many younger filmmakers also seek to combine genre and auteur elements, such as the “films du milieu” in France.<sup>236</sup>

In 2007 a group of 13 French filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors<sup>237</sup>, at the initiative of female director Pascale Ferran, wrote a 194-page report - “Le milieu n'est plus un pont mais une faille” (The middle is no longer a bridge but a fault) – and in 2008 formed a group called the Club des 13, intended to lobby the authorities in favour of the “films du milieu” – mid-budget films that cross auteur and genre elements which they felt were being squeezed out of the system.

The main conclusions of the 2007 report<sup>238</sup> included the following:

- The overall quality of French films has declined, notwithstanding the high level of public funding. This is partly due to polarisation between high-budget commercial films and low-budget auteur films with decreasing space in the middle.
- Filmmakers who want to combine both elements can't raise funding for their films.
- There is a shortage of new talent (although they note the importance of newcomers such as Céline Sciamma (*Water Lilies/ La Naissance Des Pieuvres*) and Mia Hansen-Love (*All Is Forgiven*))
- Increasing focus within the public funding system on the power of broadcasters and merchandising.
- The “films du milieu” have the best potential for foreign exports, after the films by Luc Besson.
- The balance between automatic and selective support systems has been lost with increasing use of the

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<sup>236</sup> See my article: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2017/film/spotlight/rendez-vous-with-french-cinema-new-york-put-focus-on-female-filmmakers-1201999404/#!>

<sup>237</sup> Cécile Vargaftig, scénariste, Jacques Audiard, réalisateur, Pascale Ferran, réalisatrice Claude Miller († 4 avril 2012), réalisateur, Denis Freyd, producteur, Arnaud Louvet, producteur, Patrick Sobelman, producteur, Edouard Weil, producteur, Fabienne Vonier, distributrice, Stéphane Goudet, critique, Claude-Éric Poiroux, exploitant, Jean-Jacques Ruttner, exploitant, François Yon, exportateur

<sup>238</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.cinemapublic.org/IMG/pdf/Le\\_Club\\_des\\_13\\_rapport.pdf](http://www.cinemapublic.org/IMG/pdf/Le_Club_des_13_rapport.pdf)

automatic support by broadcasters and media groups.

- Scripts are now written by several authors, who can't focus on a single project and with chronic underfunding of script development.
- Producers are not involved in the script stage and projects start shooting before the script is ready.
- Films supported by the *avance sur recettes* scheme are granted the same nominal amount as 15 years ago i.e. less money in real terms, and find it more difficult to gain funding from broadcasters.
- There is a formulaic approach to films – in both auteur films and so-called commercial films.

Source: Le Club des 13 rapport<sup>239</sup>

The Club des 13 filmmakers do not agree on a system based almost exclusively on the power of the director (classic auteur cinema) or on the producer (commercial cinema) but believe on a balance between producer, director and screenwriter. They think that the role of the scriptwriter in particular is increasingly undermined and recall the importance of scriptwriters and scriptwriters turned directors in the past, such as Jeanson, Audiard, Prévert, Guitry, Pagnol, Cocteau, Rohmer and Demy.

This is a key point since they consider that the role of the screenwriter in France has never been culturally recognised and consider that the *politique des auteurs* and the *Nouvelle Vague* was one of the factors that led to this situation.

The group claims that so-called commercial films have a television drama aesthetic which limits their potential for theatrical exhibition in France and abroad.

This creates a dichotomy between commercial films which avoid focusing on complex personal and social issues and auteur films in which funding commissions refrain from funding crossover projects such as comedies, which are considered to be too light.

This leads to ghettoization of auteur films and formulaic TV aesthetic approaches to commercial films.

In Scandinavia, the “Nordic Noir” movement of films and TV series has also explored a space between the auteur and genre cinema. Olof Hedling in his article *Notes on Nordic Noir as European Popular Culture* cites examples such as Niels Arden Oplev, 's *Män som hatar kvinnor* (2009), which sold over 1.217 million tickets in Swedish cinemas and a further 1.5 million admissions in Denmark and Norway. Its total admissions in Europe were over 9 million and it also led to a US remake. Hedling notes how Nordic Noir has become a familiar brand in North America and Europe since the 1990s, and in addition to films has been supplemented by high-profile television serials such as *Forbrydelsen* (Søren

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<sup>239</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.cinemapublic.org/IMG/pdf/Le\\_Club\\_des\\_13\\_rapport.pdf](http://www.cinemapublic.org/IMG/pdf/Le_Club_des_13_rapport.pdf)

Sveistrup, 2007), *Bron* (Hans Rosenfeldt, 2011) and *Wallander* (various authors, 1994-2014). He adds that transnational dissemination of the crime genre has paved the way for other crime drama formats, such as Danish political drama *Borgen* (Adam Price, 2010).

What interests Hedling is the potential to explore the mix between genre and auteur styles to achieve trans-national success and notes how this was previously achieved by film movements such as Italian cinema in the 1950s and 1960s, spy movies, the spaghetti western films and recent historical drama series such as *Downton Abbey*. He also notes the success of certain music groups from Scandinavia the most successful example being Abba. He concludes that it is nonetheless difficult to overcome the international perception that films and series from Scandinavia are likely to be dour and unappealing, especially for English-speaking countries:

To conclude, coming from a somewhat geographically isolated part of Europe, stereotypically associated with slow-paced, broody dramas and art cinema à la Bergman, if with any kind of films and television shows at all, the increasing transnational distribution and reception of Nordic Noir represents an indisputable advance. However, whatever the perceived success, the above accounted for instances of reception, particularly in the US and the UK, testifies to a situation where the effect of cultural discount still lingers on. Despite strategies of cultural adaptation, transculturation and attempts at making the geographic margins familiar, efforts to create transnational European audiovisual popular culture beyond the Anglophone sphere still seem hard fought. Notwithstanding Europeanisation, globalisation and transnationalism, the clash with the remnants of a traditional national identity and language remains (Hedling, 2014, p. 6).

The phenomenon of producing films that combine auteur and genre elements is found in many other countries. Another recent example in Portugal is the feature film *Variações* (2019) about pop singer António Variações, which recorded over 275,000 admissions in Portugal. In a review of the film, Luís Ferreira stated the following:

When we talk about Portuguese cinema, we normally talk about a spectrum whose points are usually at either end. At one end is “artistic” or “author” cinema, which wins awards at international festivals and is often critically acclaimed but is usually unable to have expression on the national scene. At the other end is so-called “commercial” cinema, that includes films that can get people into theatres (in moderate doses, of course), but which usually uses more repetitive formulae and with productions that often sloppy. *Variações* can be thought of as a film that represents a break in the auteur/genre dichotomy in Portuguese cinema.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.cinema7arte.com/variacoes-uma-luta-dentro-e-fora-da-tela/?fbclid=IwAR12KQaINZLGGexTwecpaITTx5cKYLO4ogfrtXEtV8QMmragi1wnWIDxU>. (my translation)

## **Conclusion**

The main goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the various constraints that have been placed on the freedom of filmmaking since the invention of the moving image and attempts to forge a middle ground between genre and auteur cinema. As mentioned at the start of this chapter there are many other films and film movements within this period not identified within this chapter. The main conclusions include the following:

- 1) The above analysis highlights the sea change introduced by the second wave of auteur cinema that reinforced the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema.
- 2) Given the significant increase in state subsidy support for European cinema, this raises the question as to whether such support, which is conditioned by film theory, effectively limits freedom of expression.
- 3) Given that safeguarding freedom of expression has been a key issue faced within the American and European film industries, the question of film theory is not a purely academic issue – it has a direct impact on the films that are funded and seen.
- 4) Producers of films and TV series that aim to reach wider audiences face a challenge to achieve cross over and transnational success since non-English language films and series tend to be associated with auteur approaches aimed at very narrow audiences.
- 5) All of these issues revolve around the question of what constitutes art in the field of moving images. The next chapter will address this question as the thesis moves towards the conclusion.

## PART FOUR – PROPOSED MODEL AND CONCLUSION

Part Four draws on the elements developed in this thesis to develop a general theoretical model for understanding films, that makes it possible to bridge the gap between auteur and genre cinema, followed by the conclusion that summarises the main findings and the areas of future research.

## CHAPTER TWELVE – THEORETICAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING FILMS

### Summary

Using the elements developed in this thesis we can develop a general theoretical model for understanding films that is able to bridge the divide between auteur and genre cinema. This chapter explores the links between mythic structures and the annual cycle of the seasons and analyses models such as the Shaman's Journey, Lover's Journey and Fisher King myth, models of the human psyche based on the division between mask and shadow, analysis of the importance of the drives of Eros and Thanatos, and the role of the Trickster character in stories.

### Introduction

The following key conclusions have been established so far in this thesis:

- 1) The digital environment has produced a new paradigm for moving images
- 2) Television series, documentaries and social media videos are playing an increasingly central role in modern communication, while cinema has progressively lost its centrality
- 3) Audiovisual communication is a new form of writing that involves dynamics that are distinct from text-based communication.
- 4) Audiovisual communication is able to create in the viewer prosthetic memories which means that it is a privileged means of tapping into non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" and the unconscious
- 5) The dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema is less and less relevant in the digital environment
- 6) Notwithstanding the loss of relevance of auteur cinema per se, understanding the potential poetic force of moving images is extremely important in order to understand the medium and also for creators.
- 7) Contemporary narrative cinema has been significantly influenced by theories developed by Joseph Campbell and applied by writers such as Christopher Vogler. Revisiting Campbell's works provides fresh insights into understanding narrative structures, including non-conventional and non-linear narratives.

Having reached this point it is now possible to trace a theoretical model. To begin with, I will analyse the key questions listed at the start of this thesis

## **How can we define a film with poetic force?**

This question is pertinent because on the basis of the arguments presented in this thesis one of the prime characteristics of “poetic force” are related to the capacity of a film to project the viewer into a different state of consciousness which has parallels with the dream state. Cognitive film theory emphasises the importance of emotional and sensorial engagement with films as a crucial element of the viewer’s experience and criticises semiotic analysis of films on these grounds, because they focus on questions of film form rather than the emotional engagement of films. If we define poetic force as being linked to non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious this goes beyond the primary focus of cognitive film theory – of emotions and sensorial reactions – and establishes a potential bridge with the ideas of Jung, Campbell and others, as defended herein.

If this argument is accepted – and the evidence provided in this thesis is intended to support that proposition – then it is perfectly possible for a film with a classic linear narrative and that with an alternative non-linear narrative to have poetic force.

Notwithstanding theories, such as those advocated by Maya Deren, which define a distinct mode of poetic cinema, which she defined as vertical links within the film, it is possible on this basis to conclude that a classic linear narrative may have poetic force.

This argument is further corroborated by the link between the narrative and the journey towards non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious. The arguments presented in this thesis provide evidence for understanding the filmic journey as moving towards an unknown world, which can be described at a metaphorical level as a “journey into the dark forest” and this journey has a key role in creating an altered state of consciousness in the viewer.

This does not imply that there must be a linear narrative structure, and this journey towards non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious may also be achieved by non-linear narrative structures.

However the key division in this regard is not between films in fantasy or real world settings, but between films that achieve such as journey and those which do not.

A film with poetic force, understood in the context explained herein, may have a real world setting or a fantasy setting. In the case of a real world setting, if we consider a film such as Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver* it may be described as a journey towards a “dark forest”, that has mythic parallels, for example with the Persephone myth. Although it has a real world setting it is nonetheless a fiction, an artifice and at a certain level a “fantasy”. A similar statement may be made about Todd Phillip’s *Joker*.



### **Is a film with poetic force necessarily an auteur film?**

Following on from the response to the previous question, this is a crucial question to the subject of this thesis. The term “auteur cinema” has come to be defined as a film form that is distinct from genre cinema, it is almost defined as the “other” to genre cinema. As explained herein this is the result of the second wave of auteur theory, because in the first wave auteurs were defined as working within genre cinema (e.g. Hitchcock or John Ford) and arthouse cinema (e.g. Bresson). As such terms such as arthouse film, art film and auteur film are understood in common parlance as referring to films that are highly distinct from classic genre films.

The use of terms such as auteur and art to refer to this particular category of films creates a hierarchy of cultural value and importance. This is particularly relevant in the context of institutional structures that govern film funding, film festivals and film education.

In the context of the first wave of auteur theory it is possible to identify auteurs working within genre cinema. During the heyday of this first wave – 1940s – 1960s – the dominant genres included westerns, musicals etc which have lost their relevant strength in the box office. New genres have risen to popularity. At the time of writing this thesis, in 2019, they include genres such as superhero, science fiction and fantasy. In the context of the first wave of auteur theory it is possible to identify auteurs working within these genres. Names that come to mind include Alfonso Cuarón, with films such as *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Gravity*, Guillermo del Toro, with films such as *Hellboy (2019)*, *Pan's Labyrinth (2006)* and *The Shape of Water (2018)* and Christopher Nolan, with films such as *The Dark Knight* trilogy, *Interstellar (2014)* and *Inception (2010)*. These are genre films with directors identified as auteurs within the context of the first wave of auteur theory. It can also be argued that they have poetic force, within the context defended in this thesis. The same directors have also directed films in real-world settings that also have poetic force, one notable example being Cuarón's *Roma*.

As such it is possible to reaffirm that a genre film can have poetic force and may be directed by an auteur. Therefore if we define “auteur film” as having a specific film form - distinct from Hollywood genre cinema - which in the context of recent auteur theory is the dominant position then a film with poetic force is not necessarily an auteur film, defined in this way. This obviously is a crucial conclusion for the argument defended in this thesis that it is possible to move beyond the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema.

## **Does the type of film defined as “cinema de auteur” or “world cinema” a genre in its own right?**

As argued above, terms such as “cinema de auteur” and “world cinema” have entered common parlance and form part of a commodification process of cinema, which has had a major impact on exhibition and distribution of films. This perception is so entrenched that it makes little sense to challenge it. At the same time it can be highly damaging, for example through the perception that art and entertainment are completely separate spheres, and therefore that art can only be achieved within the category of auteur cinema, arthouse cinema or art cinema. This is the reduction of the seventh art to a narrow subset of all cinema production which is particularly restricting in the current multiplication of forms of producing and watching films.

## **Is one of the main distinguishing characteristics between what is normally viewed as a genre film vs an auteur film a question of filmic narration?**

If we accept that both a genre film and an auteur film can foster a journey towards non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious, under the terms defined herein, it is possible to argue that what distinguishes between these two categories of film is not whether they can have poetic force or artistic value, but rather the type of filmic narration they use. For example, in a film such as João Pedro Rodrigues’ *The Ornithologist* (2016) he explained in a screening of the film at Doc’s Kingdom in Arcos de Valdevez, in 2018, that he aimed to draw on elements of the western genre, of a classic journey into the unknown. During the Q&A session about the film he also said that there were elements of a shamanic journey in this context. However the filmic narration used in this film is totally different from that used in a classic western film.

As such it is possible to argue that the distinguishing characteristic between what is classified as a genre film and an auteur film is not necessarily its underlying narrative structure, but rather the approach to filmic narration, under the terms described by theorists such as Patrick Colm Hogan, as explained above. This is also linked to the difference between “paleface” and “redskin” approaches, as defined in chapter 7.

This does not imply any value judgement in this regard and in particular it does not imply that there should be any preferred form of filmic narration. But it does provide grounds for moving beyond the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema, by clarifying our understanding of the key issues involved. It could be argued that by pursuing this approach it leads to a different dichotomy, for example a paleface/redskin dichotomy. In this regard, it may be stated that there is clearly a broad spectrum that

spans the paleface and redskin approaches, whereas the challenge posed by the dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema is that since it is based on a question of film form, it is far more difficult to move beyond.

**If poetic force is related to fostering a “journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious” can this be defined in empirical, testable terms?**

This question is highly pertinent, especially in the context of cognitive film theory, but goes beyond the remit of this thesis. It is possible to test the psychological and physiological reaction of viewers to films and if films are able to alter not only an emotional state but create a dream-like state it should be possible to test this empirically. To the extent that cinema may be viewed as a “shared dream” it should also be possible to draw parallels between such psychological and physiological reactions and elements of story structure and filmic narration. There is a specific field of research known as neurocinematics and increasingly extensive application of neuroscience testing to films, series and commercials. Therefore it should be possible to empirically test some of the theoretical propositions developed in this thesis. Obviously this also raises concerns. This video shows a test of different parts of the brain activated while watching the trailer to *Avatar*<sup>241</sup>.

**Can a film with a strong linear narrative, related to attaining a goal or solving a problem, foster a “journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious”?**

Further to the arguments presented above this clearly is possible. Indeed one only needs to think about Shakespeare’s plays to realise that a linear narrative with strong characters can have poetic force. The idea that narrative is somehow an obstruction to poetry or to art has a specific historical context, as explained herein, but makes no sense if one considers the history of cinema, which now spans around 125 years, or the history of theatre, prose and poetry which date back millennia. Even if we consider texts such as Joyce’s *Ulysses* with its stream of consciousness approach, these can be understood as having strong characters and a strong underlying narrative using the model of anamorphoses suggested by Campbell, as explained in Chapter 6 above.

**Can a film aimed at a specific socio-demographic audience, for example children, teenagers or people without higher education, or university graduates, or over 40s etc all**

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<sup>241</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/KSKlkXvqruI>

### **have poetic force, and do the elements that endow poetic force vary for different socio-demographic audiences?**

This question is relevant because it is clear that a film franchise such as *Harry Potter* may have tremendous poetic force, in the sense defined herein, for a specific population segment or demographic group of society, but may have little impact or allure on other population segment or demographic group. However if one defends that such films are without merit, this suggest a narrow perspective that may be defended by pertaining to a specific socio-economic or demographic segment of society. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the curatorial framework for commissioning and exhibiting films, where certain groups of films may not be produced because they do not correspond to the taste and interests of a specific population segment that has effective control over curatorial decisions.

### **Can a film within a specific genre that appeal to a broad audience – such as comedy, romance, thriller or horror - be considered an auteur film or to have poetic force?**

This question is also relevant because films with a clearly identifiable genre such as comedy, are often considered not to be auteur films or have artistic value. In the case of comedy, there are many examples of film comedy that are considered to have artistic value or to be made by auteurs, including examples such as Chaplin or Jacques Tati, but in the context of the second wave of auteur theory there has been a clear movement away from the comedy genre as having artistic value. This marks a profound change in relation to certain national cinemas – notably Italian cinema, wherein comedy was one of the core characteristics of its cinema and best-known auteurs.

### **Can films with goal-orientated, active lead characters have poetic force?**

Auteur cinema is often defined as being a cinema in which the actors are less important, because the viewer's attention passes to the director. For example, as noted above, Pam Cook argues that art cinema is defined by characters, "who are often aimless victims rather than controlling agents" and have a "rambling story" (Cook, 1985, p. 116). Such characters "often seem to lack "defined desires and goals" and the relationship between character motivation and narrative events may not be immediately apparent" (Cook, 1985, pp. 216-217). In the context of cognitive film theory, our empathy with the lead characters, and the identities that we ascribe to them, play a key role in the film experience. Furthermore, the presence of the lead characters in key art films is a crucial dimension of the power of these films. At the same time, and following the rationale that what distinguishes a classic "art film" from a "genre film" is a question of filmic narration, there clearly is scope for greater narrative digression within an art film.

However it could be argued that this doesn't reflect weak characters, but precisely the opposite – powerful characters who perhaps lack clearly defined goals but nonetheless have an extremely powerful presence. Godard's early films from the 1960s, including powerful actors such as Anna Karina, Michel Piccoli, and Jean Paul Belmondo, are not "aimless", indeed often their prime motivation is linked to the romantic subtext of the film, but they are clearly more multi-layered than many characters in superhero films, for example. In conclusion, it is possible for a film with goal-orientated, active lead characters to have poetic force, for example *The Godfather* and it is also possible for a film with more rambling characters to have poetic force.

Having responded to these preliminary questions we can now trace some of the key elements of the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis.

### **The growing demand for modern myths in the neo-liberal world**

Two key currents of Western thought - the rational path and the poetic path - are intimately related to how we see the world - whether in terms of mind-body dualism, or a phenomenological approach which from certain perspectives can imply animism.

Excessive focus on reason, to the detriment of anything else leads to what Iain McGilchrist calls the emissary controlling the master.

From the sole perspective of reason there are no absolutes, everything is relative, which ultimately leads us to existentialism, as demonstrated in Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger* in which there is no reason to either shoot, or not shoot, the man on the beach.

We are living in an era where there is unprecedented emphasis on the power of reason. This is due to historical developments and has been intensified by technology, epitomised by the computer revolution. We now have ultra-rational, ultra-logical machines which can calculate everything. There is the prospect that with the singularity they will become masters in their own rights, transforming humans into slaves/emissaries.

Alibaba Group founder Jack Ma at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, said that given the AI revolution, it's necessary to focus on education and creativity:

We cannot teach our kids to compete with machines. Teachers must stop teaching knowledge. We have to teach something unique, so a machine can never catch up with us (...) Education is a big challenge now. If we don't change the way we teach, we will be in big trouble in 30 years from now. Because the way we teach, the things we teach our kids, are the things from the past 200 years – its knowledge based. We need to be teaching our children values, believing, independent thinking, teamwork, care for others...these are the soft parts. The knowledge will not teach you that. That's

why I think we should teach our kids sports, music, painting, art. Everything we teach should be different from machines.<sup>242</sup>

These ideas are in direct opposition to the core ideas of neo-liberalism which focuses precisely on the need to use the education system to focus on learning facts, mathematics, logic, things that will be “useful” in careers and the world.

In the first half of the twentieth century artists and thinkers already rebelled against an agenda excessively based on the power of reason.

Writers such as C. S. Lewis and Tolkien created their fictional worlds of Narnia and Middle Earth precisely as antidotes to excessive rationalism. They were effectively the forerunners to the rise of the fantasy genre in cinema.

The rising popularity of DC Comics and then Marvel Comics reflected this same core desire to find fantasy and unlock the imagination within the modern world. The development of CGI has made it possible to translate these visions into cinema, which has currently led to what feels like a glut of superhero films.

The surrealists, who challenged bourgeois thinking and values, excessively based on reason and hypocritical “civilised values”, also created fantasy worlds.

As explained above in this thesis, these developments have roots that can be traced back to powerful former movements such as German romanticism. Tolkien for example was inspired by Norse mythology. Both C. S. Lewis and Tolkien combined a keen interest in mythology and Christian belief.

In the recent era, the universe associated to the *Harry Potter* saga involves similar inspirations – a way of talking about the moral dilemmas facing the world without doing so in a real-life setting. The fantasy dimension makes it easier to tap into elements related to mythology and meta-narratives.

As the world has become increasingly focused on rationalism, in part due to neo-liberalism and the computing revolution and the political debate is increasingly focused on political correctness, alternate universes in a fantasy context are increasingly appealing to audiences and may be liberating for artists, as was the case for C. S. Lewis and Tolkien.

Can “fantasy” also be art? The answer is obviously yes, but this raises an important question in relation to current trends in cinema and TV series towards fantasy stories rather than stories set in the real world.

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<sup>242</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://blog.learnfasthq.com/jack-ma-teach-soft-skills-not-knowledge-to-compete-with-machines>

As demonstrated in this thesis, the Oscar for Best Picture has almost always gone to films with a real world settings, whereas since the year 2000 in particular, almost all the top films at the box office have had a fantasy setting – either via superhero, sci-fi or fantasy stories.

In European cinema most production and also awards are for films in a real world setting.

This is of course a complex issue, which is related to how popular culture and the arts are viewed.

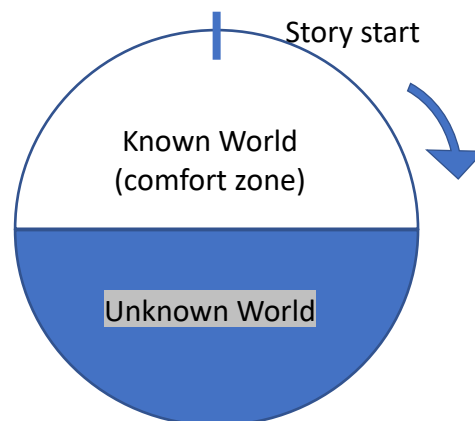
Understanding film as a journey into the unknown can illuminate these questions.

### **The filmic journey**

Viewing story as a journey is a well-founded idea, and any journey involves various key steps: point of departure, departure, exploration, typically followed by return.

What determines whether the journey is interesting from a narrative perspective is the way that it engages with audiences.

This basic idea of the story as journey and departure from the comfort zone can be illustrated as a circular movement from the known world to the unknown world, which is linked to the monomyth cycle described above:



*Figure 24 – Narrative structure from known world to unknown world*

This basic model for understanding a story structure can be useful even if we don't apply the full monomyth structure defended by writers such as Christopher Vogler based on the ideas of Joseph Campbell, as explained above.

The key steps in this circular structure can be reduced to the minimum, since this model applies to both linear narratives and alternative narratives.

In certain narratives virtually the entire story may occur in the “Unknown World”. Key steps such as the call to adventure, moment of aesthetic arrest, passing thresholds, the innermost cave and return may be found in both genre films and auteur films.

In relation to Maya Deren’s idea that a poetic film has a vertical structure rather than a horizontal structure, this model demonstrates that both vertical and horizontal elements can apply to any film. Even with a strong linear narrative, there may be a parallel “vertical” development as the protagonist(s) journey through the unknown world. Even if the horizontal elements are reduced to a minimum and the montage primarily follows as associational logic, the basic model of the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious is maintained.

These steps can also be viewed in terms of the three-act structure and may be represented as follows:

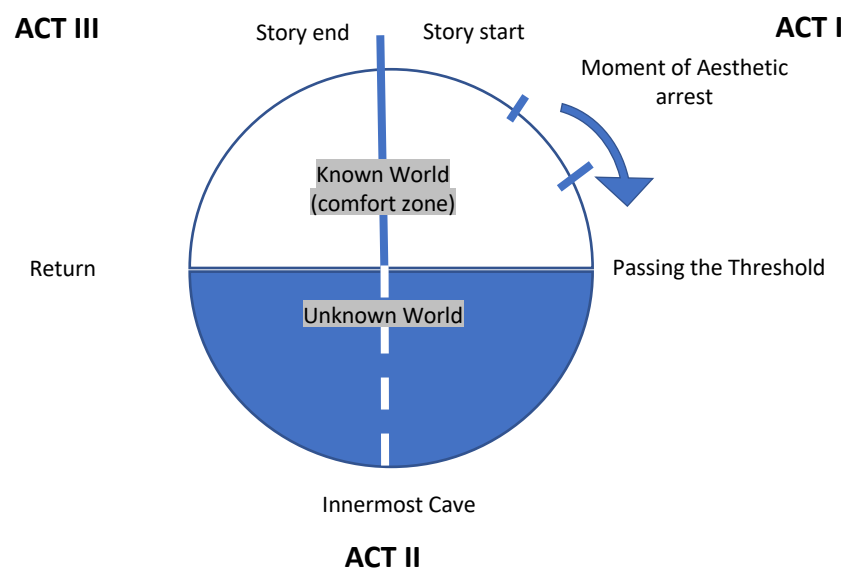


Figure 25 – Narrative structure - 3 acts



This basic narrative structure mirrors the descent into a state of reverie/the unconscious, which the film journey can achieve for the spectator, casting a “spell” and enticing the spectator to suspend disbelief and enter the “dreamlike stake” of the film. In the case of a structure based on the Fisher King myth, explained above, Act I will begin in a wasteland, then pass to the “dark forest” and in Act III the wasteland will be reborn.

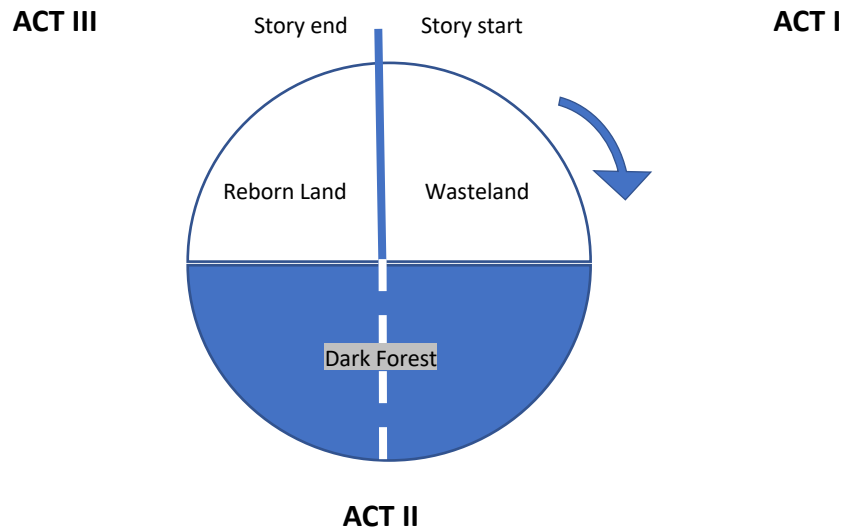


Figure 26 – Fisher King narrative structure - 3 acts – Wasteland – Dark Forest – Reborn land

This model also applies in the case of a film with a realist setting. Even if there is a non-linear or alternative narrative, this underlying model may apply. Although this model may appear to be artificial it has parallels with other structures. For example, there are parallels with the annual cycle, which may be divided into four cardinal points, eight points or twelve points:

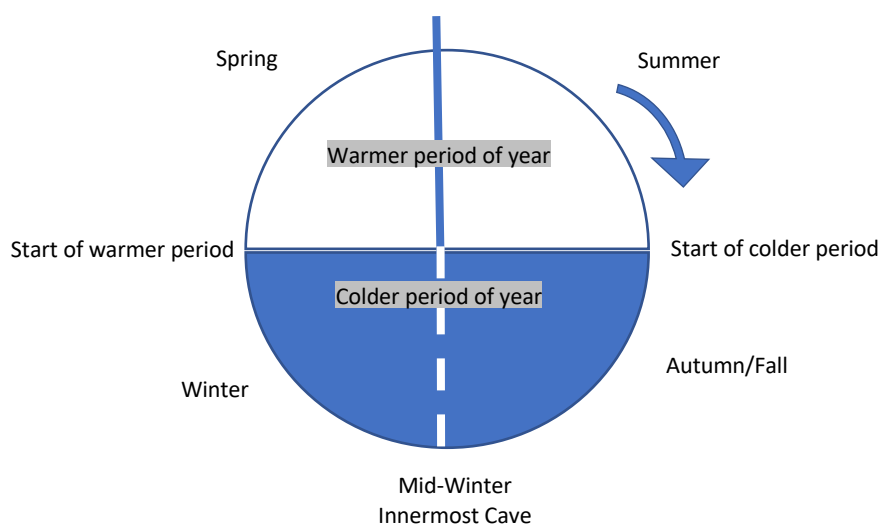


Figure 27 – Narrative structure – annual cycle

The annual cycle also involves a “return to the womb” or a period in “the belly of the whale” in Campbell’s terminology.

At this level, the story transports the protagonist - and through empathy the viewer - into the dark forest/sacred grove of the unconscious in which there will be an encounter with higher powers – an epiphany – followed by a return to the known world.

This process is one of the fundamental dimensions of moving images as an art form, and does not necessarily require film to have a non-linear or alternative narrative structure to achieve this dreamlike journey.

Mapping out the imaginary in this manner finds parallels in Gilbert Durand’s work, in particular the *Anthropological structures of the Imaginary* in which he traces the diurnal and nocturnal spaces of the imaginary.

### **Is there a link between films with poetic force and the shamanic experience?**

The nature of the filmic journey has parallels with the shamanic experience, as explained above.

Campbell suggests that the shaman’s performance was one of the first forms of art. The performance engages the audience and transports them to an altered state of consciousness.

The shaman attains his or her capacity to embark upon this journey through past experience, which typically involves a period, which may be metaphorically described as destruction and dismemberment followed by rebirth.

Having gone through this cycle of death and rebirth, the shaman is then empowered to transport others on this journey, without obliging them to suffer to the same extent as the shaman did. Through the performance, the spectators embark upon an out-of-body journey in which they have a virtual experience of moments of dismemberment, death and rebirth.

The transformational arc of the protagonist(s) in a film demonstrate their shamanic power to transform from one state of being into another, thus also influencing the audience.

Such transformations are found in great films, such as the character arc of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* or of Walter White in *Breaking Bad*.

The current popularity of superhero films is interesting in this regard because superheroes not only have links to ancient heroes and divinities, as stated above, the majority also have powers as shape-shifters, creating parallels with the figure of the shaman. The fact that Peter Parker can transform into a

spider-like creature, or that people can transform into werewolves, etc. are classic shaman-like characteristics.

Vampire-stories, such as the *Twilight* franchise or the *Vampire Diaries (2009)* also share these characteristics.

The power of the actor to achieve a shamanic transformation in the film, reinforces the idea that audiovisual communication may have collective authorship, unlike literary production where there is typically a single author.

The overall design of the film, as overseen by the director, may also be viewed as a shamanic construction, whose constituent elements, including the performance of the actors, is designed to transport the audience into the realm of non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” and the unconscious.

The visual spectacle, the use of music and dance, the performance of the actors, the dramaturgy of the plot etc, are all elements of this overall shamanic construction.

This leads us to two other important aspects: visual storytelling and the role of the character/actor.

### **Can the “Hero’s Journey” structure also be viewed as a “Shaman’s Journey”?**

This is one of the underlying questions explored within this thesis. Campbell suggested a parallel between the monomyth and the initiation of the shaman. As such the film can draw the audience into its journey as a shamanic experience, which is a vital element of the journey towards a state of reverie / the unconscious and may be achieved primarily at a sensorial level rather than rational or intellectual level. The theme of shamanism often arises in the present context, in which people are attempting to reestablish links with nature and this theme has been addressed in genre films such as James Cameron’s *Avatar* and auteur films such as João Salaviza’s and Renée Nader Messorá’s *The Dead and the Others (2018)*.

The mentor is a shaman and the hero is an apprentice shaman who must go through a series of ordeals, in which he will suffer a symbolic death and be splintered into different parts. During this death there will be a re-encounter with the Goddess / atonement with the father, after which the shaman will reconstitute himself/herself and return to the known world as a new born shaman.

The audience as it observes this story, will be drawn into this character arc and share in the shaman’s journey, without the direct physical ordeal of death and rebirth.

This cycle is also linked to the annual vegetation cycle and the death of the mentor shaman and passing of the baton to the apprentice shaman, as seen in *Star Wars* mirrors this vegetation cycle.

### **The importance of the (multi) sensorial dimension of films**

As explained above, the capacity for films to generate a multi-sensorial experience is a core element of the filmic experience and is achieved through multiple techniques including the actors' performance and the style of filmic narration. In this regard there are multiple sensorial approaches that can be explored. At one end of the spectrum there is the Hollywood style of visceral filmmaking as described by Boorstin, which has multiple forms, including the high voltage filmmaking style of a director such as Michael Bay, whose style has been called "Bayhem" [see for example the video "Michael Bay - What is Bayhem?" by Tony Zhou (Every Frame a Painting)] which summarises Bay's style as:

- layers of depth, parallax, movement, character and environment to give a sense of epicness;
- Every shot is designed for maximum visual impact, regardless of whether it fits
- Tight shots of the character become tighter. And the wide shots become wider. Everything gets more layers of motion.
- Bayhem is the use of movement, composition and fast editing to create a sense of epic scale.
- Each individual shot feels huge, but also implies bigger things outside the frame.
- It stacks multiple layers of movement, shot either on a very long lens or a very wide one.
- It shows you a lot for just a moment and then takes it away.
- You feel the overall motion but no grasp of anything concrete
- It's basically a variation on the existing vocabulary of the action scene: individual shots are a little dirtier, a little shakier, more complex, few more layers.
- Then you cut it together faster than the brain can register but not faster than the eye can move.

Source: "Michael Bay - What is Bayhem?" by Every Frame a Painting <sup>243</sup>.

Zhou concludes:

In the end, I think the popularity of this style is hugely important. Whether we like it or not the interesting thing here is that we are really visually sophisticated and totally visually illiterate. We can process visual information at a speed that wasn't common before, but thinking through what an image means ...not so much. <sup>244</sup>

This style has also been subject to significant criticism. Werner Herzog is shown in this video stating; "You do not avert your eyes. That's what's coming at us. This is what television, what a collective anonymous body of majority wants to see on television" <sup>245</sup>.

Much of Hollywood filmmaking style is visceral and aimed to circumvent rational thinking. However this is one strategy towards fostering a journey towards a "state of reverie" / unconscious.

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<sup>243</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2THVvshvq00&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>244</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/2THVvshvq00>

<sup>245</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/2THVvshvq00>

Other filmmakers working within Hollywood achieve this in a slightly more subtle manner, such as Alejandro G. Iñárritu's *The Revenant* (2015) but this film is a multi-sensorial experience which combines elements of strong narrative with a visual poetry that has parallels with Tarkovsky. One can see in this regard the videos: Iñárritu's *Visual Poetry*<sup>246</sup> and *The Revenant* a film by Andrei Tarkovsky"<sup>247</sup>. Iñárritu's films offer more space for contemplation but also include high impact moments such as the bear attack in *The Revenant*.

At the other end of the spectrum is the slow cinema approach described by Antunes and Schrader. But the multi-sensorial experience continues to be important. As noted above, Antunes identifies different sensorial styles within slow cinema, such as the "cinema of walking" of Gus Van Sant, Antonioni and Bela Tarr and the long takes and still framing of Manoel de Oliveira and Ming-lainbg Tsai.

João Botelho in his film *O Cinema de Manoel de Oliveira e Eu* (2016)<sup>248</sup> emphasises the importance of the fixed position camera to ensure that the spectator focuses on the essential. Oliveira's cinema was intellectual and made extensive use of voiceover texts and static shots, but there is nonetheless a sensorial, poetic element, which links him to filmmakers such as Buñuel.

A fast-paced visual style, such as Michael Bay's may be offensive to some, whereas a slow cinema style such as Manoel de Oliveira's may be boring to others. But in both cases there is a multi-sensorial use of the medium which engages not only with the rational thinking but also with the emotions, and, it may be argued, with non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" or the unconscious.

### **Is the Character Arc also related to the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious?**

Audiovisual communication is based on questions of identity, as explained above in this thesis. As we observe single images or a sequence of images we attempt to trace identities from these images – in terms of identities of place, communities and individual characters.

In the case of fiction the stories revolve around the main characters and the drama is intimately linked to the characters' search for identity.

A powerful film will depend upon the multiple layers of the characters and the capacity of the actors to explore those layers.

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<sup>246</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/s-S1ePqIbSw>

<sup>247</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://youtu.be/cpcdhNq\\_VPM](https://youtu.be/cpcdhNq_VPM)

<sup>248</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/ntpqJuCgdTo>

In the context of the line of reasoning developed in this thesis, the character is the central axis of the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious. We accompany this journey through our empathy with the main character(s).

This is linked to the Jungian idea of the Persona/Mask and the Shadow. Jung defended the idea that people project a Mask to others, which is often the opposite of their underlying Shadow.

Jung's full analysis of the psyche includes multiple levels including the Ego, Personal Unconscious and Collective Unconscious.

The Persona/Mask has been described as follows:

The persona usually grows from the parts of people that wished once to please teachers, parents, and other authority figures, and as such it leans heavily toward embodying only one's best qualities, leaving those negative traits which contradict the Persona to form the "Shadow".<sup>249</sup>

By contrast the Shadow has been described as follows:

Those traits that we dislike, or would rather ignore, come together to form what Jung called the Shadow. This part of the psyche, which is also influenced heavily by the collective unconscious, is a form of complex, and is generally the complex most accessible by the conscious mind.

Jung did not believe the Shadow to be without purpose or merit; he felt that "where there is light, there must also be shadow"—which is to say that the Shadow has an important role to play in balancing the overall psyche. Without a well-developed shadow side, a person can easily become shallow and extremely preoccupied with the opinions of others, a walking Persona. Just as conflict is necessary to advancing the plot of any good novel, light and dark are necessary to our personal growth.

Jung believed that, not wanting to look at their Shadows directly, many people project them onto others, meaning that the qualities we often cannot stand in others, we have in ourselves and wish to not see. To truly grow as a person, one must cease such willful blindness to one's Shadow and attempt to balance it with the Persona.<sup>250</sup>

Each person attempts to achieve wholeness, through achieving a union between these different dimensions of the personality and between the individual and the collective.

These ideas are linked to Campbell's ideas identified above.

In the context of a story, the main character(s) evolve from a situation in which their social existence is based on their Persona/Mask, but they are effectively imprisoned, along the lines of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and they need to confront their Shadow in order to achieve greater inner harmony, within themselves and with others.

The story is therefore a journey from their Persona, to their Shadow and then a return with a new Persona.

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<sup>249</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>

<sup>250</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>

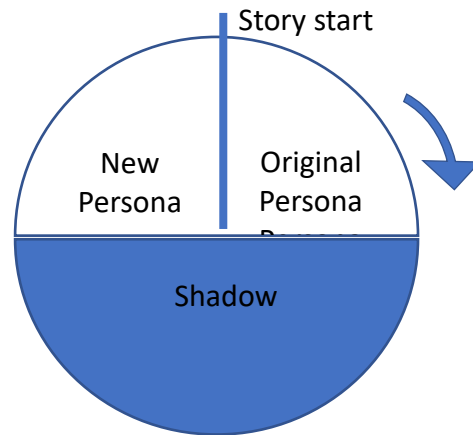


Figure 28 – Character arc – Persona – Shadow – New persona

At the start of the story the character is constrained/trapped by his or her Persona/Mask and unable to fully intervene in the world.

The character, as portrayed by the actor, must begin to “act” i.e. begin to take actions. These actions will force the character outside his or her known world/comfort zone, towards the unknown world in which his or her Shadow will have to be confronted.

The trigger for this story, may be a call to adventure, or moment of aesthetic arrest, as mentioned above, or may be an external event which forces the character to begin to take actions, such as a plane crash in the film *Cast away (2000)*. But whether the story is based on the need to respond to life changes or a response to a “call” there must be a moment when the character begins to take actions and make choices.

If we have a character who is always passive, it will be more difficult for the story to have power and for the audience to feel empathy with the character. This does not necessarily imply a classic Hollywood action role, but tensions within the main characters exist at this level, even if the character appears to be “aimless”.

On the basis of the main character(s)’ Persona, once they and embark upon the journey into the unknown world the simplest structure is based on a clear objective – such as getting the girl, surviving or winning a fortune - wherein this objective will be linked to the character’s Persona, but may not be what the character actually needs in terms of their Shadow.

Even if the characters are not clearly goal-orientated there must be some inner tension within the characters underlying the story in order to engage with the audience.

In the process of the confrontation between the Persona/Mask and the Shadow the initial objective that may have motivated the character's actions, may lose importance, and at a key moment in the story the character will have to make a choice about what he or she really "needs", which will be based on his or her Shadow and will determine the new Persona.

Even in Paul Schrader's model of transcendental style and slow cinema there is a "decisive action" or "decisive moment" linked to the need to make a choice.

At this point, the lead character will shed his or her old skin and evolve into a new persona.

### **Can narrative structures based on the Fisher King myth have poetic force?**

As outlined above, a particularly powerful model for understanding narratives is that of The Fisher King, which is linked to Arthurian Romance.

I will now explore this model in greater detail.

The Fisher King has a "mortal wound" that has rendered him lame or impotent and his land is a barren wasteland. To recover the fertility of his land he must go on a quest, or have a knight go on a quest on his behalf.

This quest involves journeying into what can be called the "dark forest". This dark forest explores the lunar dimensions of non-verbal consciousness, a "state of reverie" or the unconscious. In other words, the protagonist must depart from the known world or "solar world" and confront his or her innermost fears.

This journey through the dark forest may be a traditional hero quest, but may also be a lover's journey in which the lovers jointly journey through a dark forest.

This analysis is linked to Gilbert Durand's idea of the nocturnal or lunar dimension of the imaginary, as described in *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary* (Durand, 2016, re-edition).

In this journey into the dark forest / unconscious, the protagonist suffers and experiences a spiritual transformation. James Cameron created specific references to this process in *Avatar* and originally intended to include an Ayahuasca ceremony and even produced the initial animation, but it was cut from the final film.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://youtu.be/Ud-0i4sU7Bs>



First and foremost the Fisher King, is the Wounded or Maimed King. Any character with a Wound, especially if it is a hidden and yet decisive wound, makes for an interesting character and will tend to attract our empathy.

Wounded characters abound in cinema and television, one needs to look no further than the scar on *Harry Potter's* forehead.

The journey of a wounded character, even if the wound is hidden, is ultimately a curative journey that will either be successful or will fail.

This curative dimension of the story is linked to the shamanic function of film, given that one of the key roles of shamanic experience is to heal.

The use of wounds to make more interesting characters has been extensively discussed in the literature.<sup>252</sup>

When we watch films, in some cases, even if perhaps not fully conscious of this fact, we may wish that they have a direct curative influence, as we play out our own wounds and perhaps find a form of healing.

In the specific case of the Fisher King, as a result of the Dolorous Stroke he has lost his virility and as a result his kingdom has become sterile, a wasteland. In order to return the land to fertility the king's wound must be healed. This can be achieved by the Fisher King himself, or by another who will embark on the quest to recover the lost virility, which in the Arthurian romance is the Holy Grail. In the case of the Arthurian romance, the knight who acts on the Fisher Kings' behalf is Percival or Galahad.

This model underpins a tremendous range of narratives.

The Wounded King can be interpreted at many levels including the very mortality of mankind.

In the biblical tale Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise, and given the "curses" of toiling on the land and the pains of childbirth and also have to confront their own mortality – the fact that they will live on the "mortal coil" but are one day condemned to die. This "mortal wound" is one of the biggest challenges to human consciousness and becomes more pressing as people get older.

The wounded king may also be linked to the figure of Prometheus, who in some myths is considered to have shaped man from clay and in other myths to have stole "fire" (a symbol of knowledge) for mankind but was then tied to a rock and condemned to have his liver eaten every day.

The figure of Christ is another wounded king, who was crucified and whose crucifixion and resurrection is remembered every year.

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<sup>252</sup> For example: [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://www.scriptmag.com/features/craft-features/creating-characters-craft-features/top-core-wounds-bring-characte](https://www.scriptmag.com/features/craft-features/creating-characters-craft-features/top-core-wounds-bring-characte)

Figures of myth such as the Sumerian god Enki.<sup>253</sup> Oannes, Vishnu and others are also considered to be a Fisher King who has been vanquished by his brother and imprisoned in the Abyss, or Ocean deep, or Abzu.

It should be noted that in this regard one of the ways that the “unknown” world in Campbell’s hero journey structure is as the abyss:

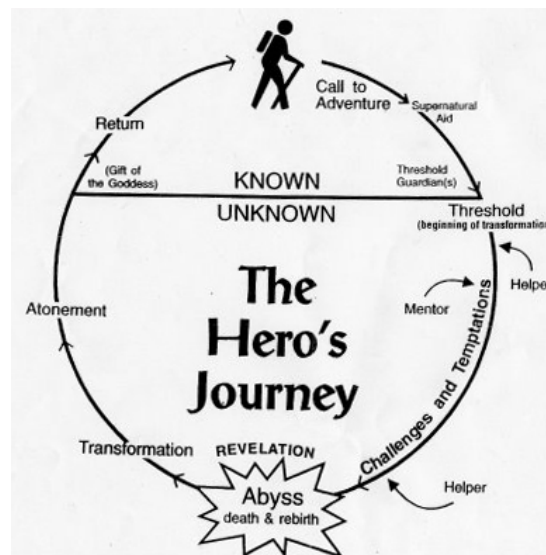


Figure 29 Hero's Journey cycle with Abyss

Source: [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://bbenne.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/heros-journey.jpg](https://bbenne.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/heros-journey.jpg)

As such the Fisher King is a “lost king” who may one day return.

This finds parallels in the myth of King Arthur and that of Sebastianism in Portuguese mythology.

The Fisher King has been maimed or wounded and imprisoned, and in his absence the world has been transformed into a Wasteland. When he returns fertility will be returned to the World.

This is linked to the idea defended by Campbell, as described above, that we are separated from the divine element, and as a result live in a wasteland. It also has links to Lacan’s idea of the “lack” and the progressive distancing from a sense of wholeness.

By embarking on the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious and shedding the Persona/Ego/Self it is possible to restore balance/wholeness.

However, the Fisher King, as a result of his maiming may appear hideous and only true love can break this curse, restoring order.

This basic mythic structure has multiple applications and has been used in a wide number of stories.

<sup>253</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.debate.org/debates/Resolved-Poseidon-and-prometheus-were-originally-the-same-entity/1/>

One application is in myths such as Robin Hood, in which the “true King” (Richard) has either left, or been overthrown by his evil brother (John), and the “knight” (Robin) must restore order by vanquishing the evil king and winning the hand of Maid Marian, a figure linked to May Day. Robin and the story world must descend into the dark forest of the unconscious before returning to restore fertility to the land.

By uniting with Marian in the love grotto and vanquishing the evil king, Robin paves the way to the return of the true king.

Another application of the Fisher King myth is *The Beauty and the Beast*. A prince has been cursed and transformed, shaman-like, into a monster, living in an enchanted castle in the middle of the dark forest. The Beast is a kind of Fisher King with a mortal wound. Only the true love of a maiden, who ventures into the dark forest, can break the curse and enable the true king to return.

Another application is in the stories of *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White*. In this case the maiden/princess is the Fisher Queen, trapped in the dark forest by a spell that may only be broken by true love.

These myths have been used extensively in films. *The Beauty and the Beast* myth is particularly common and in addition to the films with this name also underpins the structure of films such as the *Twilight* saga, *Dracula* (in particular Coppola’s 1992 version), *Edward Scissorhands (1990)*, the *Phantom of the Opera (2004)* and many others.

The overall narrative structure of the *Star Wars* saga also has links to *The Beauty and the Beast* and the Fisher King. Darth Vader is the Fisher King who has turned to the dark side and is rescued by the pure love and valour of his son Luke Skywalker.

The Fisher King cycle is linked to myths related to the annual cycle and vegetation gods such as Dionysus, Tammuz and Damuzi and their female counterparts Persephone also known as Kore, who spend half the year in the underworld.

Persephone is abducted by Hades the king of the Underworld, who is also a kind of Fisher King, and must spend half the year with him.

The story of Orpheus is also related to the Persephone-myth.

Orpheus marries Eurydice who is bitten by a poisonous snake and descends to the Underworld. Orpheus also descends to persuade Hades and Persephone to release her. He wins her back with his singing but loses her on the threshold of the return to the ordinary world.

The “Persephone cycle” / Orpheus myth, is used with or without a happy ending, and is found in stories such as *The Searchers (1956)*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Taken (2008)*.

The same myth with a twist is also explored in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and in several films by James Cameron, including *The Terminator (1984)*, *The Abyss (1989)*, *Titanic* and *Avatar*.

In terms of character construction the core idea of a maimed or wounded character is the starting point for many stories.

For example, in *Breaking Bad*, Walter White is a maimed "king" who after finding out he has terminal cancer descends into the underworld of drug-dealing. In this case the "maiden" he is seeking is complex. It can be construed as his wife, Skyler, given that prior to his transformation he seemed to be virtually impotent, his "lost love", Gretchen, and perhaps even chemistry or crystal meth itself.

*Breaking Bad* has obvious parallels with Goethe's *Faust*, and the main character makes a pact with the devil. Gretchen is *Faust's* love (short for Margarete; Goethe uses both forms).

Bryan Cranston recognised this parallel:

My feeling is that Walt broke bad in the very first episode. It was very subtle but he did because that's when he decided to become someone that he's not in order to gain financially. He made the Faustian deal at that point and everything else was a slippery slope.<sup>254</sup>

In *American Beauty (1999)*, Kevin Spacey's character is a different kind of "maimed" character, a man lost in the wasteland of American suburbia, who has a moment of aesthetic arrest when he sees Angela Hayes (played by Mena Suvari), which triggers his own "descent" into the unknown world.

### **Antagonists as wounded characters**

Linked to the theme of wounded characters, antagonists are often based on characters with profound wounds that have opened their links to their own unconscious, but in a manner that has pushed them towards the attraction of death. Given the rise of the neo-noir aesthetic (see below) there are also an increasing number of protagonists who are torn between love and death, and are attracted by a "darker side". An antagonist with a strong intuitive power can pull the protagonist towards his or her perspective and makes the dramatic tension more profound.

This exploration is particularly important for the crime drama genre. For example, in *The Silence of the Lambs (1991)*, the character of Hannibal Lecter exercises a powerful influence on Jodie Foster's character, suggesting that they are somehow alike.

In the TV series *Criminal Minds (2005)*, each episode is based on a different wounded character who has developed a different modus operandi which reflects this wound. A key character in solving the

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<sup>254</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://blog.oup.com/2013/09/breaking-bad-faust-character-casting/>

crimes is Spencer Reid who is a wounded character and has intuitive powers that enables him to spot clues.

### **Superhero films and shamanic structures**

The current popularity of superhero films can also be linked to shamanism and myths such as the Fisher King.

Throughout human history there have been legends of creatures that are half human and half animal, one of the most obvious examples being werewolves. Shamans capacity to transform themselves into animals is also linked to this tradition, as is the legend that witches had animal familiars such as cats.

Many superheroes are half-human / half-animal, such as batman, spiderman, catwoman or ant-man. Other superheroes are half-human / half-animal such as Iron-man. Certain superheroes combine both facets - such as the technology used by batman and spiderman.

Other characters from supernatural films, such as vampires are also linked to this tradition of half-human / half-animal, and the theme of transformation from human into animal is also found in films such as *Cat People (1982)* or *Black Swan 2010*.

We also find shaman-like human/animal creatures in films such as *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Shape of Water*. The story of Tarzan is also linked to this theme of half-human/half-animal.

Another dimension of this theme is the presence of characters/communities with shamanic traditions in certain filmic traditions, notably the Western genre.

A film like *Taxi Driver*, notwithstanding its real-world setting in New York also has links to the Western genre and Travis Bickle appropriates certain aspects of native Indian symbolism when he adopts a Mohawk haircut.

This broad tradition is undoubtedly one of the sources of the appeal of superhero films, fantasy films, horror films etc and is found in many other contexts, including films from the Western genre, and does not necessarily undermine their "artistic pedigree".

Analysing films in terms of their propitiatory power to offer a spiritual or transcendental experience is by no means exclusive to Hollywood blockbusters. Indeed it can be argued that Hollywood films explore this dimension but the "purest" examples are found in slow cinema, as suggested in Antunes' book and also in Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* whose recent edition includes a new introduction that focuses on the trend of certain art films to move beyond what he calls the "Tarkovsky ring".

## **Football as a mythic structure**

Even a sport such as football has certain parallels with the mythic narrative structure outlined in this thesis, which is relevant for its capacity to engage with spectators' emotions and arguably with their unconscious.

At a certain level support for football, divided into different national and club teams, are "fictions" but they have tremendous force within the social fabric and are created through what we may call shared fictions. For example, supporters of a football club feel intensely about the sport and their team, but from the outside these sensations of belonging and emotion may appear absurd. The elements that achieve this congregating power project individuals beyond their immediate day-to-day concerns and bring into play what could be called a transcendental element. This was conveyed in the famous phrase by former Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly – "Football is not just a matter of life and death: it's much more important than that"<sup>255</sup>.

Football has been described as a substitute for warfare, and also been described as a metaphor for sexual conquest. There is also evidence that certain ball games existed with religious connotations in societies such as Mayan culture.

There are clear transcendental elements in football – each side has its own "half". It makes forays into the unknown, the "other half". It tries to penetrate the inner sanctum of the other half/other team. Success depends upon team work, is limited by time. It involves glory and despair.

There are also "home" and "away" games.

In films that have clear protagonists and antagonists we can even identify a "game" between two teams, in which during part of the film one "team" is scoring more goals and seems to be winning and then the other team begins to dominate.

This can introduce further nuances into the cyclical structure identified above.

The two halves of the football pitch have parallels with the circular structure defined above:

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<sup>255</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/bill-shankly-its-much-more-important-than-that-9780753546765>

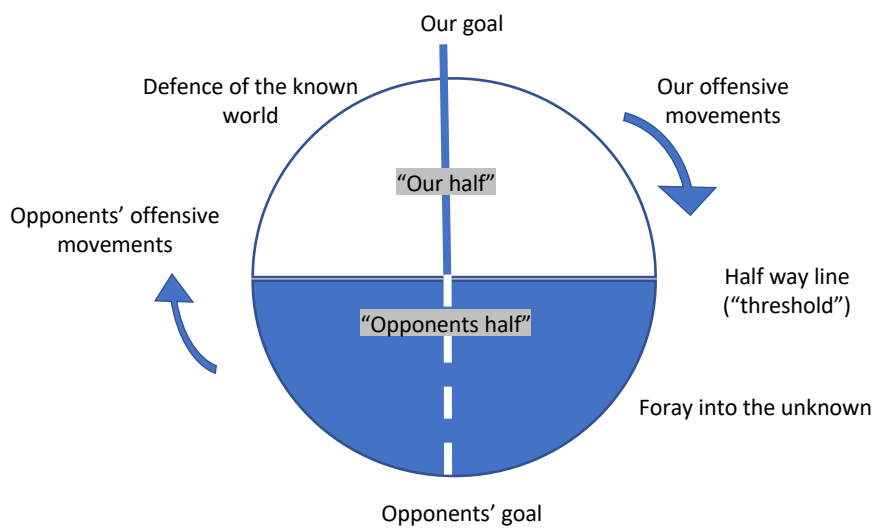


Figure 30 Football as mythic structure

This basic structure is also found in another sports with two halves.

“We” try to advance into the unknown half, passing through various thresholds until we reach the inner sanctum. If we are successful we then return to “our half” as victors. In the overall game this pattern is repeated various times until one side is successful. There are moments of intense conflict and others of greater calm.

The greatest heroes are often those who come from the humblest backgrounds and overcome numerous hurdles and ordeals before securing victory.

## Eros and Thanatos

The principles of Eros and Thanatos, as discussed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1922), can shed further light onto questions of narrative structure.

The application of Eros (life instincts) and Thanatos (death instincts) to dramaturgy has been analysed extensively in the literature.

At the most basic level, both drives are related to basic urges, as noted above in Chapter 6 on the ideas of Joseph Campbell.

Eros relates to elements that arouse our erotic interest and Thanatos elements that arouse our sense of fear of death or destruction, which can be simplified as sex and violence, which have always been ingredients used in drama.

Sexual energy within films has always been part of their appeal, both at a voyeuristic, vicarious and visceral level to use the terms applied by Jon Boorstin in *The Hollywood Eye*.

In the “golden age” of European auteur cinema, and in European films as a whole there was a powerful sexual energy, conveyed by the leading actors and actresses, with the latter playing a particularly important role including Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot and Anna Karina.

The leading European auteurs such as Bergman, Fellini, Pasolini, Truffaut, Godard etc, all included an important erotic energy within their films.

Beyond the questions of erotic energy on the one hand and violence on the other, the two principles of Eros and Thanatos can be analysed at a more complex level.

Both are directly linked to different versions of the Fisher King, which is related to questions of fertility. For example, in the Orpheus tale, Orpheus attempts to defy death through love and art.

Both life/love and death/destruction exercise a fascination and attraction for us all. This attraction can also change over the course of life. As children, the attraction of life/love is particularly intense. With the passing of the years, death/destruction can exercise a fascination.

For example, if we divide lives into four periods, each with a threshold, the powers of Eros and Thanatos are different in each:

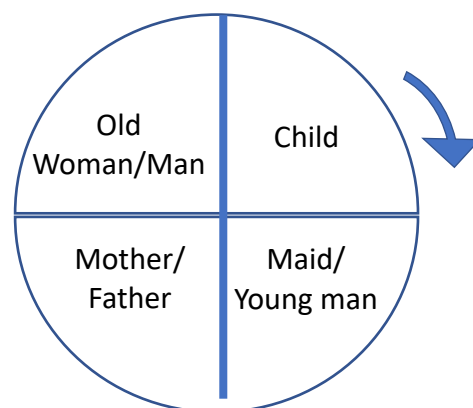


Figure 31 Four stages of life

The threshold points between each stage of life are particularly rich for drama. For example, the “coming of age” period from child to young adult, the assumption of adulthood, from being a young adult to an adult, the mid-life crisis, as the onset of old age is glimpsed, and then the approach towards death.

In these stages Eros and Thanatos may have different forces. For example, in the transition between adult and old man/woman, this may unleash both life instincts and death instincts. In a story such as *American Beauty* the “mid-life crisis” unleashes the desire in Kevin Spacey’s character to sleep with Mena Suvari’s character, although his true desire is to reunite with his family, and be a good man and father, as revealed at the end.



In *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), Charlize Theron's character is confronting the mid-life crisis of the onset of old age which unleashes the desire to destroy Snow White.

The presence of the principles of Eros and Thanatos gives power to drama and enhances the journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious which is one of the key objectives of film.

The risk of death raises the stakes and focuses the characters' attention on whether they want to live and how they want to live.

The "call" of Eros is intimately linked to the "moment of aesthetic arrest".

The competing attractions of love and hate or Eros and Thanatos have been referred to in many films. A classic example is in *Night of the Hunter* (1955):

Rev. Harry Powell: [when he notices John staring at the words "love" and "hate" tattooed across his knuckles] Ah, little lad, you're staring at my fingers. Would you like me to tell you the little story of right-hand/left-hand? The story of good and evil? H-A-T-E! It was with this left hand that old brother Cain struck the blow that laid his brother low. L-O-V-E! You see these fingers, dear hearts? These fingers has veins that run straight to the soul of man. The right hand, friends, the hand of love. Now watch, and I'll show you the story of life. Those fingers, dear hearts, is always a-warring and a-tugging, one agin t'other. Now watch 'em! Old brother left hand, left hand he's a fighting, and it looks like love's a goner. But wait a minute! Hot dog, love's a winning! Yessirree! It's love that's won, and old left hand hate is down for the count!<sup>256</sup>

The explicit battle between these two principles is found in franchises such as *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* and found at a more implicit level in the vast majority of films.

In many films, the story is driven by a realisation of either eventual or imminent death. The trigger of many stories is the call of love.

### **Evolution of the romance genre**

Related to the theme of Eros and Thanatos, it is also interesting to explore how the romance genre has evolved over time.

In the era of mass cinema, romance films and themes served as an agglutinating factor for the filmgoing audience. Both Hollywood and European cinema were inextricably linked to the romance genre.

However, in the contemporary cinema, as noted above, use of the romance genre has modified significantly.

Contemporary drama, historical drama and romance have diminished in popularity in the context of theatrical cinema, as visual effects-driven genres such as superhero, fantasy and sci-fi films have gained ground.

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<sup>256</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=X20Xlg38GcE>

The romance genre is less popular in the cinema, and even romantic comedies (romcoms) are relatively rare. This varies by country, as noted in Annex 4, and some countries, such as India, continue to produce many films in the romance genre.

However, romance continues to be present in other genres, to a greater or lesser extent. In action films, romance often enters in the form of a love interest, but is only a secondary element to the main adrenalin-drive of the film. But other genres have essentially incorporated the romance genre. This is evident in the case of the *Twilight* saga or the TV series *Vampire Diaries*.

Television drama, in particular, has become the main vehicle for romance drama. Audiences who previously flocked to the cinemas to watch romance, now watch it on the small screen.

In the field of “auteur cinema” romance continues to be an important theme, for example in films such as Michael Haneke's *Amour* (2012) but it has modified considerably since the period of Italian neo-realism or the New Wave movements.

This is due in part to a shift in the intellectual outlook in Europe, which is the backdrop to European auteur cinema.

Roland Barthes commented on this shift in outlook, in a television interview in 1977<sup>257</sup>:

The kind of passionate love of romantic love, it must be said, in essence, is out of fashion. It probably has a large popular audience but is no longer in fashion.

That is, it is not supported by the major theoretical, reflexive or ideological languages that modernity has produced,

To quote some of the well-known language systems, I would say that neither Marxism nor psychoanalysis support this idea of romantic love.

Which means that if you are dealing with someone who is in love, who has certain trappings of intellectual culture, well, this person, if he or she happens to fall in love they will be extremely lonely. Since they will suffer, they will try to rely on a language, a theory that will help them, that they can use to guide them, but at the present moment in time, they will find nothing.

If someone were to affirm something such as kind of perversion or sexual impulse ...

At that time, they will indeed find a theoretical language, developed over the past twenty years, that will help him or her to understand and assert himself or herself.

But if the person happens to be in love, as in Werther's time, well at that moment, no one around them will be able to help.

Except popular culture, to the extent that it is cut off from intellectual language.

- You even say that what appears obscene in the contemporary discourse about love is not sexuality, but sentimentality.

Yes. There is a kind of reversal. And now, I claim that a person, I can talk about issues related to sexuality.

But someone in love will, indeed, have a hard time overcoming the taboo of sentimentality.

While the taboo of sexuality, today, is very easily overcome.

- Because to be in love is to be stupid?

Yes in a sense, that's what the world believes.

The world attributes to the person in love two qualities, or to be precise two bad qualities.

The first is that they're being stupid, indeed.

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<sup>257</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.facebook.com/lna.fr/videos/1513451805367900>

There's a stupidity of the lover, which he or she feels, moreover.  
And there is also a madness of the lover, so that, the popular sayings talk about this abundantly.  
Only, it's a wise madness. It's a madness that doesn't have the glory of the great transgressive insanities.<sup>258</sup>

These ideas are highly significant given the prime importance attributed to the theme of love and romance by thinkers such as Joseph Campbell, as explained above.

In the absence of an intellectual/theoretical system that incorporates romantic love, this creates a greater sense of detachment and wasteland, to use the terms explored by Campbell.

Campbell notes how the troubadour tradition and the theme of romantic love were considered to be transgressive in relation to the dominant discourse of the Church, but had profound roots. In particular he noted the importance of the theme of love in the Oriental tradition as a means of restoring the original unity.

It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss whether there has been an overall movement of auteur cinema away from these principles of Eros and Thanatos, but there does seem to be a clear difference between the approach pursued by the New Wave cinemas and contemporary auteur cinema.

## **The Story World**

Since the story starts in the known world and then moves to an unknown world, this may imply two worlds for the narrative, or a sudden revelation of a different dimension of the same world. For example, in films such as *Blue Velvet* or *American Beauty* a new dimension of the same world is revealed. In *Star Wars*, the *Narnia Chronicles (2005)*, *Wizard of Oz (1939)*, or *Lord of the Rings*, etc the main protagonist(s) leave their known world for other worlds.

To create unity for the narrative there must be links between both worlds to achieve a common story world for the whole film.

Using the metaphor of the "other world" as a dark forest, and journey through the unconscious, in this other world the antagonist has a stronger presence and it is peopled by communities that may be either "helpers" or "foes", as described in the "Hero's Journey" model.

When the protagonist(s) cross the threshold into the dark forest it may at first seem impossibly dangerous, but helpers then appear. Examples include *Snow White's* flight through the forest, or the scene in *Avatar* when the protagonist is abandoned at night in the forest.

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<sup>258</sup> Roland Barthes à propos de "Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux" [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://www.facebook.com/Ina.fr/videos/1513451805367900](https://www.facebook.com/Ina.fr/videos/1513451805367900): (my translation)

## **Intuitive/"Primitive" communities**

As part of the "journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious" film and TV series frequently make use of groups or communities that are the dominant forces in the "unknown world" or "dark forest" of the story.

A contrast is created between the more predictable, orderly dimension of the known world, which nonetheless has something missing and may metaphorically be termed a "wasteland" and the unpredictable, chaotic dimension of the unknown world.

A classic example of the contrast between civilisation and the wilderness is the Western, in which the Indians are considered to have a more immediate link to nature, inclusively via shaman-like capacities. The civilized communities lack these powers but the cowboy shares some of their intuitive skills.

In urban communities, this more intuitive, primitive dimension may be expressed via urban gangs or subworlds.

As noted by Robert Eberts' review<sup>259</sup>, in *Taxi Driver*, Harvey Keitel's pimp character, Sport, wears an Indian headband, and when Travis Bickle descends into the underworld to rescue Jodie Foster's character, (as if he were rescuing the mythical Persephone) he adopts a Mohawk and becomes "like the Native Indians".

Native Indians feature in many American films, not only in Westerns but also in films such as *One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* or *The Shining (1980)*, where they have this intuitive capacity.

This contrast between civilised and more savage communities has recurred throughout history including the Romans vs the Celts, medieval society against witches, outlaws and vagabonds, Christians vs Moors, Christian missionaries vs pagan tribes, the Discoverers vs native communities, colonial powers vs indigenous communities, the Allies vs the Nazis, the West vs Communism etc.,

In contemporary fiction communities which are portrayed with this more intuitive dimension include Mexican immigrant communities,, e.g. in *Breaking Bad*, or terrorist groups in action and espionage films.

Gypsy communities have also been used in this role, and once again these communities are considered to have shaman-like powers. This is a dramatic device often used in Portuguese soap operas.

Gypsy communities and Travellers feature in many films, ranging from films such as Guy Ritchie's *Snatch (2000)* to Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies (1988)*.

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<sup>259</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-taxi-driver-1976>

Rural and peasant communities with their closer link to the land can also play this role.

The more intuitive community may also be that of the main character(s) in the midst of unspoilt nature, as in *Into the Wild*, or *Captain Fantastic (2016)*.

Recent Mexican films, such as Cuarón's *Roma* and Lila Avilés's *The Chambermaid (2018)*, also feature main characters who are from indigenous communities.

### **Tricksters, Fools and Freaks**

Another core theme that should be taken into consideration when analysing films is the theme of the "fool" and the related question of "freaks".

Beatrice K. Otto's *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester around the World* (Otto, 2007) demonstrates the importance of the fool in drama throughout the ages.

The fool or jester was obviously one of the stock characters of popular theatre and regularly appears in Shakespeare's plays for example, but the figure of the Fool can be viewed from a wider perspective of the trickster and the person who takes his or her life into their own hands.

The Tarot card of The Fool shows a man setting forth on a journey with a cat at his heels, and all of us can be viewed as a Fool on life's journey, whose final destination is death.

There is something essentially absurd about life's journey and the dramatic portrayal of the Fool reminds us of this fact.

In certain festive traditions, notably the Saturnalia in the Roman era and the modern Carnival tradition, the fool becomes king for one or a few days. James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (Frazer, 2018, reprinted edition) suggested that a person was nominated as the Fool/King for a few days and then sacrificed, as a substitute for the king.

The attire of the court jester mimics that of the king, with crown and sceptre, and the jester can speak his mind on matters of state.

There is a direct link between the fool/jester/trickster and the shaman, and by extension of the capacity of the arts to profess views on matters of state that may be taken into consideration.

One of the key values of the fool/trickster in a narrative structure is their unpredictability. Since this character is "chaotic" rather than "lawful", the trickster brings life to the story.

A story without tricksters is very dull.

In many films and series, the characters all have certain unpredictable elements, but some characters are particularly unpredictable.

Helena Bassil-Morozow in *The Trickster in Contemporary Film* (Bassil-Morozow, 2011) identifies actors such as Charlie Chaplin, Jim Carrey, Adam Sandler, Sacha Baron-Cohen, Andy Kaufman, and Jack Nicholson.

A character such as “The Joker” in *Batman* is key to the success of the narrative and is effective because Batman also has a dark, chaotic side.

Jean-Luc Godard also has the trappings of a trickster as noted in a 2018 *Village Voice* article: “It seemed like all versions of Godard were here: the youthful romantic; the eternal revolutionary; the aging, gnomic trickster; the fake; the icon; the blur.”<sup>260</sup>

Other examples of trickster characters include:

*Breaking Bad* – Jesse Pinkman  
*Big Bang Theory* – Sheldon Cooper  
*How I met your Mother* – Barney Stinson  
*The Big Lebowski* – The Dude  
*Pirates of the Caribbean* – Captain Jack Sparrow  
*Shameless* – Frank Gallagher

Some of the most fascinating characters have a split between a lawful and trickster side. For example, Sheldon Cooper normally seems to be logical and methodical but will suddenly become completely unpredictable.

The same applies to Walter White in *Breaking Bad*.

This tension between the conscious/unconscious, lawful/chaotic dimensions makes the character more interesting.

Related to the trickster is the role of the freak.

In the world of court jesters, people with physical deformities or who differed from the norm, including dwarves, were considered to have special powers and often assumed the role of tricksters.

Shamans were also often persons with physical deformities and/or mental disabilities.

The worlds of the circus, performing arts, and cinema, have always been attracted to non-standard physical attributes.

Even extreme beauty can be viewed as one type of “freak”.

As such, “movie stars” are not only different from ordinary people in their ability to explore other realms, to use the idea developed above, at a certain level they are “freaks”.

Our fascination with “freaks” is related to our love of the grotesque, as discussed above.

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<sup>260</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.villagevoice.com/2018/05/24/a-tale-of-many-godards/>

In the context of filmed drama, people with abnormal characteristics can help transport us to the world of non-verbal consciousness, a “state of reverie” or the unconscious.

In the world of science fiction this also leads to the use of special effects to create freak characters, that are a mainstay of films such as *Star Wars* and *Blade Runner*.

Bob Dylan in a radio interview recorded when he was 20 talked about a song he wrote for someone he knew in a freak show:

They had a freak show in it, all the midgets and all that kind of stuff. There's one lady in there, really bad shape. Like, her skin had been all burned and she was a little baby, didn't grow right, so she was like a freak. All these people would pay money to see. That really sort of got me. It's a funny thing about them. I know how these people think. They want to sell you stuff, those spectators. Like they sell little cards of themselves for ten cents. They got a picture on it, and it's got some story. Here they are on stage. They want to make you have two thoughts. They want to make you think that they don't feel bad about themselves and also, they want to make you feel sorry for them. I always liked that, and I wrote a song for her. It was called, “Won't you Buy a Postcard.” Can't remember that one, though.<sup>261</sup>

Tod Browning's 1932 film *Freaks* is a classic example of how to explore abnormal human characteristics to get the audience to delve into their unconscious. There is a long list of filmmakers who have been fascinated with this dimension of the “grotesque”, including Tim Burton, David Lynch,

There is also a link between “freaks and geeks”, as noted in the show of this name, and in series such as *The Big Bang Theory*, the peculiarities and non-standard clothes, manners and appearances of the main characters is part of their appeal.

Another type of “freak” is a person who has an abnormal mind. This can include characters who are simply exceptionally intelligent, but for the purposes of drama involving a journey into a state of reverie/the unconscious, characters with exceptional intuitive powers are extremely valuable for the narrative.

This can include autistic characters, as in *Rain Man (1988)* or the *Good Doctor (2011)*, or geniuses as in *A Beautiful Mind (2001)* or *The Big Bang Theory*.

Characters with extraordinary and intuitive minds are particularly common in crime drama, such as *Sherlock (2010)*, *The Mentalist (2008)*, *Bones (2005)*, *Criminal Minds* and *Lie to Me (2009)*.

On the flip side, antagonists often have extraordinary, but twisted minds, and the drama is precisely about the interaction between these two forces.

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<sup>261</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://blankonblank.org/interviews/bob-dylan-freak-shows-folk-music-songs-smoking-greenwich-village-coffee-houses-song-writing/>

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this chapter is to establish the key lines of a theoretical framework for understanding films that moves beyond the dichotomy between genre cinema and auteur cinema and provides elements that can be applied to all kinds of film.

This thesis argues against the idea that only one type of film form can be termed as being artistic and by means of this theoretical framework it aims to show that it is possible for all types of films to have a poetic function.

This does not of course mean that all films do so or that all films have the same artistic value.

The question of assessing the relative merit of each film is a complex subject that goes beyond the scope of this thesis. The key objective herein is to challenge and attempt to move beyond the theoretical framework that creates a dichotomy between art and entertainment, and tendentially defines as art solely those films which are shown in film festivals and museums without any commercial circulation.



## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has a very ambitious goal. It has analysed the major trend that has affected the circulation of films, creating two separate circulation circuits – the commercial and festival circuits – and two paradigms for talking about cinema, revolving around genre cinema and auteur cinema.

The thorough analysis provided of European auteur cinema, and the associated theories and historical background constitute valuable material in its own right.

But the main value of this thesis concerns analysis of the theoretical, institutional and historical factors that underlie the profound dichotomy that exists and which has evolved over time.

At a theoretical level, one of the key factors that has created this dichotomy is a focus on film form, defined in particular in terms of narrative structure and types of characters, in which regard an auteur film is often defined as having an alternative narrative structure and character types that differ significantly from character types seen in genre films.

This definition of an alternative paradigm for understanding film, based on auteur cinema, is also linked to the idea that such films are superior culturally and artistically. The distinction between an auteur film and a genre film has also been compared to the difference between poetry and prose.

A core goal of this thesis has been to explore the concept of poetic cinema, as it was viewed by filmmakers working until the 1960s, during what is described herein as the first wave of auteur theory, and subsequent ideas of poetic cinema.

Based on detailed exploration of definitions of poetry and poetic cinema, developed by theorists and the filmmakers themselves, it is argued that a linear narrative structure and goal-orientated characters can also achieve a poetic effect, thereby undermining one of the fundamental foundations for distinguishing between auteur cinema and genre cinema.

Using this approach, as developed in the theoretical model outlined in the previous chapter it has been possible to respond to the core questions raised at the start of the thesis.

In particular it has been proven that auteur cinema and genre cinema are overlapping categories and that directors who can be considered to be auteurs can also work within the field of genre cinema.

It has been demonstrated that the effective dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema is directly related to the second wave of auteur theory, which in turn is linked to a post-Saussurian paradigm (Aitken, 2001) and is being challenged at present, especially in the context of cognitive film theory.

The thesis has emphasised that the focus on Joseph Campbell's theories in terms of the "hero's journey" is only one part of his overall thinking. Studies of mythic structures used in different societies and at different historical moments can be of relevance to understand filmic narrative structures, and this goes beyond the "hero's journey" or at least expands on this core mythic structure based on departure-initiation-return.

One example of mythic structures that are of interest for understanding filmic narrative structures is the Fisher King myth. This myth has been explored extensively in the areas of comparative mythology and literature but is relatively under-explored in the field of cinema.

The structure underlying the Fisher King myth is linked to the theoretical model presented in this thesis.

The theoretical model developed herein also provides insights into current trends towards fantasy cinema, including genres such as the superhero films, which are often difficult to understand from the perspective of second wave auteur theory and are often written off as mere money-making vehicles that have little to do with "true" cinema.

It has also been demonstrated that the effective dichotomy between auteur cinema and genre cinema is also the result of institutional and historical factors which have evolved over time and will inevitably evolve further in the future.

In the expanding digital universe, with economic power shifting away from cinema and towards streaming platforms, it is essential to reassess the theoretical paradigms used in film education and film curatorial strategies. The importance of this issue goes well beyond the specific form of cinema and includes all forms of visual communication.

Given the rising importance of developing strategies not just of media literacy but in particular of visual literacy, this thesis provides grounds for expanding the debate and consolidating a model for analysing film that moves beyond the post-Saussurian paradigm (Aitken, 2001).

A theoretical model has been presented that can be applied to both auteur cinema and genre cinema, which is linked to theories associated to the potential poetic power of moving images and the capacity for film to alter viewer's state of consciousness and create psycho-physiological states that have parallels with the dream state.

This theoretical model also presents the basis for extending current research in cognitive film theory to analyse how narrative and filmic narration can alter the viewers' state of consciousness, in particular by establishing bridges to the lines of intellectual enquiry pursued by Jung and Joseph Campbell.

This is only the beginning of further research.

The first immediate step is to apply the theoretical model developed herein to a select number of films and series, grouped around specific themes. Given the length of this thesis, detailed analysis of films has been left to a subsequent stage of research.

Examples of themes and films include the following:

- 1) Analysis of films by filmmakers who have produced both genre films and auteur films, such as Christopher Nolan, Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo del Toro.
- 2) Analysis of films that have an essentially linear narrative structure but a strong poetic dimension, such as Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker*.
- 3) Analysis of films featuring trickster/Dionysian characters in one of the lead roles, e.g. Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker*, Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*, Jack Nicholson in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Malcolm McDowell in *Clockwork Orange (1971)*.
- 4) Analysis of films whose stories revolve around descent into the underworld to recover a "Penelope/Inanna/Eurydice"–style character, in films such as *Taxi Driver*, *Taken*, Cocteau's *Orpheus (1950)* and elements of this myth in the series *Breaking Bad*.
- 5) Analysis of European auteur films with elements of the hero's journey, such as João Pedro Rodrigues' *The Ornithologist*.
- 6) Analysis of Portuguese films as a distinct case in European cinema, with emphasis on the films of Manoel de Oliveira, Miguel Gomes and Pedro Costa.
- 7) Analysis of the link between auteur cinema and third cinema approaches – cultural colonialism. The image of countries such as Portugal which is "accepted" in international film festivals corresponds to only one facet of the respective society, often focusing on certain issues, e.g. poverty, social degradation or picturesque settings, and avoiding other parts of society. The image presented in this way can be viewed as a form of "cultural colonialism" i.e. countries are only "accepted" through certain prisms, which condition the way that they are perceived from the outside.
- 8) Analysis of superhero films from the perspectives of myth and romanticism. There is considerable research on this topic, including examples cited above in this thesis. But there is also room for further research, using the elements developed herein.
- 9) Further analysis of the institutional and political framework that conditions the types of films that are made. As explained in this thesis the evolution from the first wave to the second wave of auteur theory coincided with the massive reduction of filmgoing habits in Europe and the rise of

state funding for the sector. This created leverage to shift curatorial strategies. At the same time there was not only a major evolution in film theory but also a transition from the Old Left to the New Left. These changes have had a major impact on film curatorial strategies at film institutes, film schools and film festivals. This thesis provides examples of these changes but more detailed analysis may be made.

10) Further statistical analysis on the genre mix of the world's leading film producing countries and how this has evolved over time.

11) Further analysis of processes of filmic narration strategies (as distinct from narrative structures). This requires shot-by-shot analysis of certain films to show how the filmic narration is achieved, shifting from subjective camera shots (POV) to more objective camera shots (establishing shots).

In addition to these areas of research, this thesis is intended to stimulate further practical work / filmmaking. A PhD is above all a verbal text, but given that the subject matter is film, at a certain level it is difficult for such a text to truly grapple with the material at hand.

A further project related to this research would be to produce a longform documentary that could address some of the key issues addressed within this text, enabling the argument to be illustrated with sounds and images, rather than essentially with written text and quotations.

Nonetheless, and notwithstanding the length of the analysis, I hope that this research sheds interesting new light on the topics raised.

## STATISTICAL ANNEXES

Detailed statistical information and analysis that corroborates and explains the key trends identified in the main body of the thesis.

## Summary

This annex provides data on the shift from the print age to the digital age, which offers complementary information to that provided in the main body of the thesis.

## Introduction

Print media and the written word were the main form of mass media communication for several centuries.

The invention of cinema and then television and radio shook this position, ushering in the audiovisual age.

The digital revolution has radically transformed the situation and audiovisual media is increasingly dominating modern communications.

Print media – whether newspapers, magazines or books – enjoyed a consistent rise from the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the twentieth century,

This coincided with rising literacy rates and the corresponding fall in illiteracy. A few charts illustrate this process.

The US illiteracy rate was around 20% at the end of the nineteenth century and was almost eliminated by 1980<sup>262</sup>. In more developed Western European countries such as UK, France and Germany a similar fall in the illiteracy rate was recorded. In some southern European countries such as Portugal illiteracy rates remained high until the 1970s.

Book publishing recorded a progressive rise until the twentieth century, doubling every century until the eighteenth century. There was then an explosion of book publishing in the nineteenth century, first and foremost and then above all in the twentieth century.

Books, unlike newspapers, have still maintained a high level of circulation, at least in terms of the number of titles, unlike the situation for newspapers which have been more directly impacted by digital technologies.<sup>263</sup>

Newspapers experienced a major boom in the nineteenth century and continued to grow throughout the twentieth century. Newspaper already began to suffer circulation drops from the 1940s as television began to rollout and are now below 50% of the levels recorded in 1940. Until around the year 2000, however, the drop in circulation was compensated by rising advertising and classified revenues.

The key alteration to the business model for newspapers occurred in around the year 2000 as print revenues for newspapers collapsed and were in no way compensated by online revenues.<sup>264</sup>

In terms of minutes of media supplied to homes, which is dependent on the number of channels available, radio was already at a high level in the 1960s due to the large number of radio stations. Supply of TV minutes mushroomed from the late 1970s due to the growth of cable TV.

In the same period supply and demand for newspapers fell. Young people in particular have lost the habit of reading newspapers, and to a lesser extent of reading magazines.

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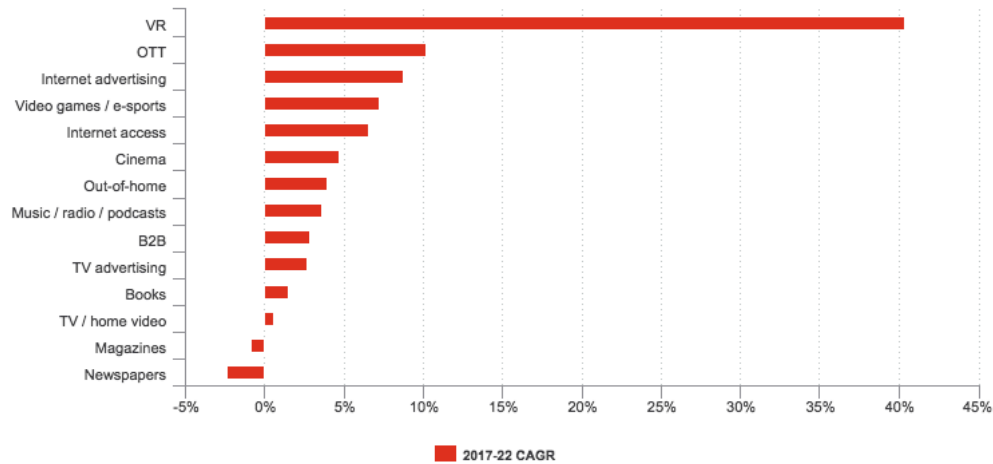
<sup>262</sup> Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.jefflewis.net/graphics/blog/us\\_illiteracy\\_rate.png](http://www.jefflewis.net/graphics/blog/us_illiteracy_rate.png)

<sup>263</sup> Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://ourworldindata.org/books>

<sup>264</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline\\_of\\_newspapers#/media/File:Naa\\_newspaper\\_ad\\_revenue.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline_of_newspapers#/media/File:Naa_newspaper_ad_revenue.svg)

Reading books has also decline, leading to the current situation in which the main areas of growth of media use are areas such as VR, OTT, and videogames. At a global level cinema continues to enjoy growth, notwithstanding the stagnation and minor drops in larger markets such as the US. Home video, magazines and newspapers are all falling

**Segment compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for next 5 years**



Source: PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook: 2018–2022. PwC. Ovum

Chart 8 – Growth rate of different media

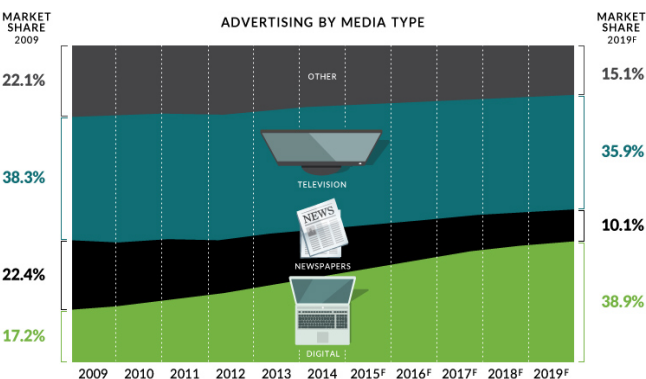
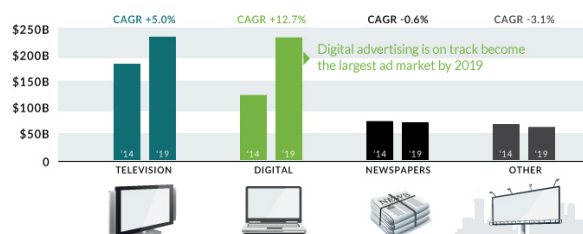
Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/tmt/media/outlook.html>  
 This is provoking a squeeze on revenues of traditional media, especially print based and an expansion of revenues of digital media, especially image based:

Chart of the Week

**THE SLOW DEATH OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA**

It's desperation time as the old guard clings to diminishing market share

GLOBAL AD REVENUE 2014 vs 2019F



SOURCE: McKinsey

visualcapitalist.com

Chart 9 Slow death of traditional media

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/chart-slow-death-traditional-media/>

The music business suffered a massive decline in revenues due to the digital revolution but is now beginning to recover, above all due to revenue from music streaming platforms such as Spotify. In the TV business the main growth area is for streaming platforms.

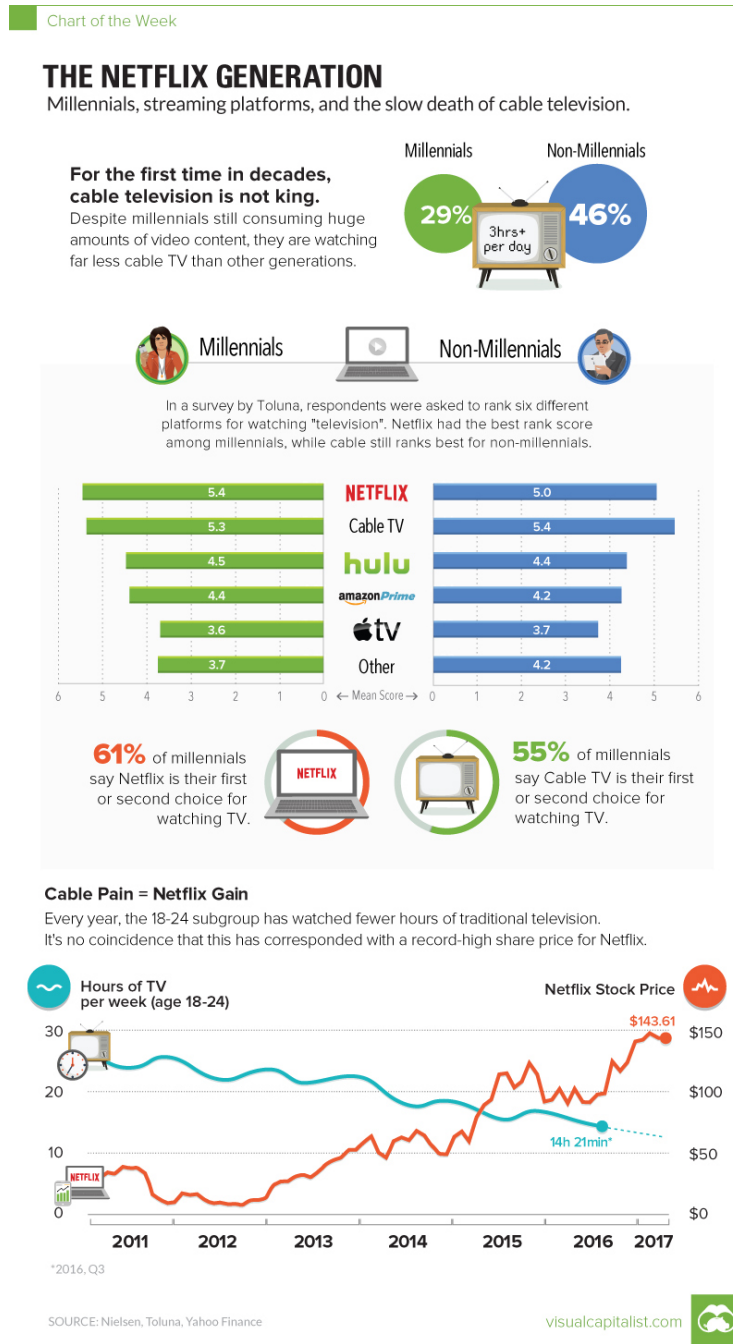


Chart 10 The Netflix generation

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/chart-netflix-generation/>

The Digital Age has radically changed the world of modern communications. At one level this represents a continuation and almost a logical conclusion of the print age, to the extent that much of computerised information continues to be based on verbal information.



But there are also fundamental differences. Information is not only ingested from typographic sources it is then manipulated and “computed”. The type of information that may be ingested is not only typographic, it is also increasingly based on sound and image information.

Sound and images may be retrieved via recording technology and then manipulated using man-to-machine tools such as editing software and also through 100% machine tools such as face recognition, and object detection.

Sensors also exist to detect information other than sound and images, and the overall data set collected by computerised tools goes well beyond typographic data.

These developments present major challenges to humanity and have been explored in theoretical debates as well as films and series. Titles such as *The Terminator* or *Black Mirror (2011)* obviously come to mind.

The print age and the birth of “typographic man” ushered in a rising middle class, which mastered the “white collar” manipulation of typographic information. McLuhan argues that print technology was the first mass production technology which over time led to the emergence of other forms of mass production and ultimately to the capitalist system.

The application of computer technology to the capitalist system paves the way to substitution of human capital by physical capital - ranging from the use of computers as a substitute to clerical and management staff, to robots that substitute human functions.

Artistic works, including audiovisual works, are exploring the consequences of, and challenges presented, by these new developments.

Indeed, it may be argued that audiovisual communication is particularly well suited to exploring these issues, since the “computer mind” is able to manipulate sound and image data as well as typographic information.

Films such as *The Matrix* trilogy offer metaphors for the new super intelligence of computers, and can achieve this in ways that may be more effective than typographic texts.

As a result, it may be argued that the moving image is not only a tool that is particularly well suited to exploring the depths of the human unconscious, as explained within this thesis, but also for us to understand the nature of the new super intelligence of computers.

On either level, audiovisual works can offer markers that help us orientate ourselves in this new Age of the Image and may provide vital references that serve a “curative function” in helping us maintain our balance.

### **What kinds of Audiovisual Media are popular on Social Media?**

In today’s world the most universal form of “artistic expression” is now photography, shared on social media such as Instagram and Facebook. The vast majority of people take and share photos and to a far lesser extent, make and share videos.

Suddenly, the “gatekeepers” of visual communication are no longer the major studios and the television channels. Any person or institution can become a “publisher” of visual images – whether photos, videos or infographics.

This sudden surge in visual communication has introduced major changes compared to the previous dominant model of visual communication.

While traditional films and TV are highly dependent upon montage to convey meaning, the new era is increasingly focused on communication via single shots – whether photos or unedited videos. Even in the case of edited videos this often involves a compilation of single shots, e.g. videos of animals or of “fails”.

Therefore to decode the “visual language” used in this communication it is necessary to reinforce analysis of the communicational and narrative power of single shots, rather than focusing on montage as a means of constructing narratives.

New models are required to understand the dominant genres of new forms of visual communication and also their place within the broader context of audiovisual media.

One of the first thing to be noted is the basic amateurism of a large proportion of the videos that are posted. This amateurism is one of the appeals of social media, as demonstrated by the 863 million views of “Charlie bit my finger - again !”<sup>265</sup>

But the fact is that an estimated one third of YouTube videos have under 10 views<sup>266</sup> and the vast majority of “participatory videos” and other videos designed to “give people a voice” actually remain largely unseen.

Notwithstanding the “you” dimension of YouTube, a large proportion of views are for professionally-produced videos – whether for music videos, travel videos or adventure sports videos.

Given that YouTube is an advertising-driven business the tendency towards an increasing proportion of professionally-produced videos is likely to increase and this trend is also likely to occur on other platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

YouTubers who make their money from subscriptions to their channels and number of views are also increasingly focused on ensuring the professionalism of their work.

However, there are also significant categories of views for themes such as “fails” and animal videos, which are essentially amateur videos, albeit in certain cases with some elements of more professional post-production.

The 25 most-viewed YouTube videos of all time<sup>267</sup> are virtually all music videos. The two exceptions are a clip from a Russian children’s show, *Masha and the Bear*, and an hour-long compilation of classic children’s songs.

The success of music videos on YouTube is partly the consequence of Vevo, YouTube’s music video partner, a joint venture signed with some of the world’s leading record companies: Universal Music, Sony Music, Google, and Abu Dhabi Media.

Music video was initially a key driver of pay-TV platforms, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of MTV, but with the advent of the Internet, music videos have migrated to YouTube, and MTV has transformed itself through edgy drama and other formats.

YouTube initially established its fame partly through videos such as “Charlie Bit my Finger” which was one of the top 5 videos in 2007, but viewing habits are progressively dominated by music videos.

In terms of subscribed channels, singers such as Taylor Swift are some of the most popular channels which are also complemented by humour channels such as PewDiePie, whinderssonnunes. Other popular channels include sports channels such as Dude Perfect, Fernanfloo, entertainment, such as TheEllenShow and WatchMojo, how-to, such as 5-minute crafts and Yuya, games, such as VanossGaming.

The most popular types of YouTube videos are listed in various posts. One post<sup>268</sup> identifies the following:

- 1) Product reviews
- 2) How-to videos
- 3) Vlogs
- 4) Gaming videos
- 5) Comedy

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<sup>265</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v= OBlgSz8sSM>

<sup>266</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://gizmodo.com/the-sad-weird-world-of-unseen-YouTube-videos-1645888775>

<sup>267</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/most-viewed-YouTube-videos/>

<sup>268</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 fro <https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-YouTube/>

- 6) Shopping/Haul
- 7) Memes
- 8) Favourites/Best Of's
- 9) Educational
- 10) Unboxing
- 11) Q&A
- 12) Collection
- 13) Pranks

These categories exclude one of the most popular categories - music.

Another post<sup>269</sup> adds other types such as:

- 14) Cooking and Food
- 15) Funny animals
- 16) Covers
- 17) Self-improvement
- 18) Parodies
- 19) Celebrity Gossip

Other categories that have been identified include:

- 20) Travel videos
- 21) Fiction
- 22) Documentary
- 23) Timelapse
- 24) Radical sports (e.g. People are Awesome)

At this level, in terms of films made with a “cinematic spirit”, which can be found on YouTube and Facebook, and also with greater frequency on Vimeo, this is primarily in the latter fields, from 20 to 24, as well as in some Vlogs (an obvious case being Casey Neistat).

If we look beyond video and also look at Instagram posts, the main types of post include the following<sup>270</sup>:

1. Inspirational quotes
2. Human faces
3. Landscapes and scenery
4. Food
5. Historical photos
6. User-generated content (eg GoPro)
7. Animals
8. Behind-the-scenes
9. Real-time trends
10. Video stories

The dimension of “travel” – taking photos in unusual places or circumstances is obviously a key dimension of Instagram posts (as well as photo posts in Facebook).

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<sup>269</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://blog.printsome.com/top-20-types-of-videos-with-most-views-on-YouTube/>

<sup>270</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.jeffbullas.com/10-types-visual-content-instagram-get-shared-like-crazy/>

The whole selfie trend is not only the consequence of rising tourism, including short city breaks but may actually fuel tourism – i.e. the need to prove that one has “been there and done that” by posting a photo on social media.

Mark Fischetti in his article *How #Selfie Culture is Changing Our Lives*<sup>271</sup> states that: “A strange notion that arises is that if we’re living to document our lives, then the documenting becomes the reason for living. It’s easy to do now with technology, especially something like Google Glass.”

He says that recording memories with Google Glass could actually distort our notion of our own memories. This theme is also addressed in films such as *The Final Cut (2004)* and in the episode *The Entire History of You (2011)* of the TV series *Black Mirror*.

Obviously traditional media, such as cinema, TV and recorded music, have extremely strong ties to Internet media, the most obvious example being music videos, and also including film trailers, excerpts from TV shows or celebrity culture posts.

Celebrity culture is a key vector of social media posts, in terms of the direct celebrities, and also “fans” who try to look like celebrities, such as girls who have used plastic surgery to look like Angelina Jolie or Kim Kardashian, or a human Barbie, or a Zombie.

One of the drivers of user posts with photos or video is the desire to “travel”, to go beyond our known world, to discover new states of awareness or consciousness. This can be achieved in many different ways – for example animal videos, travel videos or radical sports videos.

There is an implicit narrative dimension of a journey, which can also be explored in terms of film theory.

Another key dimension in the popularity of posts is the simple human dimension – posts with faces are more popular than other posts – we want to see people experiencing things that we might experience – again with a “journey” dimension.

There is also a comedy dimension to many videos, evident in types of video such as animal videos and fail videos which is another form of “journey”.

Other dimensions of narrative and construction of meaning found in film theory can be applied to many videos found on social media, and this theme will be explored later in this text.

## Conclusion

Key trends:

- 1) We are living in a new communication paradigm, that has been called the digital age or “the Age of the Image”.
- 2) In this new paradigm, audiovisual communication is achieved via an increasing number of media, and involves a new form of audiovisual literacy, which is distinct from text-based literacy.
- 3) Communication has evolved from a print media model, firstly to an audiovisual model, and now to a digital model.
- 4) This has shifted society from what Marshall McLuhan called the Gutenberg galaxy to what has now been called the Zuckerberg galaxy.
- 5) The development of this new paradigm is a challenge to traditional studies in this field, both in the areas of film studies and communication studies.
- 6) In the case of film studies, one of the key dichotomies that has structured studies in this field is that between auteur and commercial filmic production.
- 7) This dichotomy hinders understanding of audiovisual communication in the new paradigm and also is being challenged and superseded by creators.
- 8) In this new paradigm, many of the most important digital platforms are US-owned – Amazon, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Netflix, iTunes, the US Majors.

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<sup>271</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/how-selfie-culture-is-changing-our-lives/>

- 9) There is now room for user-generated content, that never existed before, which puts the You into YouTube and the Face into FaceBook.
- 10) This has led to the idea that anyone can generate content and reach a worldwide audience, a kind of DIY or punk paradigm.
- 11) However, alongside this explosion of low-end content, there is also a rising power of high-end content, especially in the areas of what is known as “premium content”, such as films, TV series, sports programmes, music videos.
- 12) Middle-range content is being squeezed, which is a major problem for European broadcasters, filmmakers and content-producers in general.
- 13) High-end content dominates platforms such as Netflix, iTunes, Amazon and film exhibition circuits, and also professionally-produced content also increasingly dominates social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook.
- 14) As a result the decision centres of the content production industry are also increasingly based in the United States, although with major outsourcing to Europe. The US Majors, Netflix etc all access content and talent from Europe but the decision centres are on the other side of the Atlantic.
- 15) This is a long-term trend, and in part has been determined by the “industrial muscle” of US-based operators, in terms of distribution networks, R&D expenditure, access to talent or use of new technologies.
- 16) There is also a content-related dimension related to the capacity to produce content which can engage with audiences.
- 17) In the new paradigm, premium audiovisual content goes well beyond cinema, and cinema itself now assumes a more marginalised role within modern communication.

## ANNEX 2 – STATISTICAL DATA ON THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AUTEUR AND GENRE CINEMA

### Summary

This annex analyses the genre balance of different national cinemas, the box office success of directors such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Federico Fellini and the admissions for films that have won prizes in the leading film festivals and in the Academy Awards.

### Introduction

The marked dichotomy between auteur and genre cinema is intimately linked to the radical changes to film viewing habits that have occurred over the past fifty years, commencing with the radical slide in cinema audiences in the 1950s and 1960s.

Whereas by the 1980s it seemed that cinema might disappear altogether, there was however recovery in many markets, as new multiplexes were built, primarily in shopping centres. For example, cinema admissions in the UK fell from 1600 million in 1947 to under 100 million in 1984, but then recovered to close to 200 million.

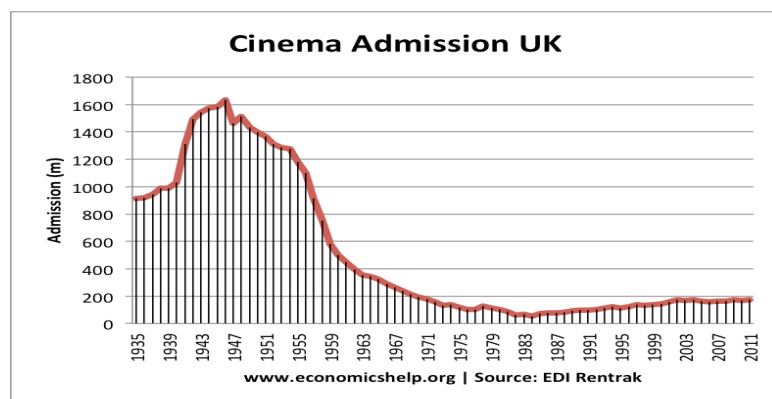


Chart 11 Cinema admissions - UK

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/6693/business/cinema-attendance-in-uk/>

In the US there was a similar massive drop between the early 1940s and the late 1960s, followed by modest recovery until the early 2000s.

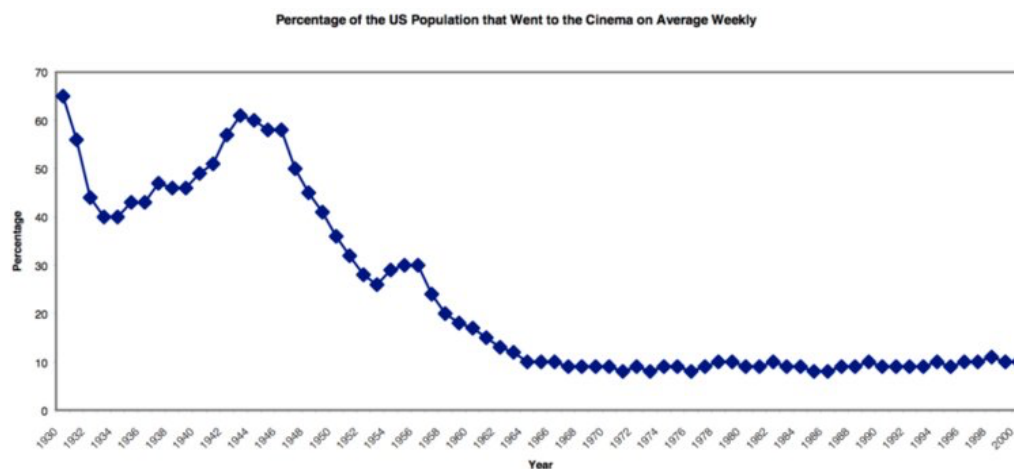
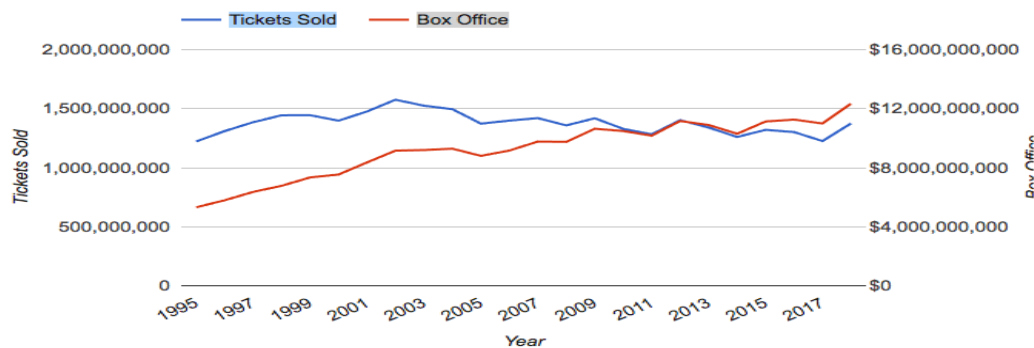


Chart 12 Cinema Admissions - US

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.businessinsider.com/movie-attendance-over-the-years-2015-1>

However, since 2002<sup>272</sup>, there has been a downward trend in film audiences in the US. 2017 marked the lowest point for over 25 years (although 2018 results suggest that there may be a slight uptick).

### Annual Ticket Sales



**Note:** Figures for 2018 are at an annualized rate (both in the graph above and the table below). The Box Office Totals in the graph above are *not* adjusted for inflation.

Year	Tickets Sold	Total Box Office	Total Inflation Adjusted Box Office	Average Ticket Price
2018	1,375,096,473	\$12,334,615,359	\$12,334,615,359	\$8.97
2017	1,225,312,616	\$10,992,959,545	\$10,992,959,655	\$8.97
2016	1,301,603,443	\$11,258,873,042	\$11,675,382,891	\$8.65
2015	1,320,388,459	\$11,130,877,724	\$11,843,884,492	\$8.43
2014	1,260,426,419	\$10,297,686,979	\$11,306,024,987	\$8.17
2013	1,339,874,282	\$10,893,180,888	\$12,018,672,305	\$8.13
2012	1,402,603,148	\$11,164,723,987	\$12,581,350,217	\$7.96
2011	1,282,624,383	\$10,171,213,773	\$11,505,140,724	\$7.93
2010	1,328,549,023	\$10,482,254,025	\$11,917,084,736	\$7.89
2009	1,418,600,476	\$10,639,505,449	\$12,724,823,134	\$7.50
2008	1,358,041,408	\$9,750,739,371	\$12,181,631,439	\$7.18
2007	1,420,038,979	\$9,769,870,732	\$12,737,749,656	\$6.88
2006	1,398,790,729	\$9,162,081,743	\$12,547,152,853	\$6.55
2005	1,372,980,280	\$8,800,805,718	\$12,315,633,123	\$6.41
2004	1,495,647,897	\$9,287,975,394	\$13,415,961,648	\$6.21
2003	1,524,925,344	\$9,195,301,709	\$13,678,580,337	\$6.03
2002	1,575,747,252	\$9,155,093,335	\$14,134,452,875	\$5.81
2001	1,476,327,892	\$8,356,017,514	\$13,242,661,209	\$5.66
2000	1,397,990,699	\$7,535,171,522	\$12,539,976,567	\$5.39
1999	1,444,688,664	\$7,339,019,709	\$12,958,857,317	\$5.08
1998	1,443,828,069	\$6,771,554,637	\$12,951,137,773	\$4.69
1997	1,385,216,757	\$6,358,145,799	\$12,425,394,311	\$4.59
1996	1,309,992,272	\$5,790,166,623	\$11,750,592,326	\$4.42
1995	1,221,817,616	\$5,314,907,323	\$10,959,704,017	\$4.35

Chart 13 – Annual ticket sales – US 1995-2018

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/>

In continental Europe admissions followed a similar slide from the 1940s to late 1960s. In recent years there has also been recovery, and particularly strong growth in certain markets such as Russia. In EU countries, there has been a rise from the early 2000s until 2016, but a dip in 2017 and 2018<sup>273</sup>.

<sup>272</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.natoonline.org/data/admissions/>

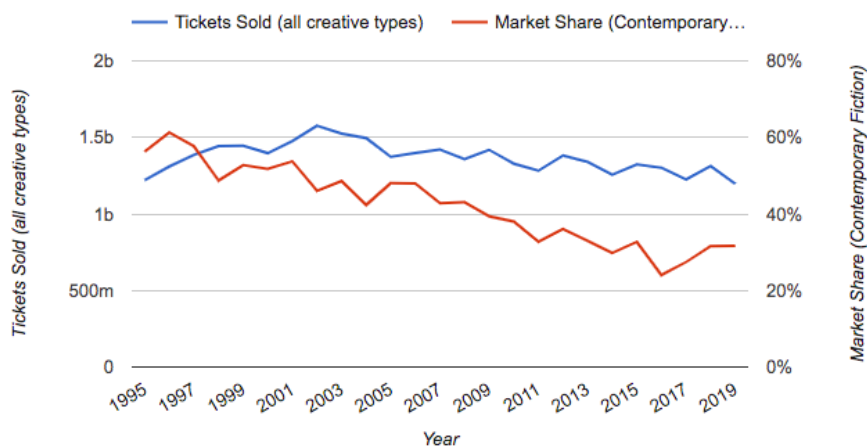
<sup>273</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.screendaily.com/news/european-cinema-admissions-reached-record-levels-in-2017/5126633.article>

## Hollywood's Increasing Focus on Visual Effects

The share of contemporary fiction amongst Hollywood films has progressively fallen over recent decades, whereas certain genres such as sci-fi, kids fiction and superhero have risen.

### Box Office History for Contemporary Fiction

#### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



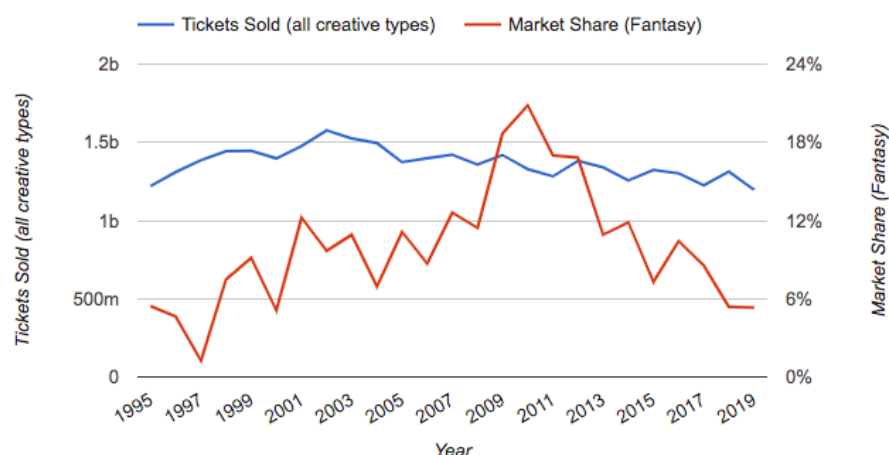
**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

Chart 14 Box Office History for Contemporary Fiction (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

### Box Office History for Fantasy

#### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

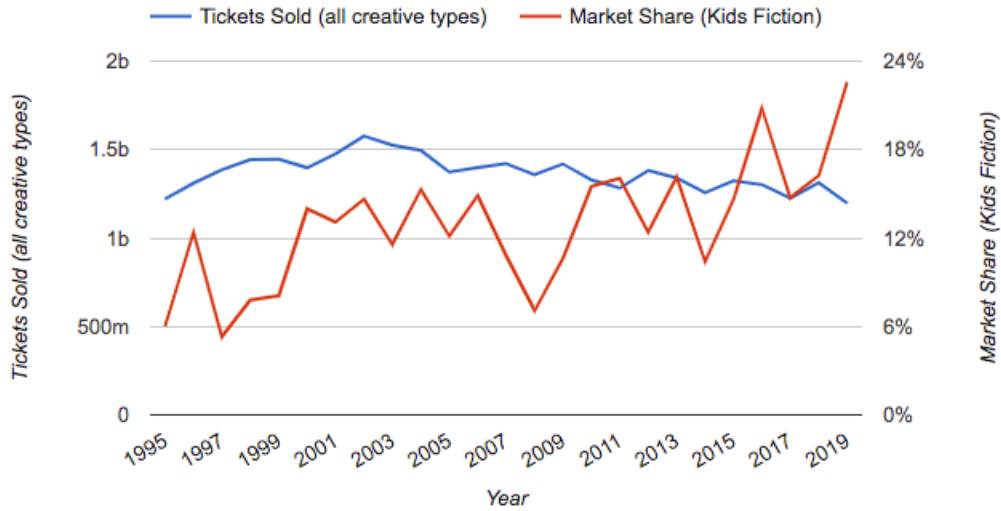
Chart 15 Box Office History for Fantasy (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>



## Box Office History for Kids Fiction

### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



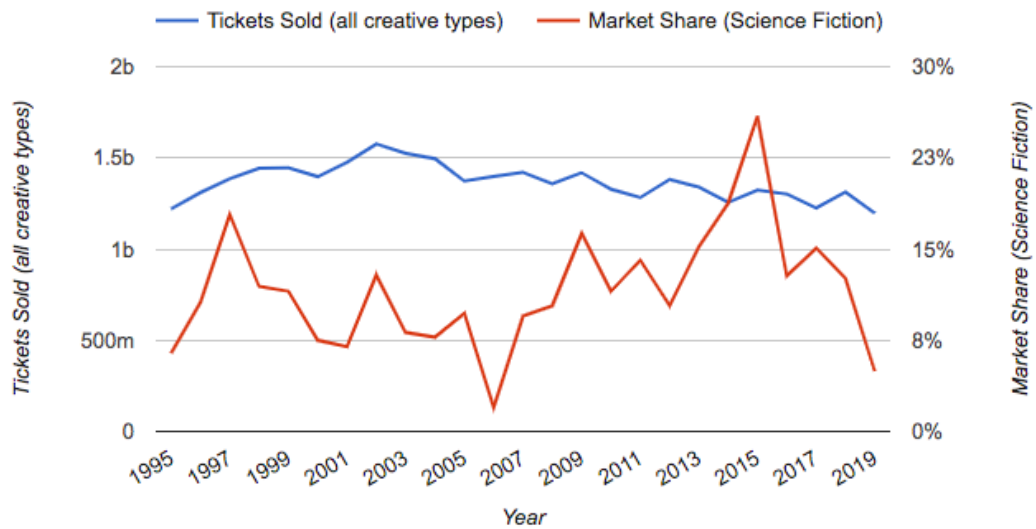
**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

Chart 16 Box Office History for Kids Fiction (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

## Box Office History for Science Fiction

### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



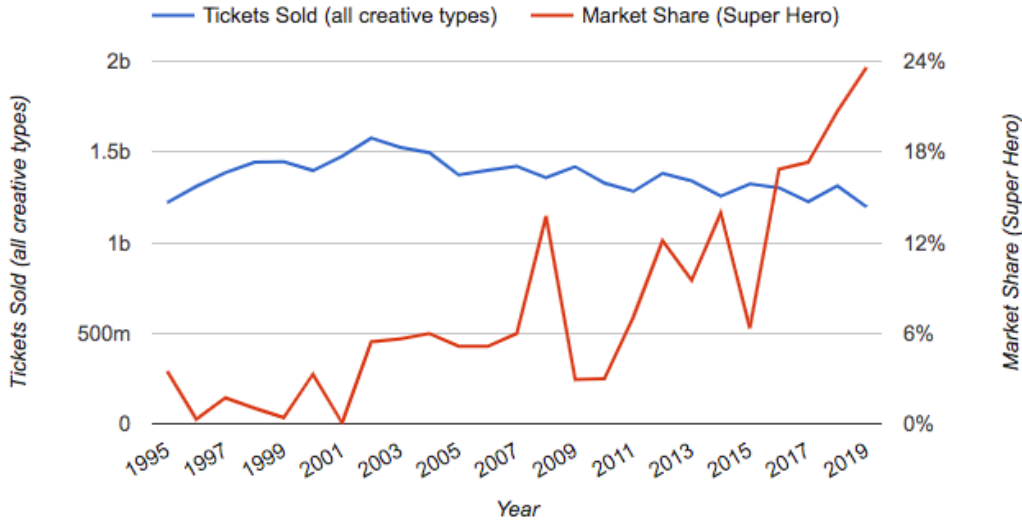
**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

Chart 17 Box Office History for Science Fiction (1995-2019)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

## Box Office History for Super Hero

### Ticket Sales and Market Share by Year



**Note:** Figures for 2019 are at an annualized rate.

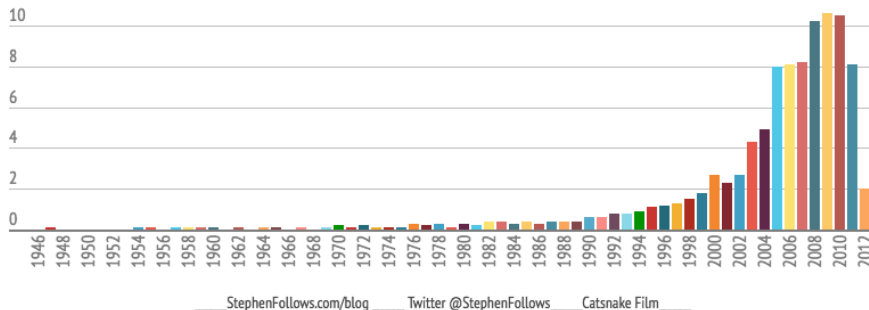
*Chart 18 Box Office History for Super hero (1995-2019)*

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/creative-types>

### The Surging Film Festival Sector

There was a massive growth in the creation of film festivals from the late 1990s onwards, as demonstrated in this graph, produced in 2012:

### Birth Year of Film Festivals



*Chart 19 Birth Year of Film Festivals*

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://stephenfollows.com/many-film-festivals-are-in-the-world/>

The rise in the number of film festivals reflects the need to create a circuit for independent films that was once met by the arthouse theatrical circuit. The need for such an alternative circuit is particularly important today because of the increased number of independent films, made possible by digital technology, and the increased demand for films that occupy a space beyond the blockbuster model of superhero and animated kids films.

Public funding for film festivals has also increased as cities vie with each other as “creative hubs”. It’s often more cost-effective for a municipal authority to create a film festival than to fund local film production.

However, there are problems facing the film festival sector since the booming number of festivals has cannibalised audiences and also often led to a reduction in public funding and sponsorship for each festival, often posing a challenge to the continuity of the festival itself.

### Admissions for European films

Statistics released on European cinema by the European Audiovisual Observatory are buoyant at first glance.

In 2018, 1847 feature films (1142 fiction films and 705 feature documentaries) were produced with a 29.4% market share.

However the number of films with a significant box office result is relatively low. Only a small number of films enjoy significant success and make the principal contribution to the aforementioned 29.4% market share.

This can be seen by analysing the top 20 films in the Big 5 European territories and seeing the number of European films included in the Top 20 and the proportion of the Top 20 in the total annual box office:

	Top 20 admissions	Annual admissions	%	National films	% of top 20	Other Eur films	%	National market share
France	68,5	209,4	32,71	5	25,7	0	0	37,4
Germany	50,5	122,3	41,3	3	18,8	0	0	23,9
Italy	34,3	99,2	34,6	2	10	1	3	18,3
Spain	45,5	100,2	45,4	3	17,5	0	0	17
UK	93,7	170,6	54,95	1	5,30%	0	0	37,4

Table 14 Admissions Top 20 films in Big 5 European Territories

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Focus - World Film Market Trends 2017

It should be noted that for the UK, the figure in the Top 20 excludes internal investment films (i.e. Hollywood films made in the UK using the tax incentive scheme) whereas the total national film market share of 37,4% includes these films.

For Spain, the top Spanish film (in this case 2016 data) was a Spanish/American coproduction: J. A. Bayona’s *A Monster Calls (2016)*.

In the case of the UK, the Top 20 contributes over half of total annual admissions and in the other Big 5 countries between 33% and 45,4% with a total of 15 films in this set of 100 films.

Of these 15 films the majority are distributed by the US Majors, especially outside France as indicated by the following table (Source: European Audiovisual Observatory Focus - World Film Market Trends 2017):

	N°. of local films in Top 20	Distributed by US Majors	Distributed by Local distributors
France	5	0	5
Germany	3	2	1
Italy	3	1	2
Spain	2	1	1
UK	2	2	0
	Total	6	9
	Excluding France	6	4

*Table 15 Top 20 films in Big 5 European Territories – distributed by US Majors or Local distributors*

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Focus - World Film Market Trends 2017, Author's analysis

In France there were 5 French films in the top 20, all distributed by French distributors (Pathé and Gaumont). In the other Big 5 countries the US Majors played the key role.

Beyond the Top 20 films there is a decreasing admissions per film, obviously, but if we consider the films that make a significant contribution to the local box office, it is unlikely to be much more than 3-4 times as many films as in the Top 20, i.e. a total of around 50-60 films in the Big 5 countries.

Total feature film production in the Big 5 countries for 100% national films and majority coproductions is as follows:

	100% national	Majority coprods
France	177	45
Germany	155	44
Italy	209	20
Spain	120	92
UK	130	5
Total	791	206

*Table 16 Feature film production in Big 5 European Territories*

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Focus - World Film Market Trends 2017, Author's analysis

For 2017, the European Audiovisual Observatory stated that there were 1676 films (1072 fiction and 604 documentaries).

The Big 5 countries, including 100% national films and majority coproductions produced 996 feature films i.e. 59,4% of the total.

If around 50-60 films in the Big 5 countries make a significant contribution to their national box office (over 1% per film) this means that around 90-100 European films achieve this status at the European level.

The other 1576 films have relatively small to negligible theatrical results.

This can be demonstrated by analysing the average admissions for all the films from the Big 5 countries and for US films, based on the Lumière database, for films produced in 2017:

## France

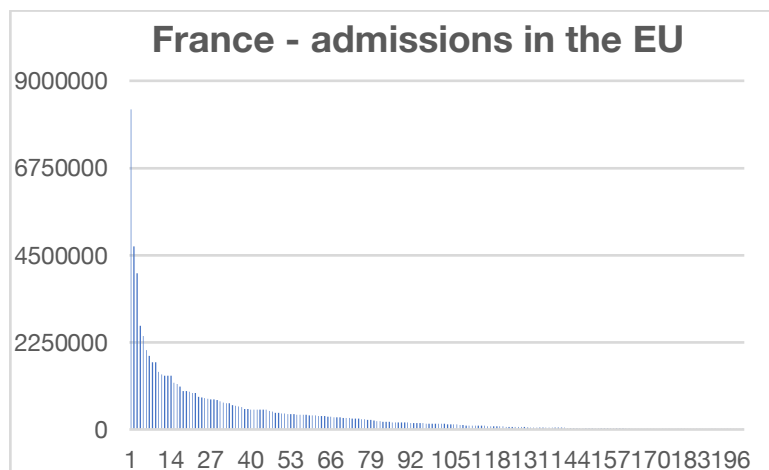


Chart 20 French films – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author's analysis

The top French film produced in 2017, Luc Besson's *Valerian*, contributed 10% of total admissions for French films in the EU. 17 films had more than 1 million admissions, and contributed 50% of all admissions for French films in the EU.

## Germany

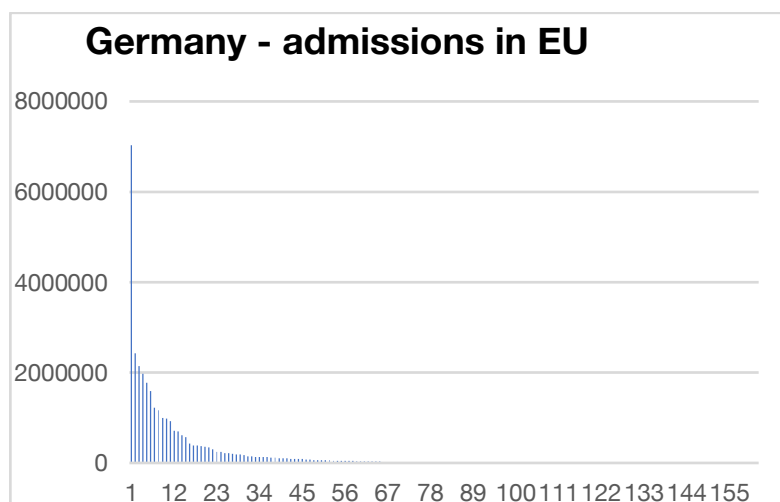


Chart 21 German films – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author's analysis

The top German film produced in 2017, was the comedy sequel, *Suck Me Shakespeare 3 (2017)* which contributed 22% of total admissions for German films in the EU.

8 films had more than 1 million admissions, and contributed 59.9% of all admissions for German films in the EU.

### Italy

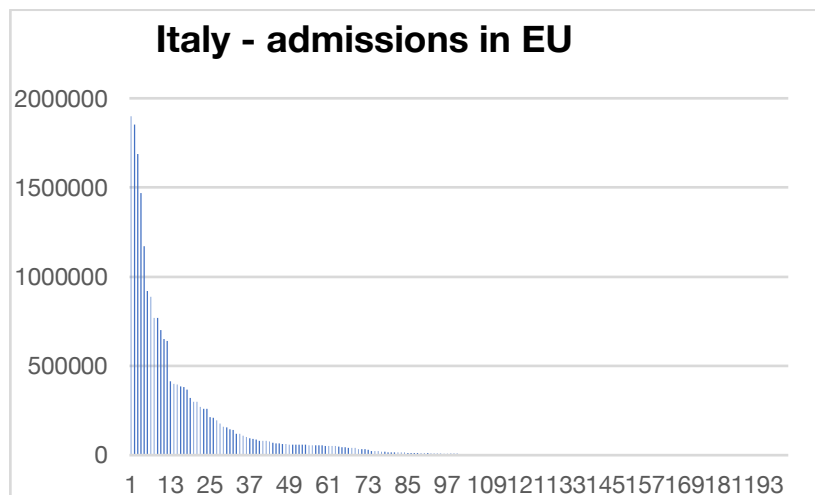


Chart 22 Italian films – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author’s analysis

Italy has a steeply declining performance curve, with over half of Italian films recording under 10,000 admissions each. The top Italian film produced in 2017 was the comedy “L’ora legale” (It’s the law). 5 films had more than 1 million admissions, and contributed 36.7% of all admissions for Italian films in the EU. 12 films had more than 500,000 admissions and contributed 61% of all admissions for Italian films in the EU.

### Spain

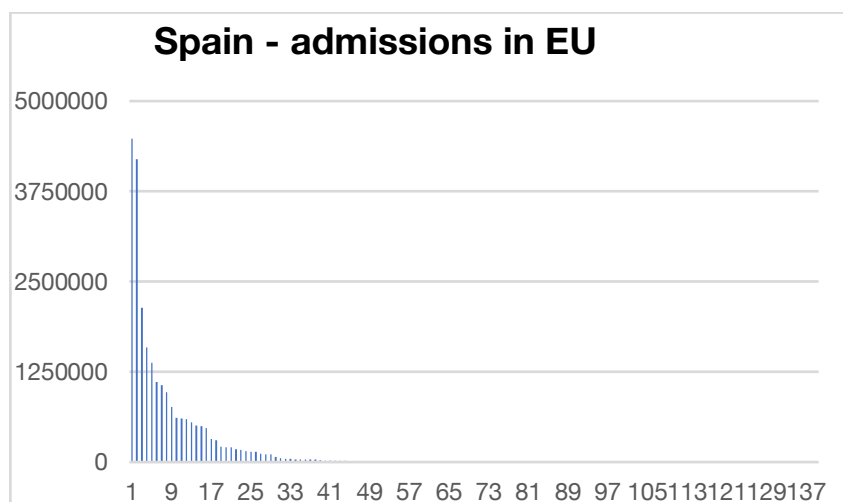


Chart 23 Spanish films – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author’s analysis

Spain also has a steeply declining performance curve, with almost two thirds of Spanish films recording under 10,000 admissions each. The top Spanish film produced in 2017 was Alex de la Iglesia's comedy *Perfectos Desconocidos*. 7 films had more than 1 million admissions, contributing 65% of all admissions for Spanish films in the EU.

## UK

For the UK we can either include or exclude inward investment films (i.e. typically Hollywood productions with a UK involvement and benefiting from a tax break). If we exclude these films we have the following profile:

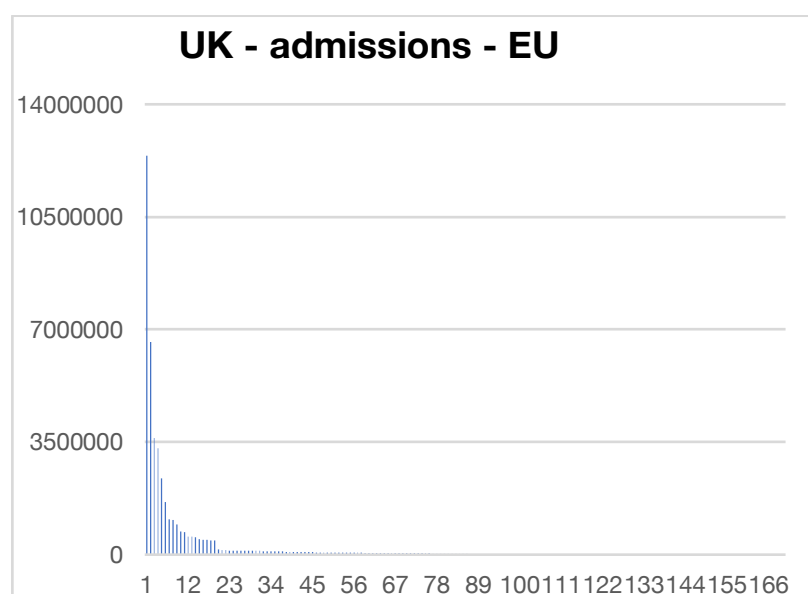


Chart 24 UK films (excluding inward investment films) – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author's analysis

Excluding inward investment films the top UK film produced in 2017 was *Paddington 2* (UK/France) with 12 million admissions. If one includes inward investment films the top film produced in 2017 was *Dunkirk*. Excluding inward investment films, 8 films had more than 1 million admissions, contributing 74% of admissions for UK films in the EU. Including inward investment films, 12 films had more than 1 million admissions, contributing 79% of admissions for UK films in the EU.

## USA

The US not surprisingly has the strongest performance for films in the EU with 80 films with over 1 million admissions. The Top 3 US titles produced in 2017 were *Star Wars: Episode VIII - The Last Jedi* (2017), *Despicable Me 3* (2017) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017).

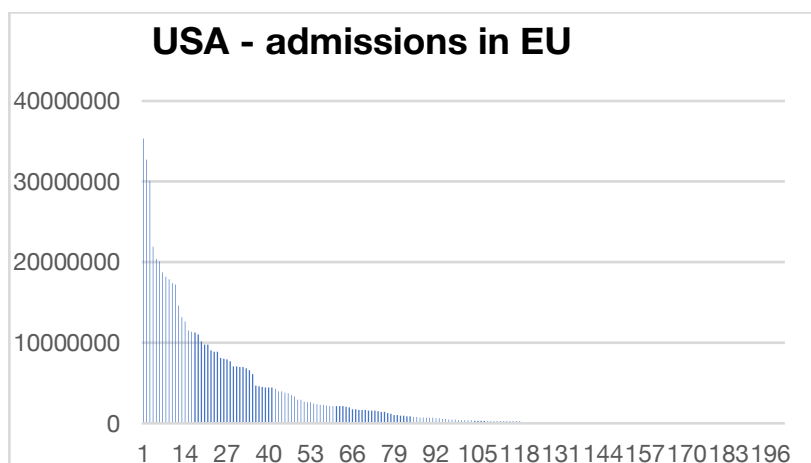


Chart 25 US films – admissions in the EU, ranked from N°. 1 film down

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author's analysis

### Comparative table

Comparing the data for the Big 5 European countries and the US, based on data from the Lumière database for films produced in 2017 we have the following results:

	Admissions 2017	Top film %	films >1m		Films 0.5m-1m		Films 0.1m-0.5m		Films 0.01m-0.1m		Films <0.01m		Total films
			Number	% of total BO	Number	% of total BO	Number	% of total BO	Number	% of total BO	Number	% of total BO	
France	80,1	10,3	17	50	28	24,7	68	21,5	76	3,7	11	0,1	200
Germany	32,3	21,7	8	59,8	6	17	25	17	44	5,2	77	1	160
Italy	22	8,6	5	36,7	7	24,3	24	26,8	55	11	109	1,2	200
Spain	24,6	18	7	64,8	8	20,7	14	11,5	19	2,2	90	0,8	138
UK wo INC	43,5	28,5	8	73,9	5	9,2	20	9,5	71	7	66	0,4	170
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>		<b>45</b>		<b>54</b>		<b>151</b>		<b>265</b>		<b>353</b>		<b>868</b>
<b>Average</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>5,8</b>		<b>0,7</b>	
US	609,2	6,8	80	96,4	17	2	35	1,3	55	0,3	9	0	196

Table 17 Comparative table – admissions for films from Big 5 European countries

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory. Lumière database (films produced in 2017), author's analysis



France (including majority coproductions) has the highest number of total admissions in the EU, almost twice as high as the UK (excluding incoming investment films), almost three times higher than Germany and almost four times higher than Spain and Italy.

The UK, if one includes incoming investment films such as *Dunkirk* is higher than France, with 83.9 million admissions and has the added advantage of stronger sales outside the EU.

Of the 868 films from the Big 5 countries produced in 2017 and released in the EU, 41% had under 10,000 admissions each and 71% had under 100,000 admissions each. In smaller EU countries, due to the size of the market, the situation is even more difficult and therefore there is strong evidence to suggest that over 50% of European films have under 10,000 admissions each and over 80% have under 100,000 admissions each.

The top performing films make the decisive contribution to the share of national films in the respective markets. In Germany, Spain and the UK the top national film contributed over 18% of all revenues for the country's films in the EU. On average films recording over 1 million admissions each, represented 57% of total admissions for the Big Five's films in the EU.

The situation for films from the US is predictably very different, given the critical mass of the country's production and the fact that films are amortised not just in the EU but throughout the world.

The US produces almost twice as many films with more than 1 million admissions each than the Big 5 combined and these films represent 96.4% of total admissions for US films in the EU.

The top films from the US typically occupy between 70-90% of the national box office in each EU country and the same titles perform well in each market.

For the purposes of this thesis, one of the main conclusions to be highlighted from this analysis is the existence of two separate circuits – a commercial circuit, in which a small proportion of European films circulate at an extensive level (e.g. with over 500,000 admissions per film) and a festival circuit which is the main forum for the majority of European films.

The highest performing European films often have little or no circulation within the festival circuit.

For example Germany's top film produced in 2017, the comedy *Suck Me Shakespeare 3* is the third film in the franchise, *Fack ju Göhte* (intentional misspelling of Fuck you, Goethe). This franchise has won awards such as the Audience Prize of the Bayerischen Filmpreis, but has had no major festival circulation.

2008 French hit *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis (2008)* directed and co-written by Dany Boon is the highest-grossing film of all time at the box office in France. It was nominated for César Awards: best Writing – Original and for the Audience Award of Best Film in the European Film Awards but had no major festival exposure.

*Paddington 2* the UK's biggest film excluding inward investment film *Dunkirk* won various film awards but also had no major festival exposure.

Italy's biggest hit in 2017, *L'ora legale* was screened in various festivals dedicated to Italian cinema but had no presence in major international film festivals.

This situation reflects the existence of two circuits – a limited number of European films circulate in the commercial circuit but have a minimal festival presence, a significant number of European films have a minimal theatrical presence but succeed in being shown in festivals, and also a significant proportion of films, perhaps as high as one third have neither festival success nor theatrical presence. This situation reflects multiple factors including the collapse of the arthouse theatrical circuit, for the reasons mentioned previously.

In order to counteract the problem of access to the theatrical circuit some countries, in particular France, have introduced measures to support local films and this is one of the main reasons for a more consolidated performance for French films.

At the European level the Europa Cinemas Network funded by the EU is another important initiative.

In 2017 the top 25 EU films released by the ECN were as follows:

Original title	Country of origin (2)	Director	prov. Admissions	
1	<i>The Square</i>	SE/DE/FR/DK	Ruben Östlund	818 308
2	<i>Victoria &amp; Abdul</i>	GB/US	Stephen Frears	546 452
3	<i>Toivon tuolla puolen (The Other Side of Hope)</i>	FI/DE	Aki Kaurismäki	518 550
4	<i>Loving Vincent</i>	PL/GB/CH/NL	D. Kobiela, H. Welchman	449 791
5	<i>Toni Erdmann</i>	DE/AT/CH	Maren Ade	389 698
6	<i>Elle</i>	FR/DE/BE	Paul Verhoeven	361 666
7	<i>Demain tout commence (Two Is a Family)</i>	FR/GB	Hugo Gélin	356 928
8	<i>Ce qui nous lie (Back to Burgundy)</i>	FR	Cédric Klapisch	331 207
9	<i>120 battements par minute (120 Beats Per...)</i>	FR	Robin Campillo	328 739
10	<i>T2 Trainspotting</i>	GB	Danny Boyle	307 822
11	<i>Sage femme (The Midwife)</i>	FR	Martin Provost	278 848
12	<i>Wilde Maus (Wild Mouse)</i>	AT/DE	Josef Hader	270 426
13	<i>Happy End</i>	FR/AT/DE	Michael Haneke	267 455
14	<i>Perfetti sconosciuti (Perfect Strangers)</i>	IT	Paolo Genovese	267 359
15	<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	GB	William Oldroyd	265 841
16	<i>Paddington 2</i>	GB/FR	Paul King	263 495
17	<i>Au revoir là-haut (See You Up There)</i>	FR/CA	Albert Dupontel	256 172
18	<i>The Party</i>	GB	Sally Potter	255 714
19	<i>WEIT. Die Geschichte von einem Weg...</i>	DE	P. Allgaier, G. Weisser	247 984
20	<i>Teströl és lélekröl (On Body and Soul)</i>	HU	Ildikó Enyedi	240 690
21	<i>Viceroy's House</i>	GB/IN/SE	Gurinder Chadha	232 780
22	<i>Le Jeune Karl Marx (The Young Karl Marx)</i>	FR/BE/DE	Raoul Peck	230 434
23	<i>Aurore</i>	FR	Blandine Lenoir	219 868

24	<i>The Killing of a Sacred Deer</i>	IE/GB/US	Yorgos Lanthimos	213 771
25	<i>L'Amant double (Double Lover)</i>	FR/BE/DE	François Ozon	212 220

Table 18 European Cinemas Network films

Source: Focus 2017

The Europa Cinemas Network provides vital theatrical exposure for a restricted number of films but doesn't alter the overall balance of two networks – a small number of films destined primarily for the theatrical circuit and the majority of European films destined primarily for the festival circuit.

### Admissions for films by leading European film directors

In order to put this situation into the context of the tradition of European art cinema, but in a radically different historical and economic context, we can look at the admissions data disclosed by France's film funding agency, the CNC, for the early 1960s, complemented by information from sites such as [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com) and [www.jpbox-office.com](http://www.jpbox-office.com).

For example the admissions data for 1957-1962 disclosed by the CNC shows that several European "art films" by acclaimed directors recorded significant audience admissions in France. We do not have data available for other key markets in Europe, but given that these films include non-French films, such as Fellini's *La Dolce Vita (1960)* it demonstrates the fact that such "art films" were major international successes. Obviously the economic circumstances of the film industry, release strategies etc were completely different.

Note: this selection includes the directors who have been recognised as "auteurs", but does not include important French directors such as Clouzot, Henri Decoin, Jacques Becker etc, who many commentators, such as Bertrand Tavernier, believe should also be considered as auteurs.

The data is not easily available for this period, but based on data from France's CNC and the sites [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com) and [www.jpbox-office.com/](http://www.jpbox-office.com/) we have the following data for a selection of films from the following directors:

### François Truffaut - Admissions per film

		France	Spain	Germany	Italy
<i>Quatre Cent Coups</i>	1959	4166149			
<i>Shoot the pianist</i>	1960	974833			
<i>Jules and Jim</i>	1962	1595379			
<i>Soft skin</i>	1964	590791	302296		
<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	1966	779811	435976		
<i>The bride was black</i>	1968	1283281	867409		
<i>Stolen kisses</i>	1968	1156101	528131		
<i>The Mississippi Mermaid</i>	1969	1227693	998966		
<i>The wild child</i>	1970	1674771	557826		
<i>Marital home</i>	1970	1010797	439158		

<i>The two English girls and the continent</i>	1971	412866	540978		
<i>A beautiful girl like me</i>	1972	684919	538968		
<i>The American night</i>	1973	839583	774895		
<i>The story of Adèle H.</i>	1975	762644	266642		
<i>Pocket money</i>	1976	2071040	209489		
<i>The man who loved women</i>	1977	981792	108765	550	
<i>The green room</i>	1978	161293			
<i>Fleeing love</i>	1979	437522			
<i>The last metro</i>	1980	3393694	330615	39155	N ° 51
<i>The woman next door</i>	1981	1101537	350616	205	N°. 40
<i>Hurry Sunday</i>	1983	1176425	118464	416191	N ° 71

Table 19 François Truffaut – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com), [www.jpbox-office.com](http://www.jpbox-office.com)

Truffaut heralded the arrival of France's Nouvelle Vague with his 1959 hit *Les quatre cents coups* which was the 9<sup>th</sup> biggest film in France that year and attracted an audience of over 4 million in France. Truffaut remained committed to making films that could attract a broad audience, even after the critical rethinking of cinema at the end of the 1960s and one of his last films, *Le Dernier Metro (1980)* starring Gerard Depardieu and Catherine Deneuve, almost rivalled the audience level of his first hit. He enjoyed significant success abroad, especially for certain hits such as *Jules et Jim*. The above table provides data on some of these results, for example in Spain in particular.

### Jean-Luc Godard - Admissions per film

<i>A Bout de Souffle</i>	1959	2210864
<i>The little soldier</i>	1960	192464
<i>A woman is a woman</i>	1960	558218
<i>The 7 deadly sins (segment "Laziness")</i>	1961	1317760
<i>Live your life</i>	1962	462438
<i>Carabineers</i>	1962	68299
<i>Contempt</i>	1963	1619020
<i>The most beautiful scams in the world</i>	1963	137102
<i>Keeping to himself</i>	1964	149163
<i>A married woman</i>	1964	441584
<i>Paris seen by ... (segment "Montparnasse-Levallois")</i>	1964	55233

<i>Alphaville</i>	1965	503125
<i>Pierrot le fou</i>	1965	1329182
<i>Male Female</i>	1965	429573
<i>Made in the USA</i>	1966	174324
<i>Two or three things I know about her</i>	1966	199758
<i>The oldest profession in the world("Anticipation")</i>	1966	584385
<i>The gay to know</i>	1967	2013
<i>The Chinese</i>	1967	337073
<i>Far from Vietnam (segment "Camera-eye")</i>	1967	63515
<i>Weekend</i>	1967	263462
<i>The challenge (segment "Love")</i>	1968	6782
<i>One + One</i>	1968	84193
<i>British Sounds (co-production: JH Roger)</i>	1969	200
<i>Pravda (co-real: JP Gorin / JH Roger)</i>	1969	566
<i>East Wind (co-production: JP Gorin)</i>	1969	2459
<i>Struggles in Italy (co-production: JP Gorin)</i>	1969	551
<i>Vladimir and Rosa (co-directed by JP Gorin)</i>	1970	269
<i>Here and elsewhere (co-production: AM Mieville)</i>	1971	11391
<i>All is well (co-production: JP Gorin)</i>	1971	158269
<i>Number two (co-production: AM Miéville)</i>	1975	68136
<i>How is it going ? (co-real: AM Miéville)</i>	1975	572
<i>Save who can (life)</i>	1979	623292
<i>Passion</i>	1981	208354
<i>First name Carmen</i>	1983	397081
<i>I salute you Marie</i>	1984	354451
<i>Detective</i>	1984	382679
<i>Treat your right</i>	1986	129577
<i>Aria (segment "Armide")</i>	1986	13287
<i>King Lear</i>	1987	12757
<i>New wave</i>	1989	140356
<i>Against oblivion (segment "For Thomas Wainggai")</i>	1991	12116
<i>Germany year 90, nine zero</i>	1991	4054
<i>Alas for me</i>	1992	82114

<i>JLG JLG</i>	1994	1961
<i>For Ever Mozart</i>	1996	53449
<i>Praise of love</i>	1999	77012
<i>Our music</i>	2003	29174
<i>Socialism film</i>	2008	30423

Table 20 Jean-Luc Godard – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, www.boxofficestory.com, www.jpbox-office.com

Godard was much less concerned about box office success than Truffaut as reflected in the above figures. In the 1960s he courted audiences more overtly and had his biggest hit with *A bout de soufflé*, and smaller hits with *Le Mepris* and *Pierrot le Fou*. After 1968 he experimented extensively with video and had much smaller box office results for his theatrical films.

### Federico Fellini - Admissions per film

		France	Spain	Italy
<i>Les feux du music-hall</i>				
<i>Luci del varietà</i>	1956	34156		
<i>Le cheick blanc</i>				
<i>Lo sceicco bianco</i>	1955	32112		
<i>I Vitelloni</i>	1954	221879		4925000
<i>Amore in città</i>	1957	67760		
<i>La Strada</i>				
<i>La strada</i>	1955	4529052		3954000
<i>Il bidone</i>				
<i>Il bidone</i>	1956	788105		
<i>Les Nuits de Cabiria</i>				
<i>Le notti di Cabiria</i>	1957	2581768		4040000
<i>La Douceur de vivre</i>				
<i>La dolce vita</i>	1960	2956094		13708000
<i>Boccace 70 ( 1 segment)</i>				
<i>Boccaccio sessanta dieci</i>	1962	862121		6156000
<i>Otto e 1/2</i>	1963	752506		3761000
<i>Giulietta degli spiriti</i>	1965	316531	405104	

<i>Histoires extraordinaires (1 segment)</i>	1968	946137		N°81
<i>Fellini Satyricon</i>				
<i>Fellini Satyricon</i>	1969	1298870	575048	4600000
<i>Les Clowns (documentaire télé)</i>				
<i>I clowns</i>	1971	305236	60459	
<i>Fellini Roma</i>				
<i>Roma</i>	1972	1223558	684592	N°59
<i>Amacord</i>				
<i>Amarcord</i>	1974	1123360	1412744	6178000
<i>Le Casanova de Fellini</i>				
<i>Il Casanova di Federico Fellini</i>	1977	894342	172240	N°18
<i>Prova d'orchestra</i>				
<i>Prova d'orchestra</i>	1979	258951	124035	
<i>La cité des femmes</i>				
<i>La città delle donne</i>	1980	871086	281402	N°24
<i>Et vogue le navire</i>				
<i>E la nave va</i>	1984	550158	122863	N°37
<i>Ginger et Fred</i>				
<i>Ginger e Fred</i>	1986	376914	161026	N°29
<i>Intervista</i>				
<i>Intervista</i>	1987	411374	14837	N°89
<i>La voce della luna</i>	1990	209043	18537	N°19

Table 21 Federico Fellini – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com), [www.ipbox-office.com](http://www.ipbox-office.com)

Fellini had his first big international hit with *La Strada* (1954) which clocked up more admissions in France than in Italy. *Nights of Cabiria* (1957) was his next big hit followed by the biggest success of his career, *La Dolce Vita* which generated over 13 million admissions in Italy and was also a big success in the US with an estimated 28 million admissions. *8 ½* (1963) and *Satyricon* (1969) were also major hits. After *Amarcord* (1973) his popularity began to wane.

## Ingmar Bergman - Admissions per film

Data for the admissions to Bergman's films in France, Spain and Germany is as follows:

	Year	France	Spain	Germany
<i>Monika</i>	1952	926 796		
<i>La Nuit Des Forains</i>				
<i>Gyklarnas Afton</i>	1953	232 614		
<i>Une Leçon D'amour</i>				
<i>En Lektion I Kärlek</i>	1953	222 806		
<i>Reves De Femmes</i>				
<i>Kvinnodröm</i>	1954	137 633		
<i>Sourires D'une Nuit D'ete</i>				
<i>Sommarnattens Leende</i>	1955	885 617		
<i>Le Septieme Sceau</i>				
<i>Det Sjunde Inseplet</i>	1957	647 825		
<i>Au Seuil De La Vie</i>				
<i>Nära Livet</i>	1957	101 314		
<i>Les Fraises Sauvages</i>				
<i>Smultronstället</i>	1957	895 112		
<i>Le Visage</i>				
<i>Ansiktet</i>	1958	253 713		
<i>La Source</i>				
<i>Jungfrukällan</i>	1959	1 037 687		
<i>A Travers Le Miroir</i>				
<i>Sasom I En Spegel</i>	1961	247 249		
<i>Les Communians</i>				
<i>Nattvardsgästerna</i>	1962	107 151		
<i>Le Silence</i>				
<i>Tystnaden</i>	1962	661 726	222 964	
<i>Toutes Ses Femmes</i>				
<i>För Att Inte Tala Om Alla Dessa Kvinnor</i>	1963	71 085		
<i>Persona</i>	1965	382 147	227 282	



<i>Stimulantia (Inedit)</i>	1966			
<i>La Honte</i>				
<i>Skammen</i>	1967	149 541	386 258	
<i>Le Rite</i>				
<i>Riten</i>	1967	62 727	62 258	
<i>Une Passion</i>				
<i>En Passion</i>	1968	145 095	336 307	
<i>Farö Dokument (Inedit)</i>	1969			
<i>Le Lien</i>				
<i>The Touch</i>	1970	370 720	276 406	
<i>Cris Et Chuchotements</i>				
<i>Viskningar Och Rop</i>	1971	1 330 796	1 491 412	
<i>Scenes De La Vie Conjugale</i>				
<i>Scener Ur Ett Äktenskap</i>	1972	997 612	1 141 186	1 300 000
<i>La Flute Enchantee</i>				
<i>Trollflöjten</i>	1974	864 328	101 855	1 000 000
<i>Face A Face</i>	1975	554 291	526 616	
<i>L'œuf Du Serpent</i>				
<i>Das Schlangenei</i>	1976	757 375	464 312	950 000
<i>Sonate D'automne</i>				
<i>Herbstsonate</i>	1978	946 105	644 702	600 000
<i>De La Vie Des Marionnettes</i>				
<i>Aus Dem Leben Der Marionetten</i>	1980	188 918	14 020	
<i>Mon Ile Fårö</i>				
<i>Fårö Dokument</i>	77-79	4 262		
<i>Fanny Et Alexandre</i>	81-82	374 208	501 013	165 146
<i>Après La Repetition</i>				
<i>Efter Repetitionen</i>	1983	91 167		
<i>En Presence D'un Clown (Telefilm)</i>				
<i>Larmar Och Gör Sig Till</i>	1997	7 718		
<i>Saraband (Telefilm)</i>	2003	41 928	68 677	

Table 22 Ingmar Bergman – admissions per film

Bergman's earlier major hits included *Wild Strawberries (1957)* and *The Seventh Seal (1957)*. Interestingly one of his most acclaimed films *Persona* had a muted success in the box office in France, Spain and Germany.

In the 1970s his hits included *Cries and Whispers (1972)* and *Scenes from Married Life (1973)* that both had over 3 million admissions at the international level.

### Bernardo Bertolucci - Admissions per film

		France	Spain	Ger.	UK	Italy	BO US (M\$)
<i>La Commare Secca (Inedit)</i>	1962						
<i>Prima Della Rivoluzione (Inedit)</i>	1963						
<i>Partner</i>	1968					320000	
<i>Partner</i>							
<i>La Strategie De L'araignee</i>	1969						
<i>La Strategia Del Ragno</i>		85927	9456			35000	
<i>Le Conformiste</i>	1971						
<i>Il Conformista</i>		570149	324658			1450000	
<i>Le Dernier Tango A Paris</i>	1972						
<i>Ultimo Tango A Parigi</i>		5158950	2957077	5200000		15623773	36,1
<i>1900</i>	1976						
<i>1900</i>		1748512	1641082			10359326	2,42
<i>La Luna</i>	1979						
<i>La Luna</i>		646970	1060272			N°18	
<i>La Tragedie D'un Homme Ridicule</i>	1981						
<i>La Tragedia Di Un Uomo Ridicolo</i>		78694	114412			400000	
<i>Le Dernier Empereur</i>	1987					N°1	
<i>The Last Emperor</i>		4727537	2868848	3124114		2670000	43.98
<i>Un Thé Au Sahara</i>	1990						
<i>The Sheltering Sky</i>		618554	822651	756086	714547	N°8	2
<i>Little Buddha</i>	1993	1358925	866054	621104	88086	N°8	4,8

<i>Little Buddha</i>							
<i>Beaute Volee</i>							
<i>Io Ballo Da Sola</i>	1996	184721	406755	136959	253481	1019175	4,6
<i>Shandurai</i>							
<i>L'assedio</i>	1999	26979	78975	8389	31043	146821	2
<i>Innocents</i>							
<i>The Dreamers</i>	2003	69909	188354	119065	138008	903655	2,5
<i>Moi Et Toi</i>							
<i>Io E Te</i>	2013	12997	18985	2073	1718	299764	

Table 23 Bernardo Bertolucci – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, www.boxofficestory.com, www.jpbox-office.com

Bertolucci's biggest hits were *Last Tango in Paris (1974)* and *The Last Emperor (1987)*. After *Little Buddha (1993)* he had more muted success outside Italy, even with *The Dreamers (2003)*.

### Michelangelo Antonioni - Admissions per film

I was unable to find comprehensive data on the success of Antonioni's films, but in France there is data for: *La Notte(1961)*, with 1 million spectators, *L'Avventura* with 882, 000 spectators and *Eclipse (1962)* co-starring French actor Alain Delon with 470,000 spectators. His biggest hit in France was *Blow Up* in 1967 with 1.57 million spectators and also 2.25 million spectators in Germany.

### Pier Paolo Pasolini - Admissions per film

Pasolini is clearly not a traditional "commercial director" but some of his films enjoyed considerable success, as shown in the following table.

		France	Spain	Ger.	Italy
<i>Accattone</i>	1961	82 115	6 202		2 270 000
<i>Mamma Roma</i>	1976	139 507	160 275		1 000 000
<i>Rogopag (Inedit) (Segment "La Ricotta")</i>	1963		1 815		250 000
<i>La Rabbia (Documentaire) Inedit</i>	1963				30 000
<i>Comizi D'amore (Documentaire) Inedit</i>	1964				100 000
<i>L'evangile Selon Saint Matthieu</i>					1 700 000
<i>Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo</i>	1965	648 755			000
<i>Des Oiseaux Petits Et Gros</i>	1970	43 806	60 197		660 000

<i>Uccellacci E Uccellini</i>					
<i>Les Sorcieres (Segment "La Terra Vista Dalla Luna")</i>					1 300 000
<i>Le Streghe</i>	1968	33 473	100 201		
<i>Œdipe Roi</i>					1 900 000
<i>Edipo Re</i>	1968	187 678	4 426		
<i>Capriccio All'italiana (Segment "Che Cosa Sono Le Nuvole?")</i>	1968				650 000
<i>Theoreme</i>					3 000 000
<i>Teorema</i>	1969	1 022 237	353 276		
<i>La Contestation (Segment "La Sequenza Del Fiore Di Carta")</i>					
<i>Amore E Rabbia</i>	1970	6 782			80 000
<i>Porcherie</i>					
<i>Porcile</i>	1969	150 645	151 248		900 000
<i>Medee</i>					1 000 000
<i>Medea</i>	1970	268 147	42 688		
<i>Carnet De Notes Pour Une Orestie Africaine</i>					
<i>Appunti Per Un'orestiade Africana</i>	1976	4 409	3 905		
<i>Appunti Per Un Romanzo Dell'immondezza (Documenature Inedit)</i>	1970				
<i>Le Decameron</i>					10 917 000
<i>Decameron</i>	1971	1 656 943	1 731 477		
<i>Les Contes De Canterbury</i>					4 665 000
<i>I Racconti Di Canterbury</i>	1972	1 303 125	850 880		
<i>Les Mille Et Une Nuits</i>					1 500 000
<i>Il Fiore Delle Mille E Una Notte</i>	1974	1 122 688	888 237		
<i>Salo Ou Les Cent Vingt Journees De Sodome</i>					
<i>Salo O Le 120 Giornate Di Sodoma</i>	1976	1 001 012	752 102		

Table 24 Pier Paolo Pasolini – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com), [www.jpbox-office.com](http://www.jpbox-office.com)

His biggest successes were in his home country of Italy, in particular *Decameron* with over 10 million admissions and *Canterbury Tales (1972)* with over 4.6 million admissions.

## Dino Risi - Admissions per film

Although not included in the normally acclaimed pantheon of European auteur directors, Italian director Dino Risi who primarily directed comedies, which nonetheless garnered critical acclaim also had major successes at home and abroad. His biggest hits included *Profumo Di Donna (1974)* with 4.6 million admissions in Italy, 2.4 million admissions in France and 2.4 million admissions in Spain. In Italy his films regularly attracted over 3 million admissions, his biggest local hits were *La Moglie Del Prete and Pane, Amore e...* (1971) both with over 7 million admissions.

## Luchino Visconti - Admissions per film

		France	Spain	Germany	
					Italy
<i>Les Amants diaboliques</i>					
<i>Ossessione</i>	1959	190303			
<i>La Terre tremble</i>					
<i>La terra trema</i>	1952	60418			
<i>Bellissima</i>					
<i>Bellissima</i>	1961	80980			
<i>Senso</i>					
<i>Senso</i>	1956	963951			
<i>Nuits blanches</i>					
<i>Le notti bianche</i>	1958	518807			
<i>Rocco et ses frères</i>					
<i>Rocco e suoi fratelli</i>	1961	2179419			10318241
<i>Boccace 70 ( 1 segment)</i>					
<i>Boccaccio sessanta dieci</i>	1962	862121			6156000
<i>Le Guépard</i>					
<i>Il gattopardo</i>	1963	3704273			11558000
<i>Sandra</i>					
<i>Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa</i>	1965	344669	170085		
<i>Les sorcières (1 segment)</i>					
<i>Le streghe</i>	1968	33473	100201		
<i>L'Etranger</i>					
<i>Lo straniero</i>	1967	560173	94486		
<i>Les Damnés</i>					
<i>La caduta degli dei</i>	1970	2639329	1090719		6187000

<i>Mort à Venise</i>					
<i>Morte a Venezia</i>	1971	1449623	54603		
<i>Le crépuscule des dieux</i>					
<i>Ludwig</i>	1973	1396399	336084		3165000
<i>Violence et passion</i>					
<i>Gruppo di famiglia in un interno</i>	1975	887950	1270362		3829000
<i>L'Innocent</i>	1976	371693	1231009		N° 15

Table 25 Luchino Visconti – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com), [www.ipbox-office.com](http://www.ipbox-office.com)

Visconti also recorded major international hits that were also critically acclaimed including *Senso*, *Rocco and his brothers* (1960), *The Leopard* (his biggest hit) and *The Damned* (1961).

### Pedro Almodovar - Admissions per film

		France	Espagne	Allemagne	UK	Italie	EUROPE	BOUS
<i>Pepi, Luci, Bom et les autres filles du quartier</i>								
<i>Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del monton</i>	1990	75 852	216 154					
<i>Labyrinthe des passions</i>								
<i>Laberinto de pasiones</i>	1991	103 363	358 153					
<i>Dans les ténèbres</i>								
<i>Entre tinieblas</i>	1988	54 416	453 472					
<i>Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait pour mériter ça ?</i>								
<i>Que he hecho yo para merecer esto !</i>	1987	86 361	424 559			n°82		
<i>Matador</i>	1988	147 456	415 988					
<i>La loi du désir</i>								
<i>La ley del deseo</i>	1988	102 546	780 568					
<i>Femmes au bord de la crise de nerfs</i>								
<i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i>	1989	628 297	3 347 052	261 111		n°19		7,1

<i>Attache-moi</i>	199		1 351					
<i>Atame</i>	0	467 603	732	243 501		n°37		4
<i>Talons aiguilles</i>	199	1 505	2 072					
<i>Tacones lejanos</i>	2	651	921			n°20		1,5
<i>Kika</i>	199		1 037					
	4	613 732	808			n°31		2
<i>La fleur de mon secret</i>	199							
<i>La flor de mi secreto</i>	5	484 493	981 750			n°98		0,6
<i>En chair et en os</i>	199		1 433		155			
<i>Live Flesh</i>	7	442 407	350	145 822	682	385 628	3 M	1,5
<i>Tout sur ma mère</i>	199		2 590		271	1 298		
<i>Todo sobre mi madre</i>	9	2 145 055	466	351 431	743	419	8.1 M	8,2
<i>Parle avec elle</i>	200	1 990	1 367		232			
<i>Hable con ella</i>	2	814	450	449 601	794	998 512	7.1 M	9,2
<i>La mauvaise éducation</i>	200	1 086	1 241		304			
<i>La mala educacion</i>	4	502	637	221 890	476	736 646	4.6 M	5,2
<i>Volver</i>	200	2 352	1 931		606	1 177		
	6	715	060	764 463	125	906	8.5 M	12,8
<i>Etreintes brisées</i>	200				249			
<i>Los abrazos rotos</i>	9	915 910	696 622	239 098	036	626 302	3.6 M	5
<i>La piel que habito</i>	201		735 116	137 855	248			
	1	759 847			487	300 186	2 M	3,1
<i>Les amants passagers</i>	201				129			
<i>Los amantes pasajeros</i>	3	535 760	714 175	61 682	606	310 003	2.2 M	1.3

Table 26 Pedro Almodovar – admissions per film

Source: France's CNC, [www.boxofficestory.com](http://www.boxofficestory.com), [www.jpbox-office.com](http://www.jpbox-office.com)

Almodovar is one of the last European directors to work essentially in a language that isn't English and with significant audience levels as well as critical acclaim. His biggest hits include *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (1988)*, *All about my Mother (1999)* and *Volver (2006)*.

### The positioning of film festivals

In the early post-war period, up until the late 1970s, European “art films” also enjoyed significant audience success and therefore European film festivals were centres of media and popular attention and a gateway to the next exciting cinematic endeavour.

Festivals continue to be havens of film art but they have undoubtedly lost their centrality.

This is due on the one hand to a shortage of films from both America and Europe that have the potential to please critics and audiences and also due to a shift in programming strategies.

We can analyse this situation by looking at data for some of the film festivals, starting with the biggest annual film event – the Cannes film festival.

### Palme d'Or winners

If we analyse the Palme d'Or winners we see the same basic trend identified in the rest of this thesis.

		US	EU
<i>La Dolce Vita</i>	1960	28299055	16573242
<i>The Long Absence §</i>	1961		748325
<i>Viridiana §</i>	1961		785011
<i>Keeper of Promises §</i>	1962		0
<i>The Leopard §</i>	1963	2117647	16499873
<i>The Umbrellas of Cherbourg</i>	1964	8172043	1274958
<i>The Knack ...and How to Get It</i>	1965	2475248	0
<i>A Man and a Woman</i>	1966	12844037	4269209
<i>The Birds, the Bees and the Italians</i>	1966		178021
<i>Blowup</i>	1967	1666667	1570889
No awards this year because of the May 1968 events in France.	1968	0	0
<i>If...</i>	1969	1619718	1641892
<i>MASH</i>	1970	52645161	3647658
<i>The Go-Between</i>	1971		1360492
<i>The Working Class Goes to Heaven §</i>	1972		183422
<i>The Mattei Affair §</i>	1972		616822
<i>The Hireling</i>	1973		0
<i>Scarecrow</i>	1973	4000000	675793
<i>The Conversation</i>	1974	2146341	234972
<i>Chronicle of the Years of Fire</i>	1975	0	500113
<i>Taxi Driver</i>	1976	12673800	4911391
<i>Padre Padrone</i>	1977	0	999126
<i>The Tree of Wooden Clogs</i>	1978	0	1352184
<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	1979	31030301	8666542



<i>The Tin Drum</i>	1979	2000000	5878315
<i>All That Jazz</i>	1980	13605639	693796
<i>Man of Iron</i>	1981	167359	378148
<i>Missing</i>	1982	4444444	2173040
<i>Paris Texas</i>	1984	649401	3149139
<i>When Father Was Away on Business</i>	1985	4544	571247
<i>The Mission</i>	1986	4640977	3570696
<i>Under the Sun of Satan</i>	1987	17587	815748
<i>Pelle the Conqueror</i>	1988	502114	621645
<i>Sex, Lies and Videotape</i>	1989	6232158	2475397
<i>Wild at Heart</i>	1990	3442139	1548988
<i>Barton Fink</i>	1991	1461743	720567
<i>The Best Intentions</i>	1992	301953	91503
<i>The Piano</i>	1993	9699965	5194223
<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	1994	25820278	3748669
<i>Underground</i>	1995	39329	543868
<i>Secrets &amp; Lies</i>	1996	3035586	4423786
<i>The Eel</i>	1997	9117	225786
<i>Eternity and a Day</i>	1998	22852	392103
<i>Rosetta</i>	1999	52493	1200045
<i>Dancer in the Dark</i>	2000	776259	3409997
<i>The Son's Room</i>	2001	179565	2598818
<i>The Pianist</i>	2002	5606296	8233032
<i>Elephant</i>	2003	210109	1204489
<i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i>	2004	19194005	8825156
<i>L'Enfant (The Child)</i>	2005	101707	870888
<i>The Wind That Shakes the Barley</i>	2006	280319	2729273
<i>4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days</i>	2007	174158	1069005
<i>The Class</i>	2008	524625	2987947
<i>The White Ribbon</i>	2009	296382	2370747
<i>Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives</i>	2010	23358	225865
<i>The Tree of Life</i>	2011	1677594	3179383
<i>Amour</i>	2012	846670	2466417

<i>Blue is the Warmest Colour</i>	2013	270577	1992393
<i>Winter Sleep</i>	2014	0	593984
<i>Dheepan</i>	2015	31058	950581
<i>I, Daniel Blake</i>	2016	30099	2373205
<i>The Square</i>	2017	167486	1428142
<i>Shoplifters</i>	2018	363723	763210

Table 27 Palme d'Or winners (1960-2019)

Source: In terms of admissions data, I have collected US box office revenue for the Palme d'Or winners and then converted the data to admissions using the average ticket price per year. For European data there are reliable figures from the EAO since 1996. For previous years I have figures from the CNC and <http://www.jpbox-office.com>, but they are incomplete.

The objective of the Palme d'Or is not to pick a box-office winner, and the winning films have inevitably had a very different success pattern each year. In particular US films enjoy a much bigger bounce from winning the Palme d'Or than films from any other country.

The following chart demonstrates the tremendous year-on-year change:

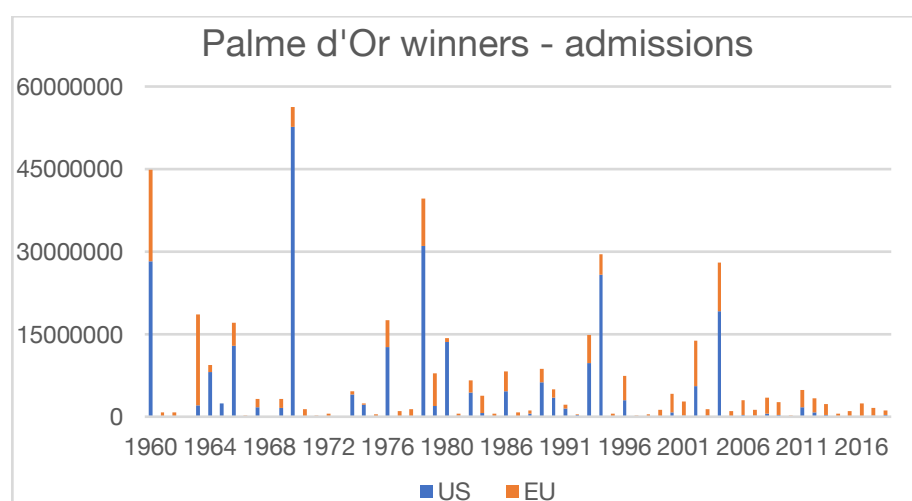


Chart 26 Palme d'Or winners – 1960-2019

Source: In terms of admissions data, I have collected US box office revenue for the Palme d'Or winners and then converted the data to admissions using the average ticket price per year. For European data there are reliable figures from the EAO since 1996. For previous years I have figures from the CNC and <http://www.jpbox-office.com>, but they are incomplete.

Some of the biggest hits (the peaks on the above chart) are *La Dolce Vita*, *Mash* (1970), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Pulp Fiction* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004). Three of these films are US productions.

It is nonetheless interesting to note that since 2004 the admissions for Palme d'Or winners have remained relatively muted with an average of 1.7 million admissions per film per year in Europe and 340,000 admissions per film per year in the US. This figure nonetheless positions the films within the top 100 films produced in Europe per year.

In terms of the origin of films, these are distributed as follows (note in some years there are joint winners. Between 1964 and 1974 the top prize was awarded as "Grand Prix du Festival International du Film"):

	Europe	USA	Rest of World
1960s	9		2
1970s	7	5	1
1980s	7	2	3
1990s	5	3	4
2000s	7	2	0
2010s	5	1	3

Table 28 Palme d'Or winners – Europe, USA, Rest of World

Source: Cannes Film Festival, author's analysis

In the 1960s and 1970s the UK won several Palme d'Ors. Since then the UK has won with *The Mission (1986)*, *Secrets and Lies (2015)*, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley (2006)* and *I, Daniel Blake (2016)*.

The US had its strongest decades in the 1970s with films such as *Taxi Driver* and *Apocalypse Now* but in the 2010s only had *The Tree of Life (2011)*.

European films won more prizes in the 1960s and have slowly won fewer prizes especially in the 1990s and 2010s.

### Other sections at Cannes

Whereas the Palme d'Or continues to focus primarily on films that have potential for significant admissions (albeit slightly more muted since 2004), the other sections of the Cannes Film Festival are more focused on films that are aimed to be more daring and as a consequence have lower audiences.

One example is Critics Week, which is aimed at more niche films. The audience of the winning films has been as follows:

<i>Critics Week</i>		EU admissions
<i>Diamantino</i>	2018	25178
<i>Makala</i>	2017	35247
<i>Mimosas</i>	2016	35148
<i>Paulina</i>	2015	72012
<i>The Tribe</i>	2014	64874
<i>Salvo</i>	2013	61425

<i>Aqui y Alla</i>	2012	19620
<i>Take Shelter</i>	2011	359561
<i>Armadillo</i>	2010	160271
<i>Adieu Gary</i>	2009	126307
<i>Premières Neiges</i>	2008	160563

Table 29 Critics Week - admissions

Source: Cannes Film Festival, author's analysis

### Un Certain Regard

This section is aimed at new voices from new parts of the world and has focused primarily on non-European films. Audience admissions for these films have been relatively muted:

	Title	EU Admissions	
1998	<i>Killer</i>	34330	Tueur à gages
1999	<i>Beautiful People</i>	284321	Jasmin Dizdar (United Kingdom / Bosnia)
2000	<i>Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her</i>	803775	Rodrigo García (Colombia)
2001	<i>Boyhood Loves</i>	17941	Amour d'enfance
2002	<i>Blissfully Yours</i>	16647	สุดเสน่หา, Sud sañehā
2003	<i>The Best of Youth</i>	1148837	La meglio gioventù
2004	<i>Moolaadé</i>	125238	Ousmane Sembène (Senegal)
2005	<i>The Death of Mr. Lazarescu</i>	74164	Moartea domnului Lăzărescu
2006	<i>Luxury Car</i>	29878	江城夏日; Jiāng chéng xià rì; 'River City Summer Days'
2007	<i>California Dreamin'</i>	77932	Cristian Nemescu (Romania)
2008	<i>Tulpan</i>	128315	Sergey Dvortsevov (Kazakhstan)
2009	<i>Dogtooth</i>	118119	Κυνόδοντας (Kynodontas)
2010	<i>Hahaha</i>	20108	하하하
2011	<i>Arirang</i>	1319	아리랑
2011	<i>Stopped on Track</i>	137532	Halt auf freier Strecke
2012	<i>After Lucia</i>	89614	Después de Lucía
2013	<i>The Missing Picture</i>	18039	L'Image manquante

2014	<i>White God</i>	148001	Fehér isten
2015	<i>Rams</i>	481945	Hrútar
2016	<i>The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki</i>	116394	Hymyilevä Mies
2017	<i>A Man of Integrity</i>	64032	لرد
2018	<i>Border</i>		Gräns
2019	<i>The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão</i>		A Vida Invisível de Euridice Gusmão

Table 30 *Un Certain Regard* - admissions

Source: Cannes Film Festival, author's analysis

### Directors' Fortnight

This section is not competitive and does not provide an annual award. Its main associated prize is the Art Cinema Award which has had the following winners since 2010:

		EU Admissions
2010	<i>Lily Sometimes, de Fabienne Berthaud</i>	171349
2011	<i>The Giants, Bouli Lannier</i>	87703
2012	<i>"No" Pablo Larraín</i>	674711
2013	<i>Me, Myself and Mum, Guillaume Gallienne</i>	2327710
2014	<i>Love at First Fight, Thomas Cailley</i>	502329
2015	<i>Embrace of the Serpent, Ciro Guerra</i>	188799
2016	<i>"Wolf &amp; Sheep," Shahrbanoo Sadat</i>	14810
2017	<i>'The Rider', Chloe Zhao</i>	195560
2018	<i>Climax, Gaspar Noé</i>	164918

Table 31 *Director's Fortnight – Art Cinema award* - admissions

Source: Cannes Film Festival, author's analysis

The biggest audience success in this period is the comedy *Me, Myself and Mum (2013)*, by Guillaume Gallienne.

As with the other sections the objective is not to spot box-office winners and therefore these results per se are no cause for surprise.

## Locarno Film Festival

Locarno has positioned itself for decades as committed to auteur cinema and the films that are selected and win prizes confirm this positioning.

The winners of the top prize, the Golden Leopard have been as follows since 1996:

		EU admissions		
2018	<i>A Land Imagined</i>	-	Yeo Siew Hua	
2017	<i>Mrs. Fang</i>	-	China / France / Germany[8]	
2016	<i>Godless</i>	2403	Ralitza Petrova	Bulgaria / Denmark / France[7]
2015	<i>Right Now, Wrong Then</i> [6]	52406	Hong Sang-soo	South Korea
2014	<i>From What Is Before</i>	406	Lav Diaz	Philippines
2013	<i>Story of My Death</i>	1657	Albert Serra	Spain / France
2012	<i>The Girl from Nowhere</i>	19745	Jean-Claude Brisseau	France
2011	<i>Back to Stay</i>	16267	Milagros Mumenthaler	Argentina / Switzerland / Netherlands
2010	<i>Winter Vacation</i>	4328	Hongqi Li	China
2009	<i>She, a Chinese</i>	13703	UK / France / Germany / China	
2008	<i>Parque via</i>	8625	Mexico	
2007	<i>The Rebirth</i>	-	Masahiro Kobayashi	Japan
2006	<i>Das Fräulein</i>	21108	Switzerland / Germany	
2005	<i>Nine Lives</i>	142910	United States	
2004	<i>Private</i>	91526	Italy	
2003	<i>Khamosh Pani (Silent Waters)</i>	56884	Pakistan / France / Germany	
2002	<i>The Longing</i>	-	Iain Dilthey	Germany
2001	<i>Off to the Revolution by a 2CV</i>	71060	Maurizio Sciarra	Italy
2000	<i>Father</i>	-	Shuo Wang	China
1999	<i>Skin of Man, Heart of Beast</i>	17225	Hélène Angel	France
1998	<i>Mr. Zhao</i>	-	Lü Yue	China / Hong Kong

1997	<i>The Mirror</i>	12258	Jafar Panahi	Iran
1996	<i>Nenette and Boni</i>		Claire Denis	France

Table 32 Locarno – Golden Leopard - admissions

Source: Locarno Film Festival, EAO Lumière database author's analysis

Locarno aims to focus on films that have a strong artistic value but may find it difficult to enjoy major box office success and this corresponds to the profile of admissions. Nonetheless films playing at Locarno have found it increasingly difficult to secure theatrical release, even for a niche audience, which led the festival to launch the Locarno Industry Academy in 2014, coordinated by Nadia Dresti, which has partners across the globe. Dresti says that: "Box office for festival films is going down. One or two big films manage to reach theatres. But most don't. Festivals used to be a launch pad to the theatrical market, but now sales agents often make their revenues from screening fees at festivals and stop there. We want to develop innovative strategies to change this situation."

### Berlin Film Festival

The Berlinale has expanded significantly over the last twenty years and now has multiple sections aimed at "auteur films".

The top award, the Golden Bear has had the following winners since 1991:

		US	ROW	EUR
1991	<i>The House of Smiles</i>	0	0	0
1992	<i>Grand Canyon</i>	8010361	1866988	0
1993	<i>Woman Sesame Oil Maker (Tie)</i>	0	0	0
1993	<i>The Wedding Banquet (Tie)</i>	1674638	0	614755
1994	<i>In the Name of the Father</i>	5980861	9569378	0
1995	<i>The Bait</i>	0	0	767825
1996	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	9769859	20678733	9993322
1997	<i>The People vs. Larry Flynt</i>	4422658	5076253	2537606
1998	<i>Central Station</i>	1193177	3216343	1954352
1999	<i>The Thin Red Line</i>	7137205	9682828	4932563
2000	<i>Magnolia</i>	4129685	4823748	2282583
2001	<i>Intimacy</i>	71555	1022279	1420209
2002	<i>Spirited Away (Tie)</i>	1729604	31000000	2861595
2002	<i>Bloody Sunday (Tie)</i>	133086	0	538574
2003	<i>In This World</i>	13980	39436	191050
2004	<i>Head-On</i>	70112	974235	1620621
2005	<i>U-Carmen</i>	0	0	55507

2006	<i>Grbavica</i>	0	0	249646
2007	<i>Tuya's Marriage</i>	0	0	384865
2008	<i>Elite Squad</i>	1123	1953760	269829
2009	<i>The Milk of Sorrow</i>	1395	6860	169309
2010	<i>Honey</i>	0	0	241785
2011	<i>A Separation</i>	895208	2082598	1539222
2012	<i>Caesar Must Die</i>	0	0	334466
2013	<i>Child's Pose</i>	11952	95975	303399
2014	<i>Black Coal, Thin Ice</i>	0	2034272	299701
2015	<i>Taxi</i>	0	0	1171655
2016	<i>Fire at Sea</i>	13981	0	348669
2017	<i>On Body and Soul</i>	0	0	499208
2018	<i>Touch Me Not</i>	1513	0	25466

Table 33 Berlinale – Golden Bear

Source: Berlin Film Festival, (data for US, rest of world and Europe from multiple sources including Box Office Mojo and EAO's Lumière), author's analysis

The biggest audience success for a Golden Bear winner is the Japanese animation film *Spirited Away (2001)* which is Japan's biggest all-time success with 23.5 million admissions.

A chart of the admissions for Golden Bear winners reveals that although there are major annual fluctuations as with other top awards, like the Palme d'Or, there has been a major shift since the early 2000s

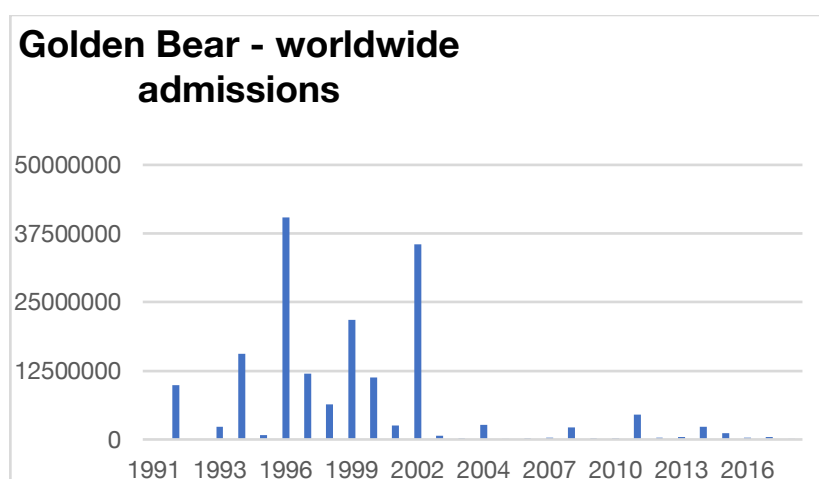


Chart 27 Berlinale – Golden Bear winner – worldwide admissions

Source: Berlin Film Festival, author's analysis



Until 2002 there were several Golden Bear winners with significant worldwide admissions, including Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* and Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1998).

US films have not won the Golden Bear since Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia* won the award in 2000. The award winners have been across the globe.

This is a direct result of the festival's artistic director, Dieter Kosslick, who retired in 2019 whose aims for the Berlinale including fostering stronger audience involvement, making the festival a platform for world cinema, particularly from Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, and launching new sections dedicated to experimental cinema, such as Forum and Forum Expanded.

## The US side – the Academy Awards

The pattern of top critical awards going to films with lower box office results is not only seen in Europe. It reflects wider changes in the industry as explained above.

One example is the Academy Awards or Oscars, where there is a clear trend in this direction.

The admissions for the winners of the Best Picture Oscar have been as follows:

	<i>Academy Award – Best Picture</i>	US admissions
2018	<i>Green Book</i>	9339206
2017	<i>The Shape of Water</i>	7119224
2016	<i>Moonlight</i>	3220223
2015	<i>Spotlight</i>	5344695
2014	<i>Birdman</i>	5182448
2013	<i>12 Years a Slave</i>	6970725
2012	<i>Argo</i>	17088631
2011	<i>The Artist</i>	5633251
2010	<i>The King's Speech</i>	17167699
2009	<i>The Hurt Locker</i>	2269041
2008	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	19682441
2007	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>	10797039
2006	<i>The Departed</i>	20211346
2005	<i>Crash</i>	8514867
2004	<i>Million Dollar Baby</i>	16182319
2003	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i>	62525261
2002	<i>Chicago</i>	29378230
2001	<i>A Beautiful Mind</i>	30166491
2000	<i>Gladiator</i>	34824755

1999	<i>American Beauty</i>	25609567
1998	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	21389722
1997	<i>Titanic</i>	130890673
1996	<i>The English Patient</i>	17800096
1995	<i>Braveheart</i>	17381597
1994	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	78874282
1993	<i>Schindler's List</i>	23204292
1992	<i>Unforgiven</i>	24375288
1991	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	31055326
1990	<i>Dances with Wolves</i>	43548191
1989	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	26849697
1988	<i>Rain Man</i>	42049984
1987	<i>The Last Emperor</i>	11249164
1986	<i>Platoon</i>	37339775
1985	<i>Out of Africa</i>	24527100
1984	<i>Amadeus</i>	15346512
1983	<i>Terms of Endearment</i>	34420155
1982	<i>Gandhi</i>	17948262
1981	<i>Chariots of Fire</i>	21213275
1980	<i>Ordinary People</i>	20359451
1979	<i>Kramer Vs. Kramer</i>	39501859
1978	<i>The Deer Hunter</i>	19513676

Table 34 Academy Awards – Best Picture - US admissions

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo

The winning film for Best Picture has recorded significantly lower audience levels over this period, especially over the last 15 years as shown in this chart:

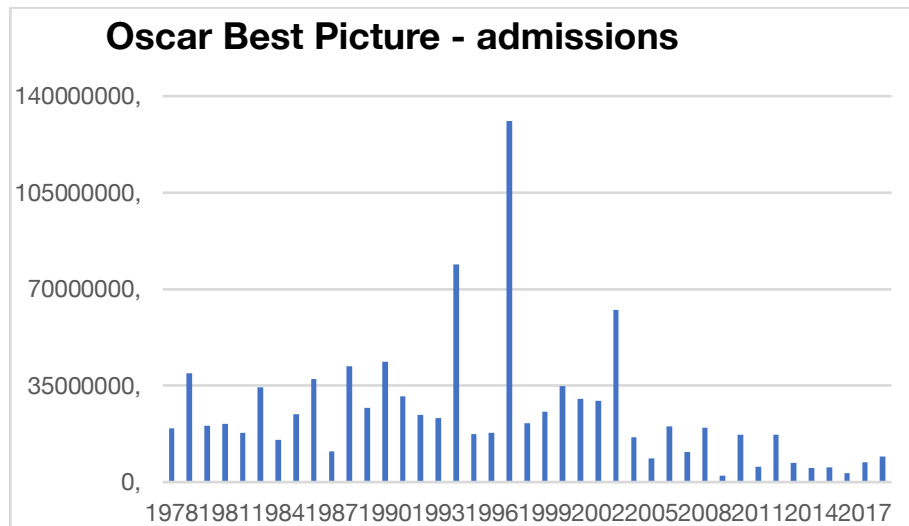
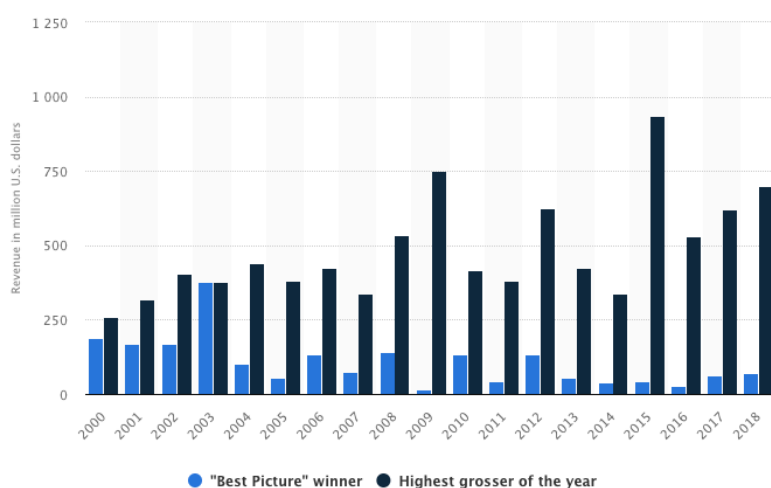


Chart 28 Admissions for Academy Awards Best Picture

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo

This reflects a divergence between the films that have the highest audience success at the box office and those that are acclaimed by the members of the Academy, as shown in this chart:

### Box office revenues of Academy Award "Best Picture" winners and the highest grossing films of the year from 2000 to 2018 (in million U.S. dollars)



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by Amy Watson, last edited Mar 20, 2019

The statistic presents box office revenues of Award "Best Picture" winners and the highest grossing films of the year from 2000 to 2018. The highest grossing movie in 2012 was "Marvel Avengers", with a box office revenue of 623. U.S. dollars. The winner of the "Best Picture" Award for that year was "Argo", with an annual revenue of 134.58 million. The highest gross 2018 was "Black Panther", which generated

Chart 29 – Box office revenues of Academy Award Best Picture winner and Top film at box office

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/chart/8298/best-picture-winners-box-office/>

If we consider data since 1960 the situation is even clearer. For example if we look at the box office rank of the film winning Best Picture in the previous year's box office (i.e. box office rank in 1960 of the Best Picture winner in 1961).

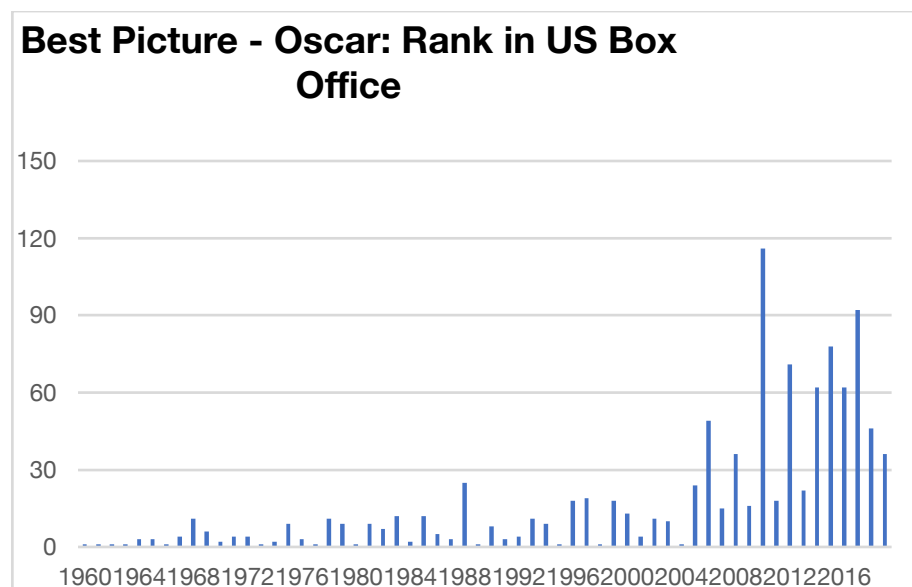


Chart 30 Rank in US box office for Academy Awards Best Picture

Source: 1960-1979 [Retrieved on 29/10/19 from https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com](https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com), 1980-2019: boxofficemojo)

In the first half of the 1960s, the winner of the Best Picture Oscar was also the top ranked film at the US box office in the previous year.

Obviously the Academy Awards don't exist as a prize for the box office champ but the progressive distancing between the Best Picture Oscar and the films that perform well at the box office is significant. We can analyse this data by decade.

### 1960s

Between 1960 and 1963 the Best Picture Oscar coincided with the top film at the US Box office:

	Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
1969 - "Oliver!"	6	2001: Space Odyssey	Bullitt
1968 - "In the Heat of the Night"	11	The Graduate	Jungle Book
1967 - "A Man for All Seasons"	4	Hawaii	The Bible
1966 - "The Sound of Music"	1		
1965 - "My Fair Lady"	3	Mary Poppins	Goldfinger
1964 - "Tom Jones"	3	Cleopatra	It's a Mad Mad World

1963 - "Lawrence of Arabia"		1		
1962 - "West Side Story"		1		
1961 - "The Apartment"		1		
1960 - "Ben-Hur"		1		

Table 35 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 1960s

Source: Academy Awards, Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com>, author's analysis

The 1968 Best Picture Oscar, which related to films released in 1967 was a watershed year.

1967 was the beginning of the "New Hollywood" era and marked a shift in the films that were successful at the box office. The top 3 films were *The Graduate*, *The Jungle Book* and *Bonnie and Clyde*. The Best Picture winner *In the Heat the Night* was the 11<sup>th</sup> biggest box office film for the year.

### 1970s

In this decade there was once again a high level of coincidence between the winner of Best Picture Oscar and the top films at the box office:

		Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
1980 - "Kramer vs. Kramer"		1		
1979 - "The Deer Hunter"		9	<i>Grease</i>	Natioonal Lampoon's Animal House
1978 - "Annie Hall"		11	<i>Star Wars</i>	Smokey and the Bandit
1977 - "Rocky"		1		
1976 - "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest"		3	<i>Jaws</i>	The Rocky Horror Picture Show
1975 - "The Godfather Part II"		9	<i>Blazng Saddles</i>	The Towering Inferno
1974 - "The Sting"		2	<i>The Exorcist</i>	
1973 - "The Godfather"		1		
1972 - "The French Connection"		4	<i>Billy Jack</i>	Fiddler on the Roof
1971 - "Patton"		4	<i>Love Story</i>	Airport
1970 - "Midnight Cowboy"		2	<i>Butch Cassidy</i>	

Table 36 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 1970s

Source: Academy Awards, Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.ultimatemovierankings.com>, author's analysis

The main watershed year was the 1977 box office (the year *Star Wars* was released). 1978 Best Picture Oscar, Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, was ranked 11 in the US box office. ("Star Wars" had received a nomination for Best Picture).

## 1980s

The 1980s began the divergence between Best Picture Oscar and box office performers. The biggest divergence was for Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor*. The latter was nonetheless a major international hit and Hollywood was increasingly dependent on international box office:

		Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
1990 - " <i>Driving Miss Daisy</i> "		8	<i>Batman</i>	Indian Jones
1989 - " <i>Rain Man</i> "		1		
1988 - " <i>The Last Emperor</i> "		25	<i>Three Men and a Baby</i>	Fatal Attraction
1987 - " <i>Platoon</i> "		3	<i>Top Gun</i>	Crocodile Dundee
1986 - " <i>Out of Africa</i> "		5	<i>Back to the Future</i>	Rambo II
1985 - " <i>Amadeus</i> "		12	<i>Beverly Hills Cop</i>	Ghostbusters
1984 - " <i>Terms of Endearment</i> "		2	<i>Return of the Jedi</i>	
1983 - " <i>Gandhi</i> "		12	<i>ET</i>	Tootsie
1982 - " <i>Chariots of Fire</i> "		7	<i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i>	On Golden Pond
1981 - " <i>Ordinary People</i> "		9	<i>Empire Strikes Back</i>	9 to 5

Table 37 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 1980s

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

## 1990s

The 1990s recorded a similar pattern to the 1980s, with two films winning Best Picture Oscar also being the top box-office performer – *Titanic* and *Forrest Gump*. All films were ranked within the Top 20 at the US box office:

		Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
2000 - " <i>American Beauty</i> "		13	<i>Star Wars Phantom Menace</i>	<i>Sixth Sense</i>
1999 - " <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> "		18	<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	<i>Armageddon</i>
1998 - " <i>Titanic</i> "		1		
1997 - " <i>The English Patient</i> "		19	<i>Independence Day</i>	<i>Twister</i>
1996 - " <i>Braveheart</i> "		18	<i>Toy Story</i>	<i>Batman Forever</i>
1995 - " <i>Forrest Gump</i> "		1		
1994 - " <i>Schindler's List</i> "		9	<i>Jurassic Park</i>	<i>Mrs Doubtfire</i>
1993 - " <i>Unforgiven</i> "		11	<i>Aladdin</i>	<i>Home Along 2</i>
1992 - " <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> "		4	<i>Terminator 2</i>	<i>Robin Hood</i>
1991 - " <i>Dances With Wolves</i> "		3	<i>Home Alone</i>	<i>Ghost</i>

Table 38 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 1990s

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

## 2000s

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked a major shift, and the first time that a Best Picture Oscar was awarded to a film outside the Top 100 at the US box office – *The Hurt Locker (2005)*:

		Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
2010 - " <i>The Hurt Locker</i> "		116	<i>Avatar</i>	<i>Transformers</i>
2009 - " <i>Slumdog Millionaire</i> "		16	<i>Batman : Dark Knight</i>	<i>Iron Man</i>
2008 - " <i>No Country for Old Men</i> "		36	<i>Spiderman3</i>	<i>Shrek 3</i>
2007 - " <i>The Departed</i> "		15	<i>Pirates of the Caribbean</i>	<i>Night at the Museum</i>
2006 - " <i>Crash</i> "		49	<i>Star Wars Revenge Sith</i>	<i>Narnia 1</i>
2005 - " <i>Million Dollar Baby</i> "		24	<i>Shrek 2</i>	<i>Spiderman 2</i>
2004 - " <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> "		1		
2003 - " <i>Chicago</i> "		10	<i>Spiderman</i>	<i>Lord of the Rings 1</i>
2002 - " <i>A Beautiful Mind</i> "		11	<i>Harry Potter 1</i>	<i>Lord of the Rings 1</i>
2001 - " <i>Gladiator</i> "		4	<i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i>	<i>Cast Away</i>

Table 39 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 2000s

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

The only film that coincided between Best Picture Oscar and top film at the box office was *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.



## 2010s

This decade intensified the divergence between Best Picture Oscar and box-office results:

		Rank in US box office in previous year	Top film in BO	
			Nº. 1	Nº. 2
2019 - "Green Book"		36	<i>Black Panther</i>	<i>Avengers : Infinity War</i>
2018 - "The Shape of Water"		46	<i>Star Wars: Last Jedi</i>	<i>Beauty and Beast</i>
2017 - "Moonlight"		92	<i>Star Wars: Rogue One</i>	<i>Finding Dory</i>
2016 - "Spotlight"		62	<i>Star Wars Force Awakens</i>	<i>Jurassic World</i>
2015 - "Birdman"		78	<i>American Sniper</i>	<i>Hunger Games - Mockingjay 1</i>
2014 - "12 Years a Slave"		62	<i>Hunger Games - Catching Fire</i>	<i>Iron Man 3</i>
2013 - "Argo"		22	<i>The Avengers</i>	<i>Batman: Dark Knight Rises</i>
2012 - "The Artist"		71	<i>Harry Potter Deathly Harrows part 2</i>	<i>Transformers Dark Side Moon</i>
2011 - "The King's Speech"		18	<i>Toy Story 3</i>	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>

Table 40 Academy Awards – Best Picture – 2010s

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

In terms of the US box office the top-ranking film was *The King's Speech* which won "Best Picture" in 2011.

The average ranking in the US box office in the 2010s was 54<sup>th</sup> position, compared to an average of 3<sup>rd</sup> position in the 1960s.

These results highlight the growing divergence between the films that perform well at the box office and those which are considered to have the highest artistic value.

## Explanations

There are multiple explanations for this trend. Paul Schrader places the main responsibility on audiences saying: We now have audiences that don't take movies seriously so it's hard to make a serious movie for them. It's not that us filmmakers are letting you down, it's you audiences are letting us down.<sup>274</sup>

One of the factors is a younger demographic for films since the 1960s. However, notwithstanding the repeated assertion that young people are increasingly the main audience, the data actually suggests that the 14-24 age group is actually reducing its filmgoing habits.

## Fantasy vs. Reality

A key explanation for this change is that American audiences have shifted towards films involving sci-fi, fantasy, animation and effects-driven elements, whereas the film winning the Best Picture Oscar has been primarily films set in a reality setting.

There are certain films that blur this boundary. For example *Forrest Gump* has a real-world setting but a string fantasy element. *Indiana Jones* also has a real-life backdrop but is clearly within the fantasy dimension.

We can broadly categorise the category between Reality and Fantasy of the Best Picture Oscars and the N°. 1 box office film in the previous year as follows:

				Top film in BO in previous year		
		Reality	Fantasy	N°. 1	Reality	Fantasy
2019	<i>Green Book</i>	1		<i>Black Panther</i>		1
2018	<i>The Shape of Water</i>		1	<i>Star Wars: Last Jedi</i>		1
2017	<i>Moonlight</i>	1		<i>Star Wars: Rogue One</i>		1
2016	<i>Spotlight</i>	1		<i>Star Wars Force Awakens</i>		1
2015	<i>Birdman</i>		1	<i>American Sniper</i>	1	
2014	<i>12 Years a Slave</i>	1		<i>Hunger Games - Catching Fire</i>		1
2013	<i>Argo</i>	1		<i>The Avengers</i>		1
2012	<i>The Artist</i>	1		<i>Harry Potter Deathly Harrows part 2</i>		1
2011	<i>The King's Speech</i>	1		<i>Toy Story 3</i>		1
2010	<i>The Hurt Locker</i>	1		<i>Avatar</i>		1
2009	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	1		<i>Batman : Dark Knight</i>		1

<sup>274</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/11/paul-schrader-moviegoers-dont-take-films-seriously-1202024149/>

2008	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>	1		<i>Spiderman3</i>		1
2007	<i>The Departed</i>	1		<i>Pirates of the Caribbean</i>		1
2006	<i>Crash</i>	1		<i>Star Wars Revenge Sith</i>		1
2005	<i>Million Dollar Baby</i>	1		<i>Shrek 2</i>		1
2004	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i>		1	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i>		1
2003	<i>Chicago</i>	1		<i>Spiderman</i>		1
2002	<i>A Beautiful Mind</i>	1		<i>Harry Potter 1</i>		1
2001	<i>Gladiator</i>	1		<i>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</i>		1
2000	<i>American Beauty</i>	1		<i>Star Wars Phantom Menace</i>		1
1999	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	1		<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	1	
1998	<i>Titanic</i>	1		<i>Titanic</i>	1	
1997	<i>The English Patient</i>	1		<i>Independence Day</i>		1
1996	<i>Braveheart</i>	1		<i>Toy Story</i>		1
1995	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	1		<i>Forrest Gump</i>	1	
1994	<i>Schindler's List</i>	1		<i>Jurassic Park</i>		1
1993	<i>Unforgiven</i>	1		<i>Aladdin</i>		1
1992	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	1		<i>Terminator 2</i>		1
1991	<i>Dances With Wolves</i>	1		<i>Home Alone</i>	1	
1990	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	1		<i>Batman</i>		1
1989	<i>Rain Man</i>	1		<i>Rain Man</i>	1	
1988	<i>The Last Emperor</i>	1		<i>Three Men and a Baby</i>	1	
1987	<i>Platoon</i>	1		<i>Top Gun</i>	1	
1986	<i>Out of Africa</i>	1		<i>Back to the Future</i>		1
1985	<i>Amadeus</i>	1		<i>Beverly Hills Cop</i>	1	
1984	<i>Terms of Endearment</i>	1		<i>Return of the Jedi</i>		1
1983	<i>Gandhi</i>	1		<i>ET</i>		1
1982	<i>Chariots of Fire</i>	1		<i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i>		1

1981	<i>Ordinary People</i>	1		<i>Empire Strikes Back</i>		1
1980	<i>Kramer vs. Kramer</i>	1		<i>Kramer vs. Kramer</i>	1	
1979	<i>The Deer Hunter</i>	1		<i>Grease</i>	1	
1978	<i>Annie Hall</i>	1		<i>Star Wars</i>		1
1977	<i>Rocky</i>	1		<i>Rocky</i>	1	
1976	<i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	1		<i>Jaws</i>	1	
1975	<i>The Godfather Part II</i>	1		<i>Blazing Saddles</i>	1	
1974	<i>The Sting</i>	1		<i>The Exorcist</i>		1
1973	<i>The Godfather</i>	1		<i>The Godfather</i>	1	
1972	<i>The French Connection</i>	1		<i>Billy Jack</i>	1	
1971	<i>Patton</i>	1		<i>Love Story</i>	1	
1970	<i>Midnight Cowboy</i>	1		<i>Butch Cassidy</i>	1	
1969	<i>Oliver!</i>	1		<i>2001: Space Odyssey</i>		1
1968	<i>In the Heat of the Night</i>	1		<i>The Graduate</i>	1	
1967	<i>A Man for All Seasons</i>	1		<i>Hawaii</i>	1	
1966	<i>The Sound of Music</i>	1		<i>The Sound of Music</i>	1	
1965	<i>My Fair Lady</i>	1		<i>Mary Poppins</i>		1
1964	<i>Tom Jones</i>	1		<i>Cleopatra</i>	1	
1963	<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	1		<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	1	
1962	<i>West Side Story</i>	1		<i>West Side Story</i>	1	
1961	<i>The Apartment</i>	1		<i>The Apartment</i>	1	
1960	<i>Ben-Hur</i>	1		<i>Ben-Hur</i>	1	

Table 41 Academy Awards – Best Picture – Top Film US Box Office - Reality/Fantasy

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

If we convert this data into charts we see a radically different profile for Best Picture Oscar and N°. 1 at the box office.

For the winners of Best Picture Oscar, the vast majority of films have been in a “Reality” setting.

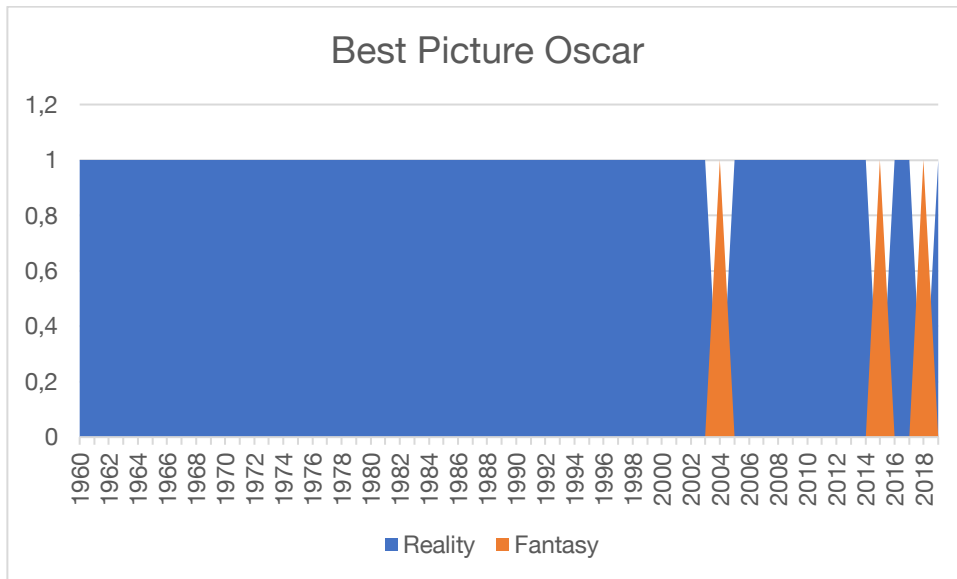


Chart 31 Academy Awards Best Picture – Real-world context vs Fantasy context

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

The main 3 exceptions are *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* in 2004, *Birdman* in 2015 and *The Shape of Water* in 2018. Of these *Birdman* was primarily in a reality setting with a fantasy sub-plot that came to the fore at the end.

In terms of the N°.1 film at the US box office (data points for the previous year, in order to match the Best Picture Oscar), there is a radical shift from the 1980s onwards.

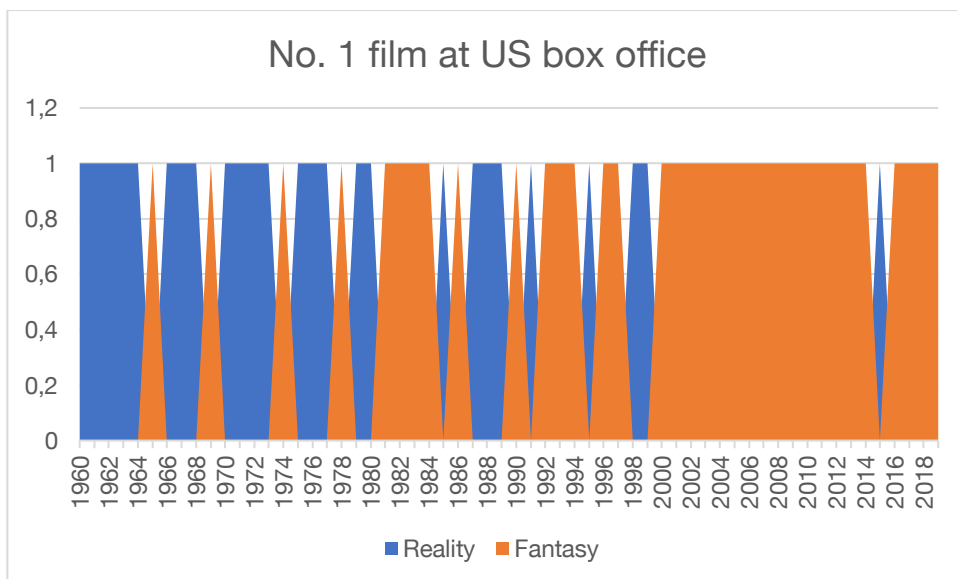


Chart 32 Top film at US box office – Real-world context vs Fantasy context

Source: Academy Awards, boxofficemojo, author's analysis

In the 1960s, there were some “fantasy” films that topped the US box office, such as *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968). In the 1970s the main “fantasy” films in N°. 1 position were *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Star Wars*.

In the 1980s there was an even division between the two. The main N°. 1 box office films with a “reality” setting included *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984), *Rain Man*, *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) and *Top Gun* (1986).

In the 1990s the main N°. 1 box office films with a “reality” setting were *Home Alone* (1990), *Forrest Gump*, *Titanic* and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998).

Since the year 2000 the N°. 1 box office film has consistently been a fantasy film except for *American Sniper* (2014).

In that year it was the only film in the top 10 at the US box office without a strong fantasy element:

Rank	Movie Title	Studio	Total Gross / Theaters
1	<i>American Sniper</i>	WB	\$350,126,372
2	<i>The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 1</i>	LGF	\$337,135,885
3	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i>	BV	\$333,176,600
4	<i>Captain America: The Winter Soldier</i>	BV	\$259,766,572
5	<i>The LEGO Movie</i>	WB	\$257,760,692
6	<i>The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies</i>	WB (NL)	\$255,119,788
7	<i>Transformers: Age of Extinction</i>	Par.	\$245,439,076
8	<i>Maleficent</i>	BV	\$241,410,378
9	<i>X-Men: Days of Future Past</i>	Fox	\$233,921,534
10	<i>Big Hero 6</i>	BV	\$222,527,828

Table 42 US box office 2014

Source: boxofficemojo

This reflects broader trends in the genre mix of US films which is described in detail in the next chapter. In this context, it should be noted that the romance genre in the Top 100 films has more than halved since the 1960s, whereas the action, sci-fi and fantasy genres have more than doubled.

Another factor in the change in the Oscars is the increasing politicisation of the awards, which is a wider pattern in other awards ceremonies and also in the context of film festivals.

Winning films can often be associated to an issue of importance and the award is seen as drawing attention to this issue, which might otherwise be overlooked. But when it comes to people choosing what film to see at the cinema it does not necessarily coincide with the same issues.

The Oscars nonetheless have always had a political element and it is possible that audiences are no longer interested in films that presenta clear social issue.

For example, *Kramer vs Kramer* focused on a clear social issue – parenting rights in the case of divorce and won Best Picture Oscar in 1981 and was N°.1 film at the US box office in 1980.

Nonetheless the tendency for clear political or social winners in the Oscar winners does seem to be more evident today.

For example in the 2019 ceremony, Alfonso Cuaron when winning Best Director said: “I want to thank the academy for recognizing a film centered around an indigenous woman. One of the 70 million domestic workers in the world without works, without work rights, a character that historically had been really relegated in the background in cinema. As artists, our job is to look where others don't. This responsibility becomes much more important in times when we are being encouraged to look away.”

When *The Green Book (2018)* won Best Picture, Spike Lee tried to leave the ceremony and expressed his indignation at the award which he saw as a superficial and insulting approach to the issue of race relations.

If we look at the Best Picture Oscar winners since the year 2010, the key factor is obviously the quality of the film, of the actors, script and directing. In certain cases it is possible to identify clear political or social issues. Others like *Birdman* or *The Artist (2011)* are perhaps above all celebrations of acting / cinema.

What is unquestionable is that awards ceremonies such as The Oscars have become highly politicised. Some of the factors that may be associated to the winners since 2010 include the following:

		Characteristics associated to film
2019	<i>Green Book</i>	Race relations. White saviour.
2018	<i>The Shape of Water</i>	A Fairy Tale for Troubled Times
2017	<i>Moonlight</i>	First Best Picture award won by black American director and first with an LGBTQI main character.
2016	<i>Spotlight</i>	True investigative journalism. Sex abuse in Catholic Church.
2015	<i>Birdman</i>	Acting.
2014	<i>12 Years a Slave</i>	Slavery
2013	<i>Argo</i>	How the CIA Used a Fake Sci-Fi Flick to Rescue Americans from Tehran
2012	<i>The Artist</i>	Classic age of Hollywood
2011	<i>The King's Speech</i>	Old school monarch vs The Social Network, speech impediments
2010	<i>The Hurt Locker</i>	First (and only) woman in history to win the best director. Iraq war.

Table 43 Academy Award – Best Picture – characteristics associated to winning film

Source: Author’s analysis

## Setting of the film

Another factor in determining the Best Picture Oscar is the setting of the film. If we broadly divide between East Coast and West Coast, including Chicago and Texas in the East Coast, we get the following breakdown of the settings of the Best Picture Oscar since 1960:

		East Coast	West Coast	UK	Europe	ROW	Fantasy
2019	<i>Green Book</i>	1					
2018	<i>The Shape of Water</i>	1					
2017	<i>Moonlight</i>	1					
2016	<i>Spotlight</i>	1					
2015	<i>Birdman</i>	1					
2014	<i>12 Years a Slave</i>	1					
2013	<i>Argo</i>	1					
2012	<i>The Artist</i>		1				
2011	<i>The King's Speech</i>			1			
2010	<i>The Hurt Locker</i>					1	
2009	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>					1	
2008	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>		1				
2007	<i>The Departed</i>	1					
2006	<i>Crash</i>		1				
2005	<i>Million Dollar Baby</i>		1				
2004	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i>						1
2003	<i>Chicago</i>	1					
2002	<i>A Beautiful Mind</i>	1					
2001	<i>Gladiator</i>				1		
2000	<i>American Beauty</i>		1				
1999	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>			1			
1998	<i>Titanic</i>			1		1	
1997	<i>The English Patient</i>			1		1	
1996	<i>Braveheart</i>			1			
1995	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	1					
1994	<i>Schindler's List</i>				1		



1993	<i>Unforgiven</i>		1				
1992	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	1					
1991	<i>Dances With Wolves</i>		1				
1990	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	1					
1989	<i>Rain Man</i>	1	1				
1988	<i>The Last Emperor</i>					1	
1987	<i>Platoon</i>					1	
1986	<i>Out of Africa</i>					1	
1985	<i>Amadeus</i>				1		
1984	<i>Terms of Endearment</i>	1					
1983	<i>Gandhi</i>					1	
1982	<i>Chariots of Fire</i>			1			
1981	<i>Ordinary People</i>	1					
1980	<i>Kramer vs. Kramer</i>	1					
1979	<i>The Deer Hunter</i>	1				1	
1978	<i>Annie Hall</i>	1					
1977	<i>Rocky</i>	1					
1976	<i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>		1				
1975	<i>The Godfather Part II</i>	1					
1974	<i>The Sting</i>	1					
1973	<i>The Godfather</i>	1					
1972	<i>The French Connection</i>	1			1		
1971	<i>Patton</i>				1		
1970	<i>Midnight Cowboy</i>	1					
1969	<i>Oliver!</i>			1			
1968	<i>In the Heat of the Night</i>	1					
1967	<i>A Man for All Seasons</i>			1			
1966	<i>The Sound of Music</i>				1		
1965	<i>My Fair Lady</i>			1			
1964	<i>Tom Jones</i>			1			
1963	<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>			1		1	
1962	<i>West Side Story</i>	1					

1961	<i>The Apartment</i>	1					
1960	<i>Ben-Hur</i>				1		

Table 44 Academy Award – Best Picture – setting of film

Source: Academy Awards, author’s analysis

Certain films have two main settings such as *Rain Man* which takes place in both the West Coast and East Coast.

In percentage terms we have the following data:

	East Coast	West Coast	UK	Europe	ROW	Fantasy
TOTALS	28	9	11	7	10	1
	42,4%	13,6%	16,7%	10,6%	15,2%	1,5%

Table 44 Academy Award – Best Picture – setting of film

Source: Academy Awards, author’s analysis

42.4% of the Best Picture Oscars are set in the East Coast of the United States. The strongest decades with this tendency are the 1970s and the 2010s.

Europe is the next biggest setting with 16.7% for the UK and 10.6% for continental Europe, i.e. a total of 27.3%. Next comes the Rest of the World, then the West Coast. There is only one Best Picture winner with a 100% fantasy setting – *Lord of the Rings*.

### **Introduction of a popular film category**

Fully aware of this trend, which has been widely commented in the US media (albeit with not such extensive data analysis) in 2018 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences stated that it was considering introducing a new Academy Award category for “Best Popular Film”. But this possibility has been put on stand by at least for the time being.

Statistics demonstrate the progressive slide in ratings for the Oscar ceremony. For example, this figure shows the slide between 1976 and 2012.

## RATING OF OSCAR CEREMONY

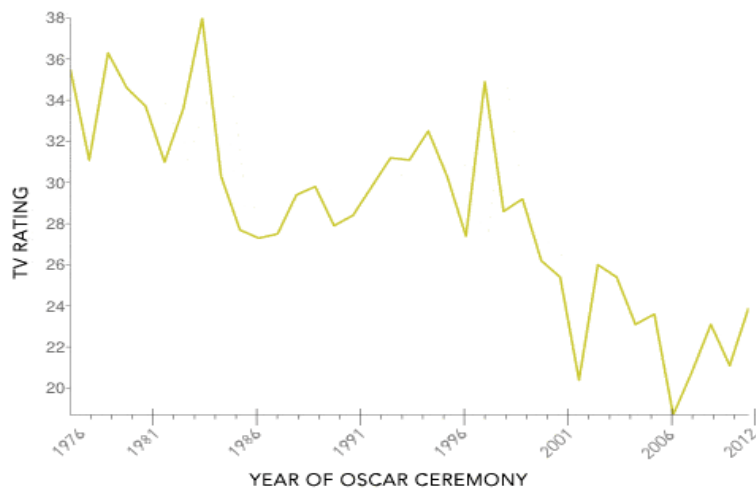


Chart 33 Television ratings of Academy Awards ceremony

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/movies/2013/02/oscar\\_ratings\\_higher\\_with\\_box\\_office\\_hits\\_nominated\\_charts\\_show\\_the\\_correlation.html?via=gdpr-consent](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/movies/2013/02/oscar_ratings_higher_with_box_office_hits_nominated_charts_show_the_correlation.html?via=gdpr-consent)

The 2018 Oscars ceremony recorded an all-time low with an 18.9 ratings in the US, a 16% drop in comparison with 2017.

This decline reflects an overall slide in interest in films and in particular in the films nominated for Academy Awards. As noted in a recent *Variety* article by Owne Gleiberman<sup>275</sup> “There’s growing conviction, and with good evidence, that “the mass audience” – the people who turn out to see comic-book movies, or *Star Wars* movies – is less and less interested in the Oscars. Ratings for the show have been in a slow but steady decline, and out of that reality grows the conviction – and fear – that the Oscars have become marginalised.”

### Moment of Reckoning for Hollywood

Hollywood survived the massive slide in audiences between the early 1940s and late 1960s due to a combination of factors.

- Legislation in the US initially restricted television networks from producing their own content, which meant that the Hollywood studios could diversify into television fiction production, thereby creating a new revenue stream to compensate the loss of cinema audiences.
- the impact of television was experienced first in the US. Until the mid 1960s cinema going audiences in Western Europe remained buoyant and by developing a Euro-Hollywood axis, the US studios succeeded in compensating for the loss in domestic audiences by generating new revenues in Europe.
- the development of home video, starting with VHS in the 1970s, initiated an increasing range of exploitation windows that generated major new revenue streams for the Majors, which enabled major revenue growth until the early 2000s.

<sup>275</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2018/film/columns/oscars-best-popular-film-category-commentary-1202899728/>

- although Western European filmgoing audiences recorded a similar slump to that which had been recorded in the US and UK as a result of the rollout of TV, new markets, especially in Asia, and also including Latin America, ensured continued revenue growth from international markets<sup>276</sup>. At present over 70% of the total box office for US films is generated abroad, making cinema (together with television) one of America's principal export industries.

However, in the wake of digital and technological evolution, Hollywood faces new challenges, including the following:

- a) Home cinema has achieved a level of technological finesse that was unthinkable in the early years of VHS and even of DVD. Watching films at home offers an experience in terms of image quality and surround sound that although it falls short of the big screen, is a significant competitor.
- b) Production and distribution of visual content has changed forever. Whereas cinema and television are one-to-many modes of communication, with limited access for ordinary people and powerful gatekeepers who determine what can be disseminated to the general public, the new world of YouTube videos means that anyone can make and distribute a film. People spend an increasing proportion of their time watching such videos rather than films.
- c) The mode of consuming visual content has also changed and is now more interactive and based on enhanced content, augmented reality or 360° videos. Traditional cinema suddenly seems to be technologically outdated, with a "vintage" feel, even with 3D videos, and consumers are attracted to new viewing experiences.
- d) Competition from viewing experiences such as interactive video games, social media etc draws audiences away from cinema going.
- e) Audiences are increasingly interested in long-running TV series, with high production values, that can be viewed episodically or via binge-watching rather than standalone films. Streaming platforms such as Netflix place greater emphasis on original series rather than film production.

Several texts have been published in the media, focusing on the "crisis" facing Hollywood productions.

In 2017, one of the main identified causes was the poor audience response to blockbuster releases, especially in the summer season.

Other identified causes included the continued rise in ticket prices and the increasingly attractive offer of streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon, and HBO Go.<sup>277</sup>

*The Reckoning: Why the Movie Business Is in Big Trouble*, by Brent Lang, published in March 2017, in *Variety*<sup>278</sup> identified several major threats facing Hollywood that it will be difficult to counter:

- i) Younger audiences are migrating from the big screen to the small screen and are becoming more interested in streamable content accessible on their iPhones or tablets.
- ii) Television fiction has become more creative and challenging than blockbuster movies which are heavily orientated towards visual effects-driven films and certain genres such as superhero pics. This makes television more appealing to creators and audiences than cinema.
- iii) Foreign funding, especially Chinese funding, for Hollywood blockbusters is drying up.

However, the overall picture for Hollywood nonetheless includes positive elements including the following:

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<sup>276</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://deadline.com/2014/09/american-box-office-importance-studios-oversas-841427/>

<sup>277</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/3/16844662/movie-theater-attendance-2017-low-netflix-streaming>

<sup>278</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2017/film/features/movie-business-changing-consumer-demand-studios-exhibitors-1202016699/>

- 1) US audiences recorded an uptick in 2018, with several blockbusters attracting stronger audiences than in 2017.
- 2) International audiences remain strong, with an avid interest in films from the US Majors.
- 3) Independent cinema is increasingly dependent on film festivals which is a booming area.
- 4) Cinema continues to constitute a key attraction in social media sites, as demonstrated by the rise in audience figures for trailers on YouTube or Facebook. The number of companies producing trailers has risen from around 12 in the early 2000s to over 100. Trailers have become a distinct form of entertainment, which meet the demand for short, shareable and free videos on Social Media, and which are trusted more than film critics and word of mouth social media posts.

### **Summary**

Throughout most of the twentieth century, cinema and the major US studios maintained a dominant position over the media content market because although filmgoing diminished dramatically after the roll-out of television, cinema continued to be the premium form of content, that was commercialised via film theatres, home video, payTV and freeTV.

In the current digital market that is no longer the case. Economic power has shifted to the streaming platforms and they do not depend solely on films. Their main revenue sources include series and documentaries and this is radically altering the balance of power within the film and TV industry.

### **Introduction – The Rising Importance of High-End and Low-End Content and Erosion of Middle Ground**

The rise of pay-TV services already established a significant difference between premium content that consumers were willing to pay an additional fee for, and basic content. Two early examples of premium content were films and sport. Rights holders to such premium content could license it across multiple platforms and maximise their revenue streams.

Middle-end content found it difficult to compete with premium content, thereby eroding the middle ground and creating two ends of the spectrum – high-end content sold to multiple platforms and low-end content sold on one or few platforms.

In the digital environment this tendency has been further reinforced, although the type of premium content has evolved.

Sports and film continue to serve as premium content, but high-end TV series, and to a lesser extent documentaries, have also conquered major ground as a popular form of premium content which drives subscriptions to streaming platforms.

Platforms such as Netflix operate in multiple territories and are available across multiple platforms.

This trend is furthering the divide between high-end and low-end content.

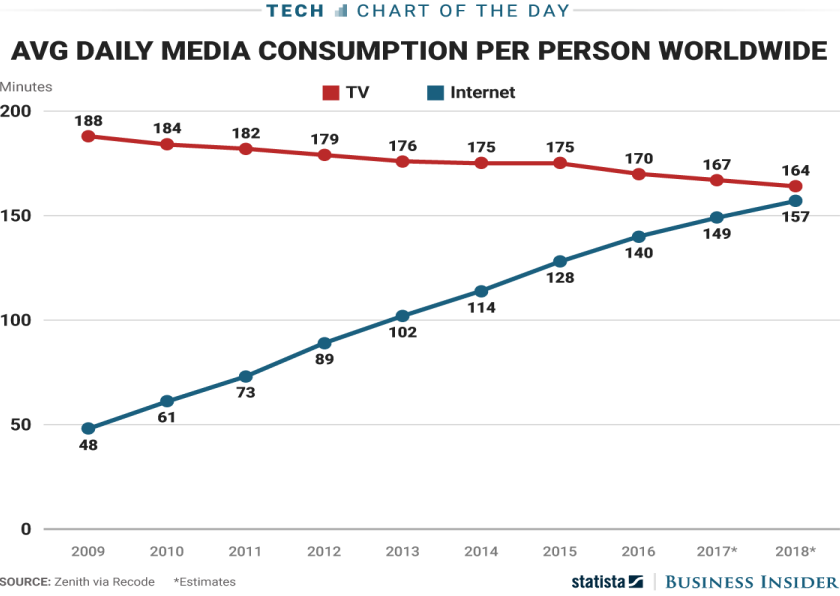
European broadcasters, both private and public, are feeling the squeeze. They can compete for sports television rights, but face rising competition from payTV sports services. In relation to fiction, which is a particularly expensive form of programming, they find it difficult to compete with the offer from platforms such as Netflix. Over time this may force European broadcasters to focus on low-end content, with operators such as Netflix dominating high-end production (see next section). European broadcasters have attempted to pre-empt this trend by also investing in high-end series and then licensing it to other platforms, including Netflix. Scandinavian broadcasters have found success in crime drama series and UK broadcasters have also followed suit.

In European countries where broadcasters have investment obligations in local content, they have lobbied the authorities to be able to invest in series rather than films.

### **The Rising Importance of Streaming Platforms**

Netflix is particularly well suited to take advantage of the digital environment since it operates via both TV and Internet platforms at an international level and controls both production and distribution.

Over the last ten years media consumption of TV worldwide has declined slightly and consumption via the Internet has risen dramatically.

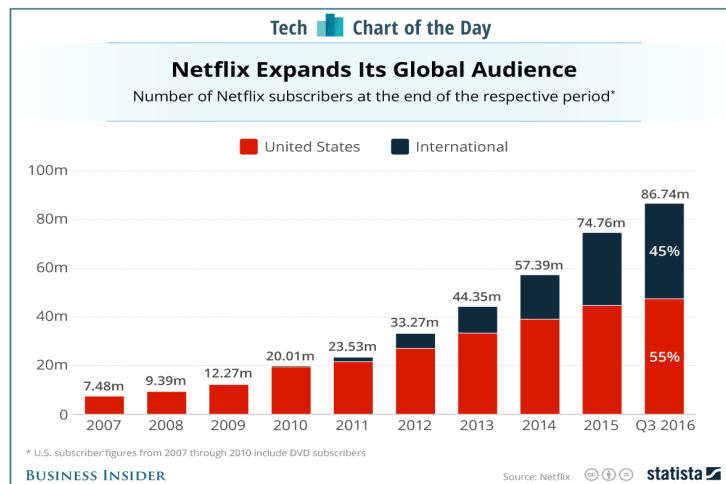


*Chart 34 Average Daily Media Consumption TV vs Internet*

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://uk.businessinsider.com/tv-vs-internet-media-consumption-average-chart-2017-6>

In terms of Internet traffic, video occupied 64% of all traffic in 2014 and a Cisco study predicts that it will occupy over 80% of all traffic by 2019<sup>279</sup>. Netflix is carving out a rising slice of all video traffic and now occupies 34% of peak Internet traffic in the United States<sup>280</sup>.

Buoyed by its success in the US market, Netflix has enjoyed major international expansion, with international revenues expected to exceed US revenues from 2018 onwards.



*Chart 35 Netflix expands its global audience*

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://infographic.statista.com/normal/chartoftheday\\_6354\\_netflix\\_etend\\_son\\_audience\\_n.jpg](https://infographic.statista.com/normal/chartoftheday_6354_netflix_etend_son_audience_n.jpg)

<sup>279</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://tubularinsights.com/2019-internet-video-traffic/>

<sup>280</sup> Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.slideshare.net/danieljacobson/api-revolutions-16755403/25-Netflix-API-Requests-by-Audience>

Netflix seems to be an unstoppable force in the United States and is posing an increasing threat to incumbent operators in other markets.

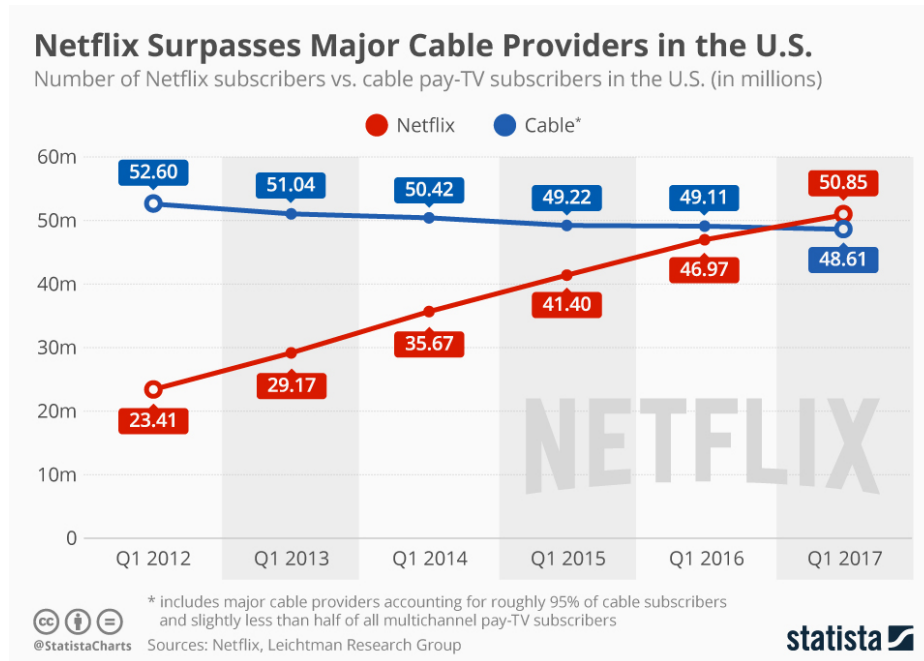


Chart 36 Netflix surpasses cable providers

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/chart/9799/netflix-vs-cable-pay-tv-subscribers/>

In order to cement this rising growth, Netflix and other streaming operators such as Amazon and Hulu have increased their expenditure on original content and are expected to rival or outpace traditional operators over the near future.

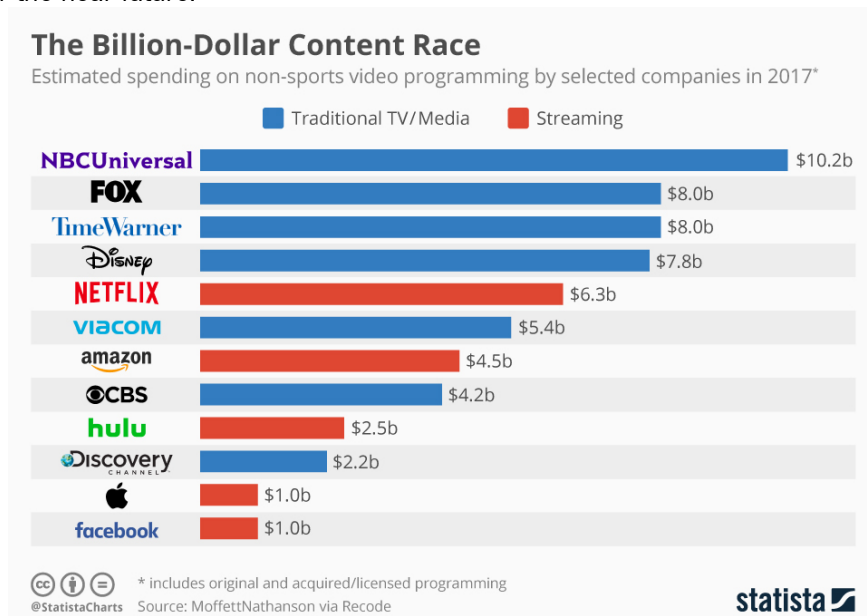


Chart 37 Investment in Content

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/chart/13076/video-content-spending-in-2017/>



Netflix's spending on content has risen every quarter over recent years.

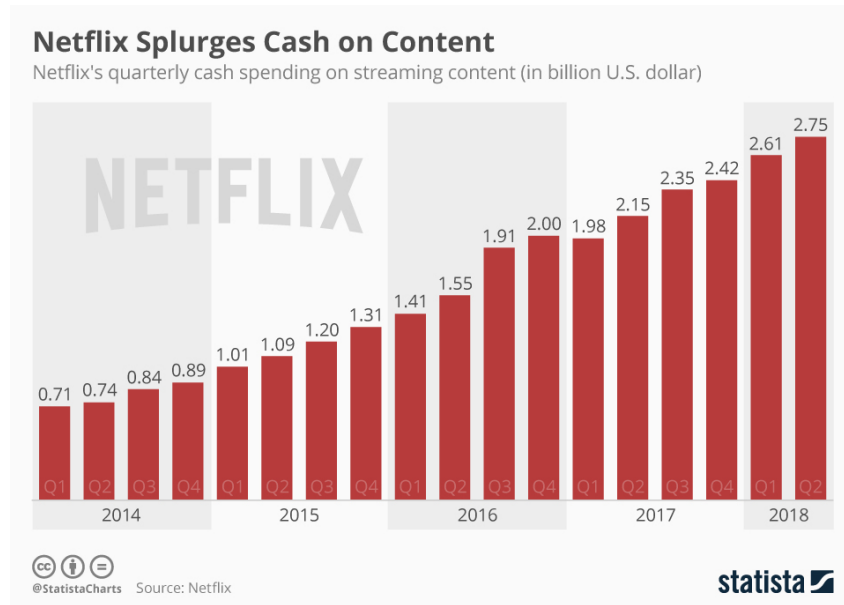


Chart 38 Netflix spending on content

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/chart/14731/netflix-cash-spending-on-streaming-content/>

The switch in viewing habits from traditional media to OTT platforms, has benefited OTT media players such as Netflix, YouTube and Hulu. Amongst these, Netflix has the highest valuation and far outpaces the valuation of the top ten traditional media companies:

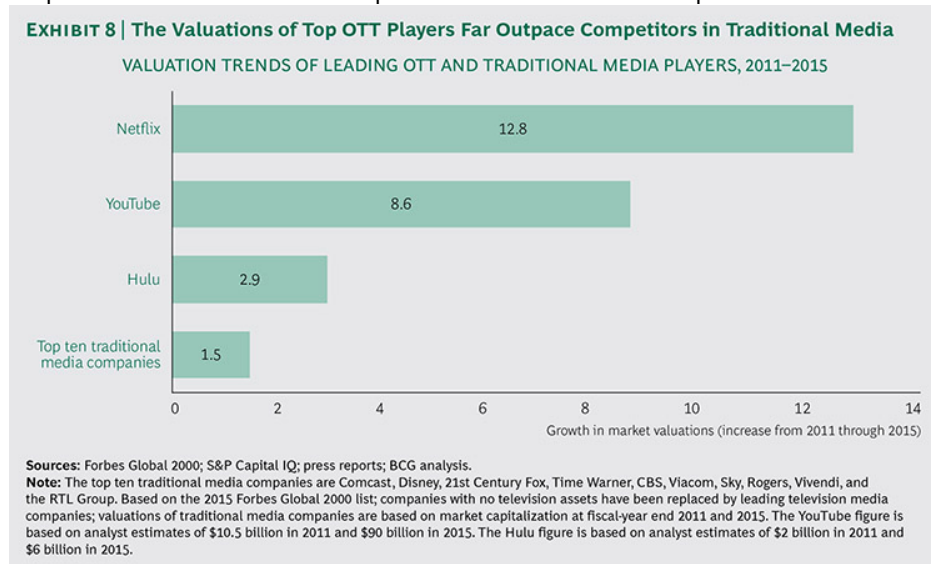


Chart 39 Valuations of OTT players

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

The commercial strength of OTT players such as Netflix, Amazon and Hulu is achieving a level of market dominance that exceeds the former power of the Hollywood studios:

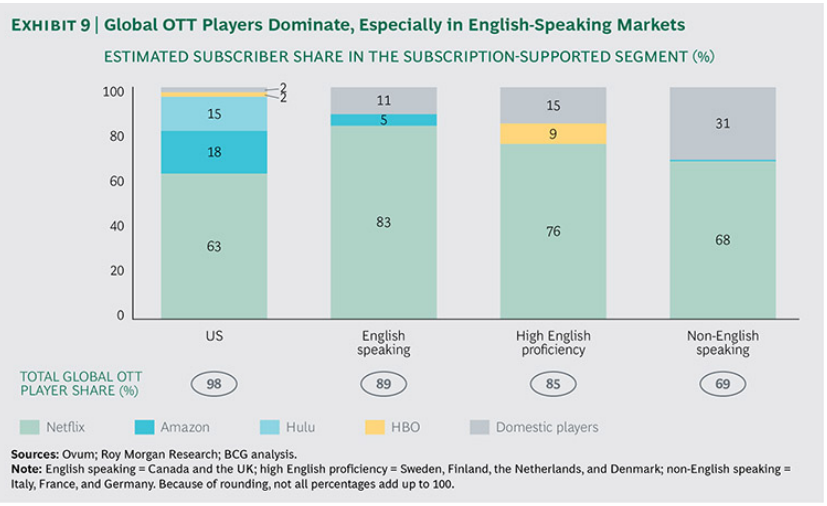


Chart 40 Global OTT players in English-speaking markets

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

As a result of these changes there is a “golden age” for content creators, but they are increasingly courting OTT platforms rather than traditional cinema and television. To prosper they must provide premium content, which is increasingly original series produced for Netflix.

The above cited BCG report emphasises that demand for the top tier and lower tiers of programming is booming while demand for middle-tier content is slumping.

In particular demand for, and consumption of, high-quality serial dramatic content is increasing.

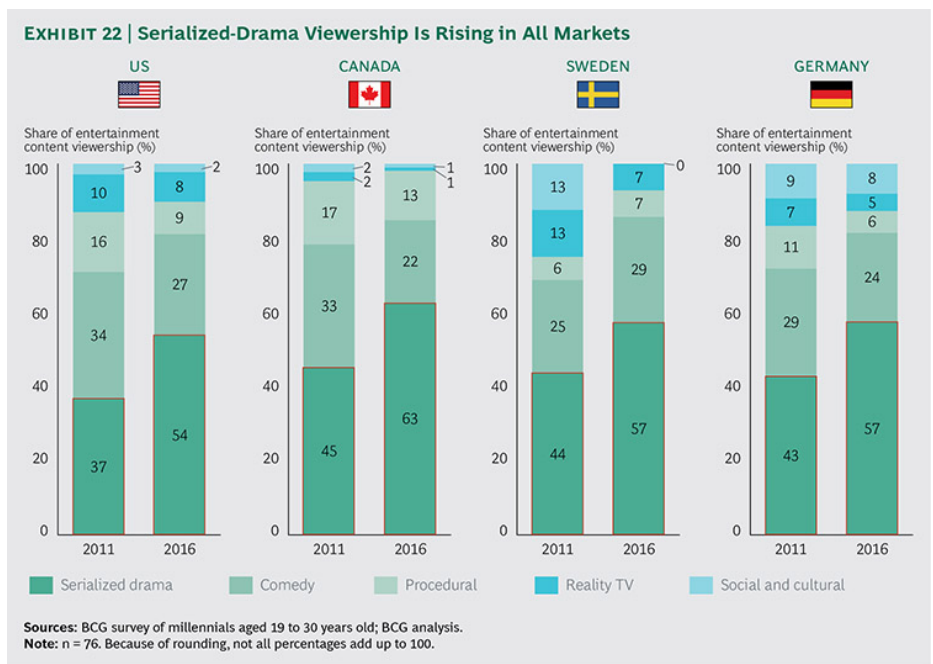


Chart 41 Serialized-Drama Viewership rising in all markets

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

Looking at all categories of viewing content, sports viewing is a key element of traditional TV channels, whereas high-quality serial dramatic content and interestingly documentary content have

become the core elements of the offer on streaming platforms such as Netflix, especially for Millennial viewers:

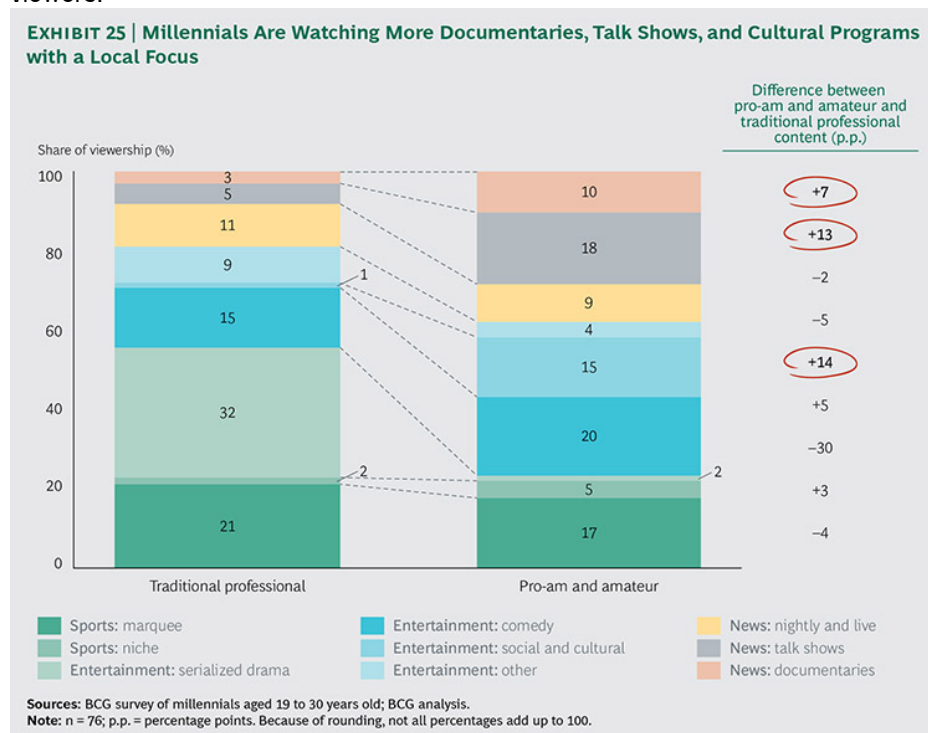


Chart 42 Millennials watching more documentaries, talk shows and cultural programmes with a local focus

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

The most popular content on Netflix includes films – thus demonstrating their continuing relevance in the modern media landscape – but TV content, including original Netflix content, is a close rival:

**Most common type of content viewed on Netflix in the United States as of September 2017**

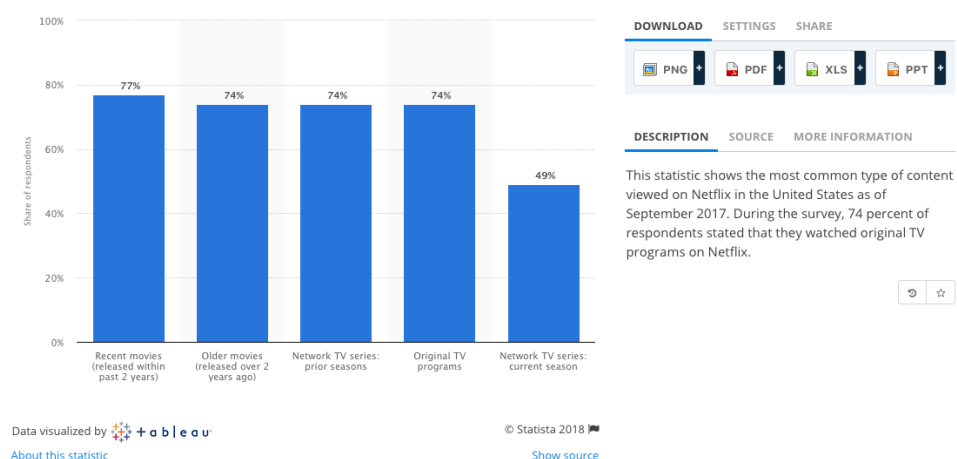


Chart 43 Most popular Netflix content in the US

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/861023/netflix-most-popular-content/>

Netflix doesn't disclose its viewing figures, but a recent report in Business Insider based on social media engagement identified the following top 13 shows in 2017:

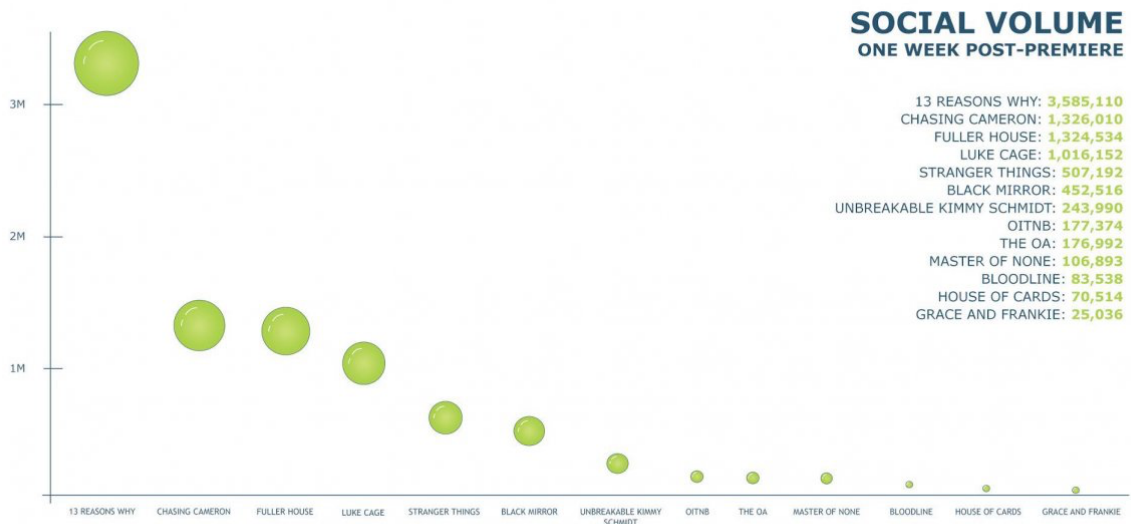
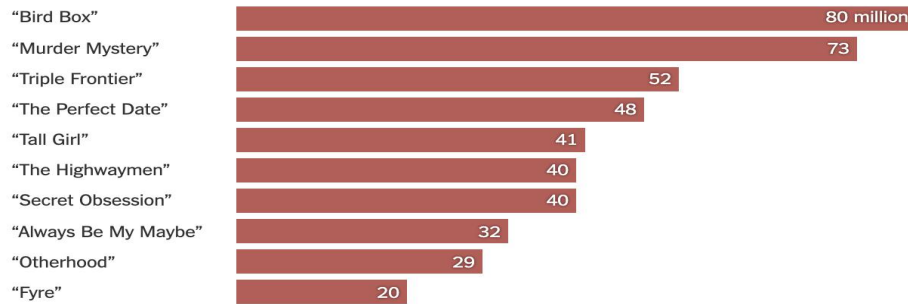


Chart 44 Netflix – top shows 2017

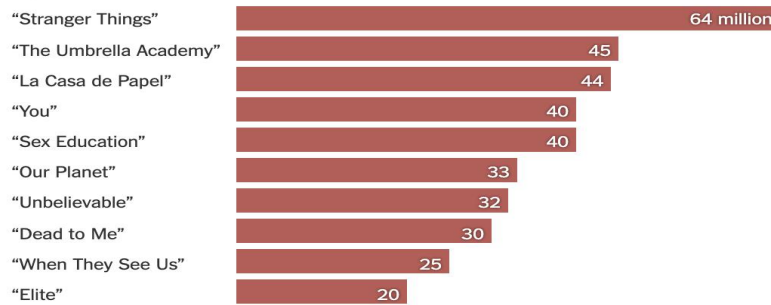
Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.businessinsider.com/most-popular-netflix-shows-2017-4/#see-how-the-shows-compare-with-each-other-in-the-chart-below-14>

For the period October 2018 to October 2019, the top films and shows were:

**Top movies by viewership, October 2018 to September 2019**



**Top television series**



Viewers who watched at least 70 percent of a movie or episode were counted.

By The New York Times | Source: Netflix  
Chart 45 Netflix – top shows 2019

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/17/business/media/netflix-top-ten-movies-tv-shows.html>

In Europe, Netflix now operates in most markets and invests in original local content. In the case of France this was a pre-requisite agreed with the French government in order to begin operating in the country. The first French original series was *Marseilles (2016)*, coproduced with TF1 and starring Gerard Depardieu, which was met with mixed critical reviews in France.

Netflix has also acquired rights to European shows, often increasing the circulation of shows beyond their national borders.

For example, Netflix has provided a boost for European crime drama series, which have enjoyed a renaissance over recent years. Examples include *Peaky Blinders (UK, 2016)*, *The Break (Belgium, 2016)*, *Lava Field (Iceland, 2014)*.

In Spain, Netflix has played a key role in enabling Spanish TV drama series to reach an international market, the most high-profile example of which is the crime drama *La Casa de Papel (2017)* - Netflix's most-watched foreign-language series ever - whose first season was produced by Antena 3 via Atresmedia and whose third series is being produced exclusively for Netflix.

A recent *Variety* article by John Hopewell, *Spanish Scripted Drama Meets Challenge of New Marketplace Landscape*<sup>281</sup> reports that "OTT distribution has helped push some Spanish series onto not only continental screens, but also global TVs." The article notes that in the wake of the success of *La Casa de Papel*, Netflix has now commissioned other Spanish drama series [such as Bambú's *The Cable*

<sup>281</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2018/tv/news/mip-1202746285/>

*Girls*, (2017)] and made early investments in others [such as RTVE's *The Department of Time* (2015) or Atresmedia's *The Cathedral of the Sea* (2006)].

Netflix aims to lock in key international talent and has signed a global exclusive overall deal with *La Casa de Papel* creator Alex Pina, and a similar overall deal, its first in Europe, with Jantse Friese and Baran bo Obdar, creators of German-language Netflix hit *Dark* (2017).

Pina told *Variety*: "We are living a moment when series are becoming one of most relevant of cultural movements ever".

Spanish-language programming is particularly attractive to Netflix, since it opens particularly strong avenues to markets in Hispanic communities in North America and Spanish-speaking Latin America.

20 Netflix original productions are being produced in Spain in 2018 and in July 2018, Netflix announced that it's launching its first European production hub in Madrid, targeting Spanish-language production and potentially drama series, which have been a priority and large source of success.

Netflix is also offering a new paradigm for Spanish feature films, as arthouse audiences contract. Spanish sales agents are increasingly focusing on sales to OTT platforms as noted by Ivan Díaz, head of international at Filmax. "We're living a mixed-model era. The platforms have become big clients for sales agents. That can mean that some titles, before of limited market potential, now yield far more money."<sup>282</sup>

It is possible that Netflix will also begin co-producing with smaller territories, such as Portugal, but until now this hasn't happened because Portugal doesn't have sufficient budgets to produce high-end drama. Nonetheless the new tax incentive scheme implemented in Portugal may change this situation.

## **New Types of Audiovisual Production**

In contrast with the recent slide in cinema audiences in the US there has been a massive increase in demand for audiovisual media.

In the context of this text, the terms audiovisual communication and audiovisual media are used to refer to all forms of communication and media that include visual and/or sound elements.

The term "visual communication" is often used to talk about communication via fixed or moving images. However, in practice a great deal of visual communication is complemented by audio elements and the term "audiovisual communication" is a more encompassing term, albeit bearing the disadvantage that it is often associated with moving images rather than still images.

Regardless of the term we use it is clear that visual communication or audiovisual communication is experiencing a major boom, driven by digital media.

Cinema is experiencing a crisis point precisely because of the difficulties it has experienced in reacting to the major allure of other types of audiovisual communication.

The boom in audiovisual communication has been powered by technological development.

Computer programming is based on binary code and in the very early years of computing was mediated via text-based interfaces, whether at the level of the early years of DOS programming, or the early years of the Internet, with a strong presence of text-driven blogs.

However, operating systems were quickly adapted to visually based communication techniques, initially catalysed by operating systems such as Apple Mac, later emulated by systems such as Windows.

In terms of Internet media, communication was initially hampered by bandwidth limitations and compression capabilities, but as Internet speeds rocketed, the most popular media quickly evolved from text to sound and then to audiovisual communication.

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<sup>282</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://variety.com/2018/film/features/spanish-sales-agents-explore-new-paradigms-1202807420/>

## Power of audiovisual communication

The power of audiovisual communication is omnipresent in modern society.

This form of communication has several core advantages:

- The power of “seeing is believing”, we often trust more what we can see than what we are told about.
- A “picture tells a thousand words”, images can condense information and express identity
- People think visually,
- Sound has a more direct and immediate effect on consciousness. For centuries much of culture was disseminated via the spoken word, and in today’s world the spoken word has a power that goes beyond the capabilities of the written word. In terms of music, it can directly tap into our consciousness.

The power of audiovisual communication is particularly evident if we look at the most popular social media platforms, the vast majority of which revolve around visual or audiovisual media, ranging from sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest to sites such as Facebook. Even sites which began with a major text-based element, such as Twitter, are increasingly based on audiovisual communication.

The number of amateur and semi-professional video creators has increased dramatically over recent years:

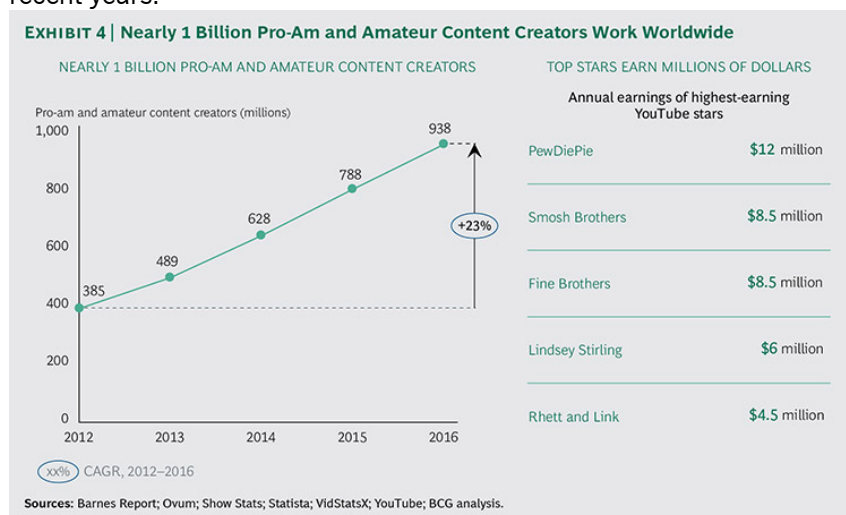


Chart 46 Rising number of Pro-Am and Amateur content producers

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

Amongst millennials viewing is also shifting to pro-am and amateur content, as noted in the BCG report *The Future of Television: The Impact of OTT on Video Production Around the World*.

**EXHIBIT 15 | Viewership Is Shifting from Traditional Professional to Pro-Am and Amateur Content**

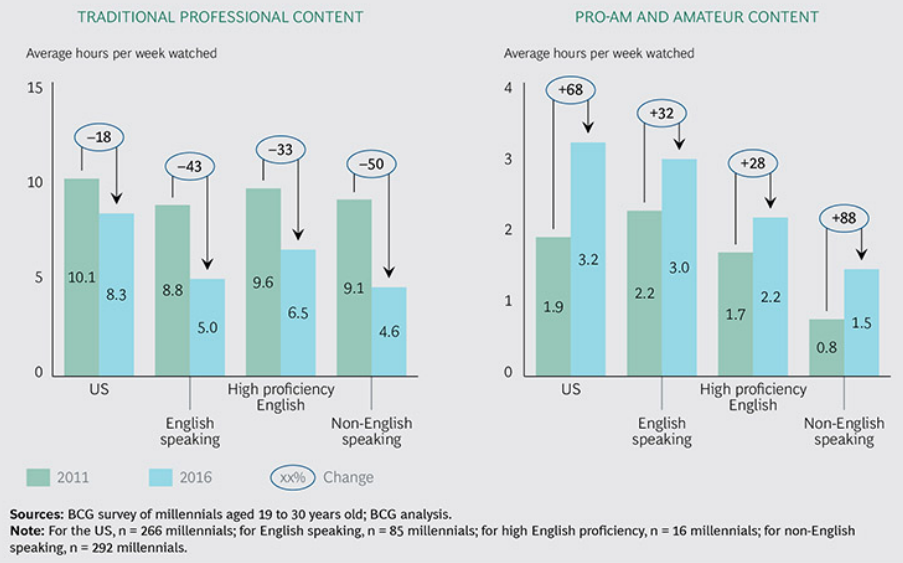
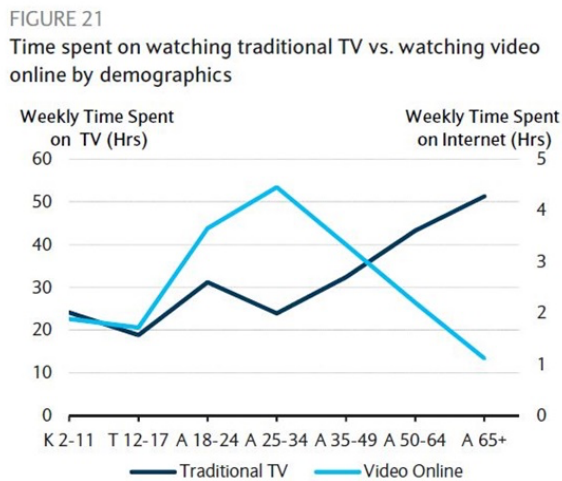


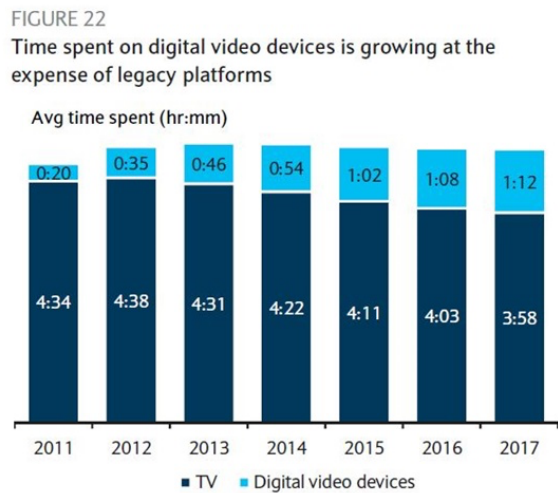
Chart 47 Millennials shifting to Pro-Am and Amateur content producers

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

There is a clear shift over time to watching videos online vs traditional TV, especially amongst viewers aged 17-34:



Source: Nielsen Total Audience Report 3Q15



Source: eMarketer  
 Note: Digital video devices include time spent watching digital video through game console, connected TV, or OTT devices

Chart 48 Traditional TV viewing vs Internet videos

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/277229/facebooks-annual-revenue-and-net-income/>

Online viewing of videos is expected to account for 30% of all video consumption by 2020. Furthermore, as noted in the BCG report: "Online viewing has increased the size of the overall video pie



rather than cannibalizing it and has created new consumption opportunities for video viewing both at home and away from home:

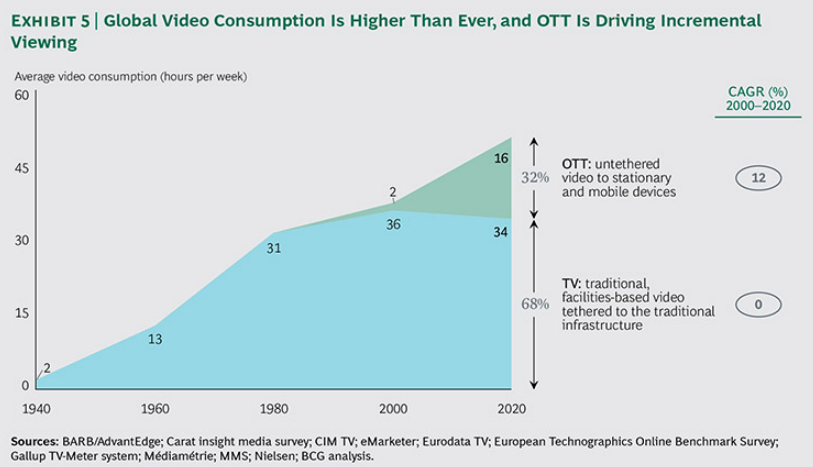


Chart 49 Global consumption of videos is rising

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

Viewing habits are increasingly switching from linear to non-linear viewing:

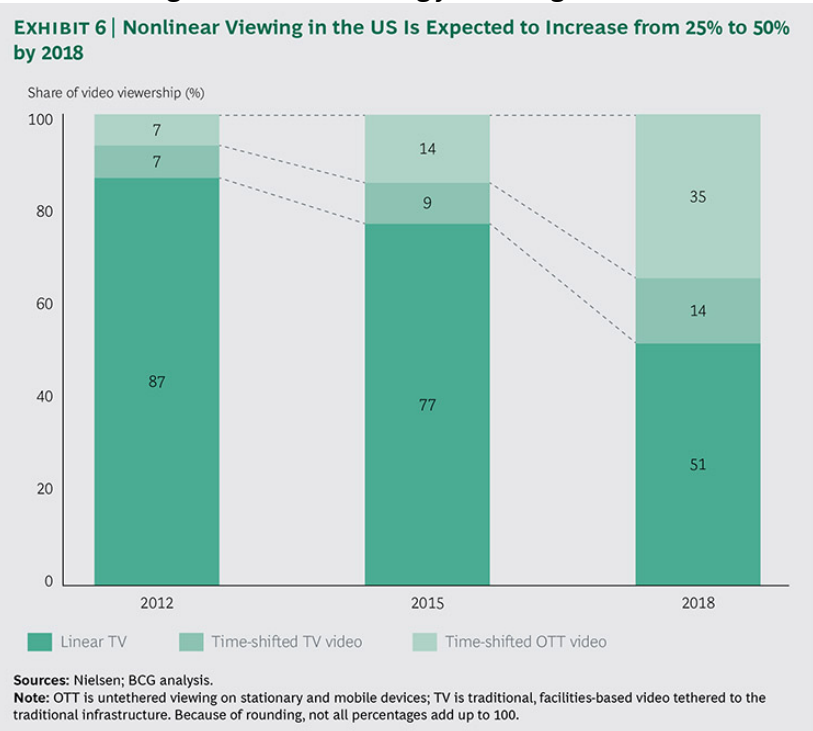


Chart 50 Nonlinear video viewing is rising

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

OTT revenues are dominated by a small number of players. In 2016, BGC estimated that five large global and semiglobal players collectively control approximately half of the \$25 billion of annual OTT market revenues:

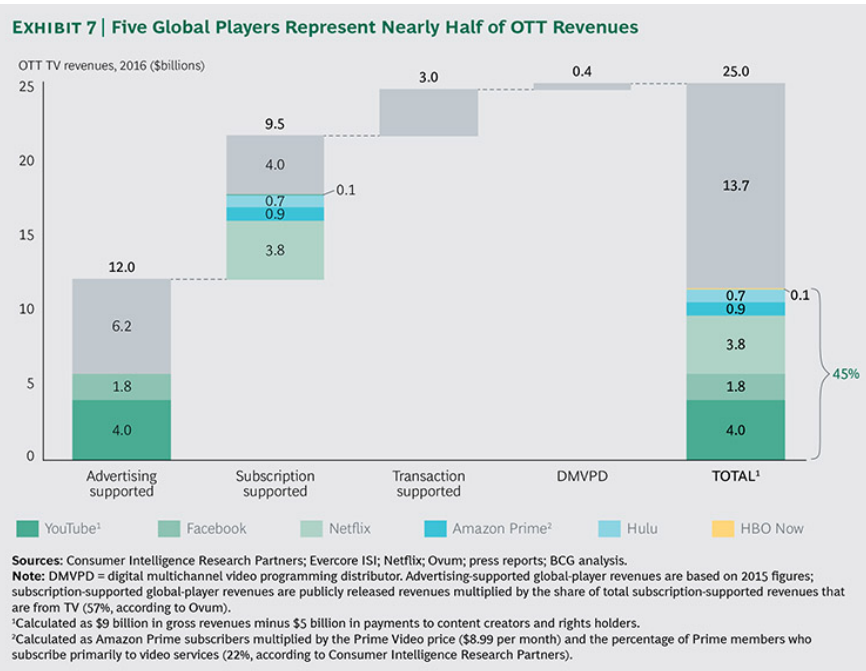


Chart 51 OTT market dominated by five global players

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/media-entertainment-technology-digital-future-television-impact-ott-video-production.aspx>

Slide in TV audiences:

**Time Spent Watching Traditional TV, By Age Group**

Percent change from Q3 2012 to Q3 2016

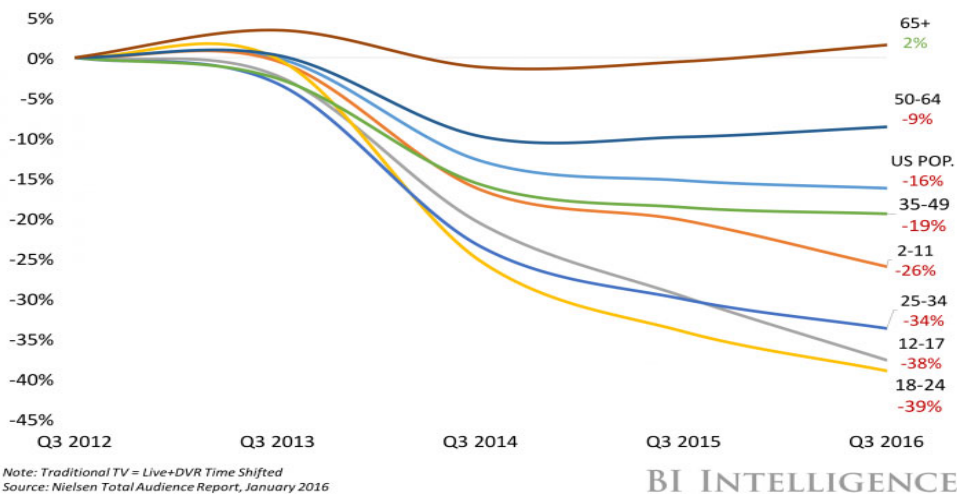
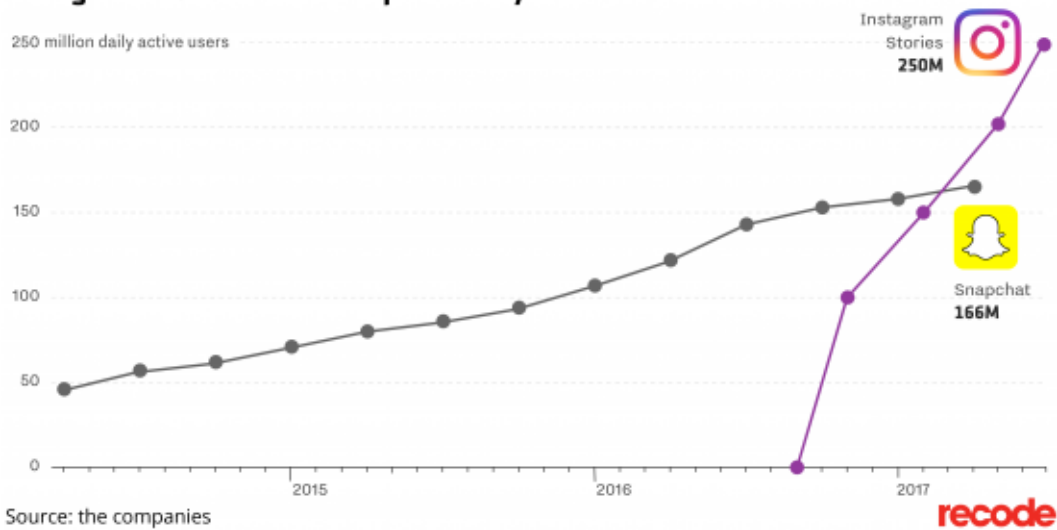


Chart 52 Traditional TV viewing is sliding

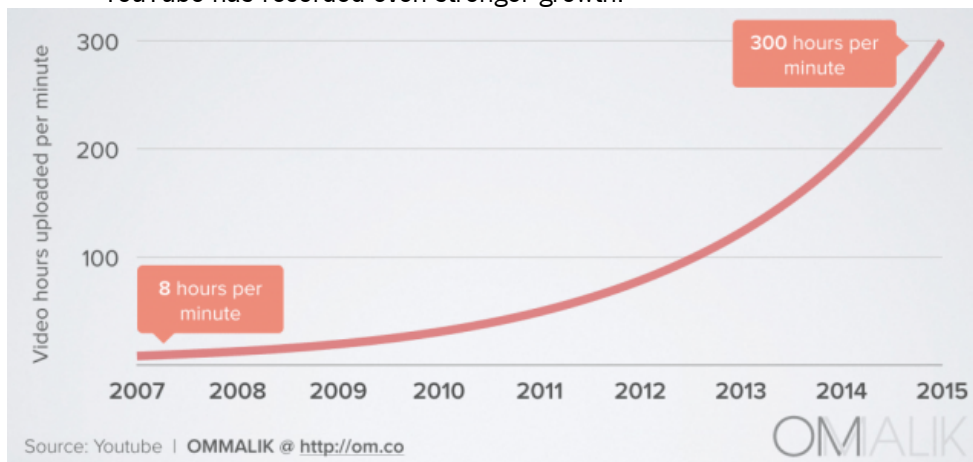
Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.nyfikengra.se/redaktorens-rader-dyster-framtid-for-teven-om-det-inte-vore-for/>

The growth of sites with a strong visual element has been exponential. For example, Instagram has grown from 1 million users in 2010 to 700 million users in 2017<sup>283</sup>. Instagram is now used by over 70% of US businesses. Instagram, which began as being primarily based on fixed images, increasingly includes moving images. 35% Of Instagram’s 700 million users are creating and viewing videos via Stories (Mediakix, 2017) and since the release of Instagram stories, it now has 250 million active users per day. Growth of Instagram stories quickly outstripped Snapchat:

**Instagram Stories versus Snapchat daily active users**



YouTube has recorded even stronger growth:



Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/YouTube-statistics/#1>

<sup>283</sup> Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/instagram-marketing/instagram-statistics/>

It is currently the second strongest social media platform after Facebook.

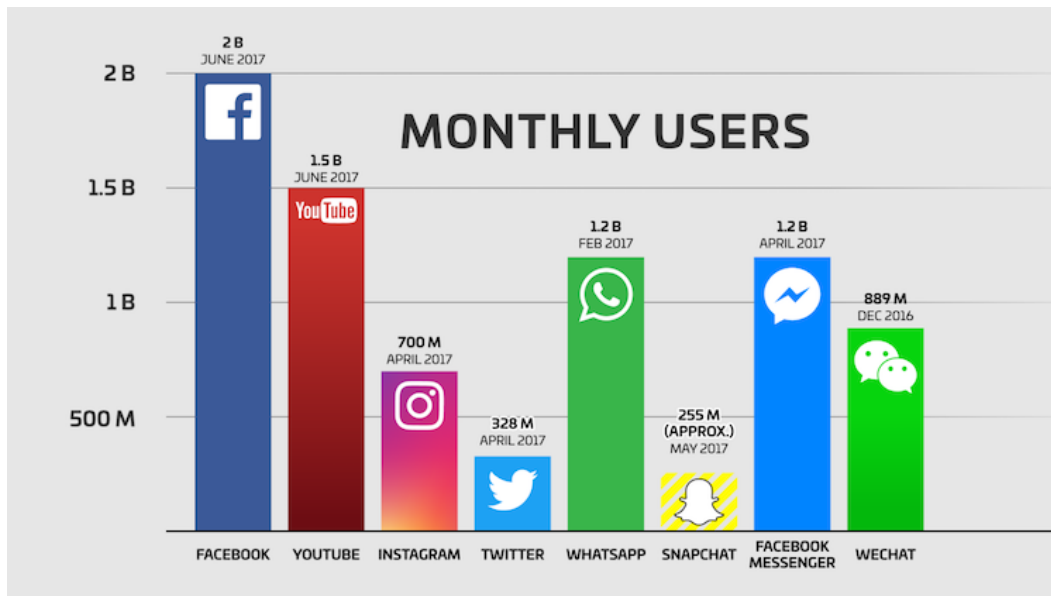
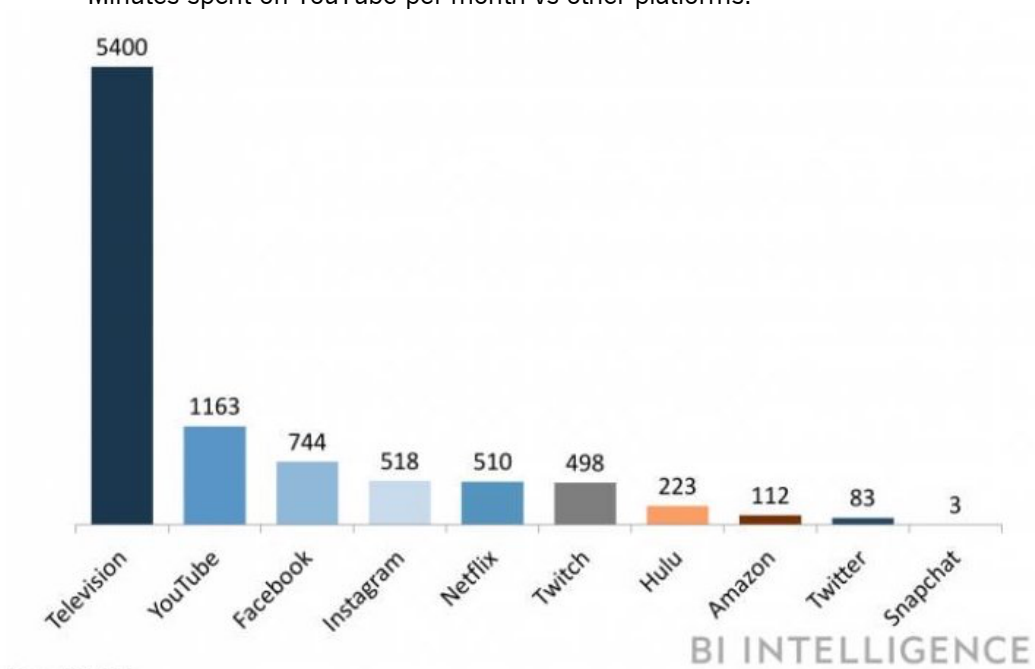


Chart 55 Monthly users of social media platforms (2018)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/YouTube-statistics/#1>

In terms of viewing videos, YouTube already records 20% as many views as television. Minutes spent on YouTube per month vs other platforms:



Source: VAB, 2017

Chart 56 Rising importance of social media for viewing videos (2018)

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/YouTube-statistics/#1>

The advertising revenues of YouTube have also been rising significantly

### Net advertising revenues of YouTube in the United States from 2015 to 2018 (in billion U.S. dollars)

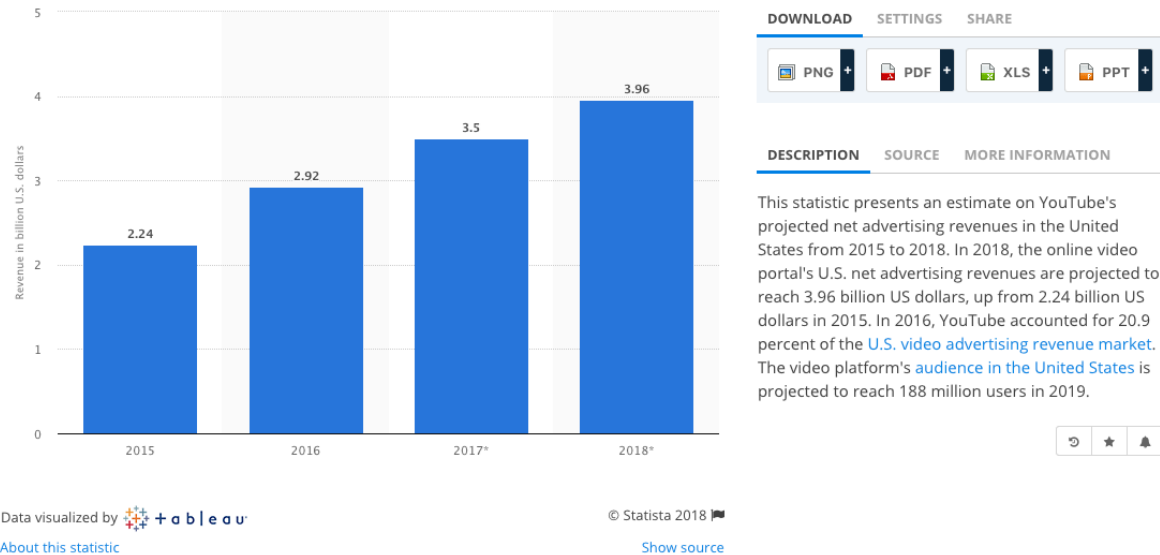


Chart 57 Advertising revenues of YouTube 2015-2018

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/289660/youtube-us-net-advertising-revenues/>

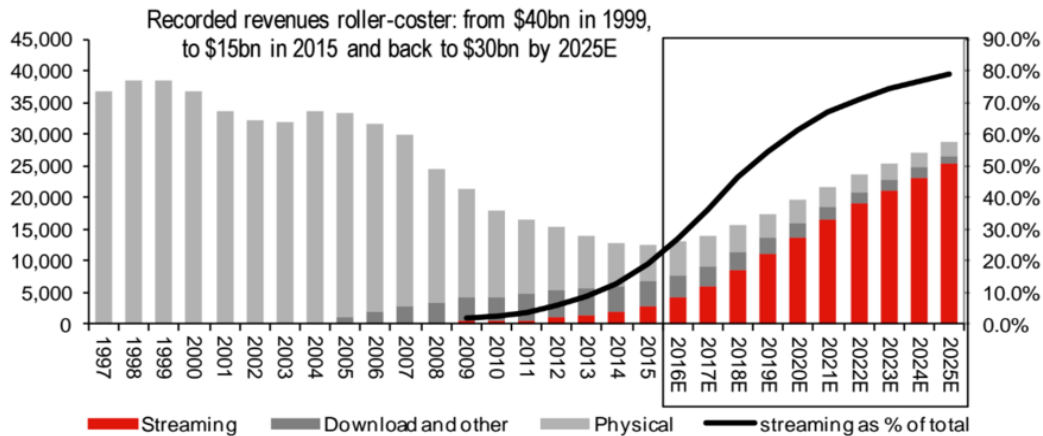
Eric Sheridan, an analyst at global financial firm UBS, estimates that by 2020, YouTube will have \$27.4 billion in advertising revenues, comparable to Facebook's 2016 revenue estimates of \$25.6 billion<sup>284</sup>.

YouTube is now a major revenue source for music labels, which recently renegotiated their deal with the platform.

Analysts predict that online platforms such as YouTube will enable the music industry to reverse the revenue decline it suffered between 2005 and 2015:

<sup>284</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.tubefilter.com/2016/04/15/youtube-estimated-revenues-27-billion-2020/>

**Fig 6 Global recorded music to double in ten years**



Source: Company data, Macquarie Research, November 2016

Chart 58 Global recorded music revenues

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.asvlaw.com/labels-set-reign-youtube-revenue/>

Facebook's advertising growth is even faster:

Internet > Social Media & User-Generated Content > Facebook: annual revenue and net income 2007-2017

**Facebook's annual revenue and net income from 2007 to 2017 (in million U.S. dollars)**

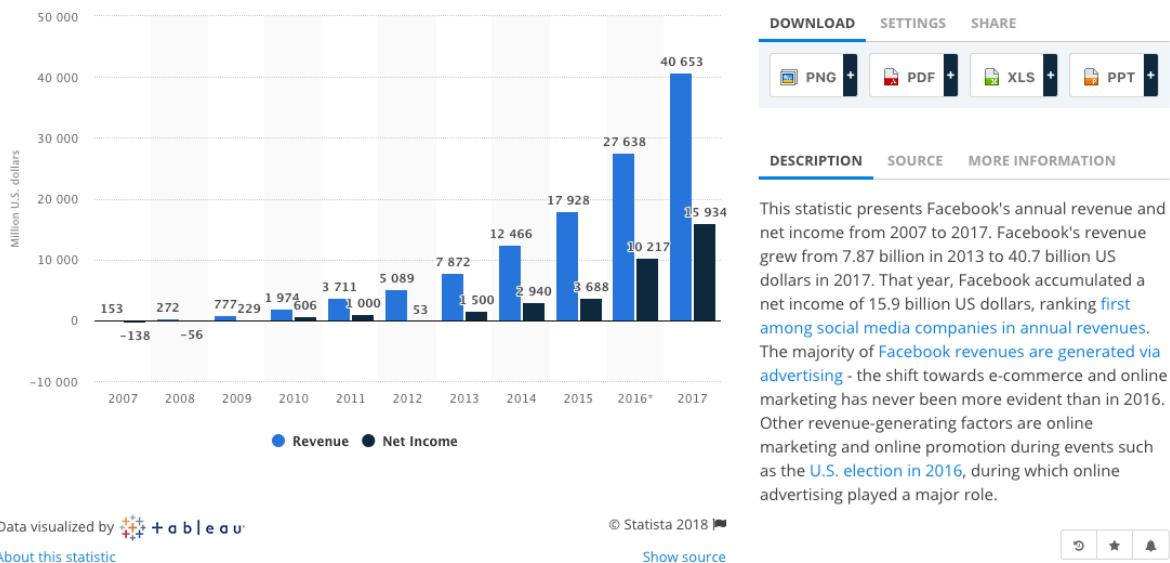


Chart 59 Facebook revenues

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/277229/facebooks-annual-revenue-and-net-income/>

In terms of video streaming, Netflix is currently the strongest platform, followed by YouTube: [Share in percent of total over-the-top of video content streaming (2018 data)]

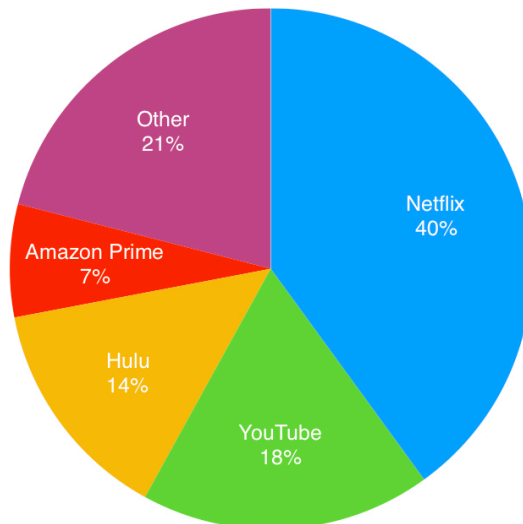


Chart 60 Video viewing – Netflix vs YouTube and other platforms

Source: Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/YouTube-statistics/#1>

Video is the most popular and shared form of content on Facebook and has been a key driver of Facebook subscribers:

In 2018 Facebook had over 8 billion average daily views and 100 million hours of video watched every day<sup>285</sup>.

One of the main growth categories of Facebook videos are live streams, which constitute around 20% of all views.

If we consider fixed images as well as videos, the dominance of visual communication on Facebook is even more evident, since images account for 75-90% of Facebook advertising effectivity/performance<sup>286</sup>.

At a wider level, it is not only live action video which is powering social media. Infographics is another major growth area.

*The Data Is In: Infographics Are Growing And Thriving In 2017 (And Beyond)*, by Cheryl Conner, published in Forbes magazine<sup>287</sup>, states that “the state of communications is increasingly visual. At this point, nearly three-quarters of marketers rely on visuals in their social media messaging. The new research indicates nearly 60% of businesses queried have used infographics, mostly for marketing and sales purposes.”

The reasons identified by Conner for the power of infographics include:

- a) Progressively shorter attention spans, thanks to smartphones
- b) The fact that humans absorb information faster with corresponding graphics (we may forget what we’ve read, but remember what we’ve seen), and
- c) Viewers tend to be triggered emotionally by images

Conner cites the following media in terms of retention of information:

- Infographics 61%
- Commercials 55%
- PowerPoints 48%
- Articles with images 46%
- Articles with text only 38%

<sup>285</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://mediakix.com/blog/facebook-video-statistics-everyone-needs-know/>

<sup>286</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/>

<sup>287</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylnappconner/2017/10/19/the-data-is-in-infographics-are-growing-and-thriving-in-2017-and-beyond/#62e6fdee137c>

Brands are increasingly focusing their energies and resources on visually-based posts, including fixed images and videos.

Visual communication is not only increasingly important in the field of corporate communication it is also a key growth area in the field of journalism.

*Why Visual Communication Is the Most Important Skill for Journalists in 2015*, by Zach Kitchke, published in the Huffington Post<sup>288</sup> explores the fact that social media such as Facebook and Twitter are an increasingly important source of news content for users, which is increasingly driven by visual communication rather than text-based reports.

62% of journalists are required to write for online news and this increasingly involves a visual component. Journalists increasingly have to multi-task, producing text and also still and moving images and/or sound reports.

Kitchke concludes: “In the changing tide of online journalism, arming yourself with visual communication skills is more important than ever before.”

New technologies such as immersive viewing, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) will increase the power of visual communication. Beyond the fields of social media, we increasingly depend on visual communication devices such as Google Earth, GPS and closed circuit television. Our world is increasingly visual and this trend will be further reinforced by AR and VR.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly able to annotate and decode visual content, which will be one of the main drivers of what has been described as the fourth industrial revolution.

The development of automatic translation tools or computer-assisted translation tools will further this trend since the core visual communication is based on universal elements that can then be adapted to multiple languages, or even dispense with the need for written language.

Even instruction manuals for domestic appliances are increasingly visually-based.

Some suggest that we are developing new visual languages. For example, film critics often complain that their reviews are increasingly interpreted primarily on the basis of the number of stars they attribute to a film, which are often placed on posters as a substitute for textual quotes.

Emojis have also been described as a new form of visual language<sup>289</sup>.

*The Future of Visual Communication: Trends for 2018 and Beyond* by Jade Emmons<sup>290</sup> suggests that 90% of all information transmitted to our brains is visual and that people remember 80% of what they see compared to 20% of what they read.

The article *Humans are Visual Creatures*<sup>291</sup> reinforces this idea stating that “neurons devoted to visual processing number in the hundreds of millions and take up about 30 % of the cortex, as compared with 8 % for touch and just 3 % for hearing”.

The article states that humans decode visual information at ultra-fast speeds and can retrieve meaning from images seen for as little as 13 milliseconds. It cites a research study on engineering students by Dr. Richard Felder in the 1980s, which concludes that 65% of people are “visual learners” i.e. can learn more quickly from visual media than text-based media and this proportion is considerably higher in certain fields.

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<sup>288</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-kitchke/post\\_9445\\_b\\_7456664.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-kitchke/post_9445_b_7456664.html)

<sup>289</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20151012-will-emoji-become-a-new-language>

<sup>290</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <http://blog.visme.co/future-of-communication/>

<sup>291</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from <https://www.seyens.com/humans-are-visual-creatures/>



### Summary

Europe and Hollywood have moved in opposite directions since the 1970s. Analysis of the data demonstrates that Hollywood has shifted away from the drama and romance genres and towards genres heavily based on special effects, such as animation, sci-fi and fantasy. Europe has moved in the opposite direction – for example France produced a higher proportion of thrillers and crime dramas in the 1960s and has moved towards “drama” films with a strong auteur dimension. Cross-country analysis of film genres reveals how each country has a different genre profile. For example the strongest country for the romance genre is India. In terms of comedy the US consistently produces a high number of comedies, but this pattern is also found in some European countries such as France. Other European countries, such as Portugal, produce a very low proportion of comedies.

### Introduction

The moving image had a decisive impact on society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to play a pivotal role in moulding our view of the world.

Broadcasting, recorded music and the Internet now perhaps have a stronger, more pervasive influence on shaping opinions than the seventh art, but cinema nonetheless maintains a lynchpin role at the epicentre of the media revolution.

The “celluloid footprint” can be measured at various levels, but can be broadly divided into two types of impact: “commercial impact” and “cultural impact”.

On a purely economic basis, we can tally up box-office figures and subsequent revenues along the film value chain in order to gauge the economic “footprint” of each film, company, studio or national film industry.

At a cultural level, we can analyse the circulation of films in film festivals or TV channels and their indirect influence on other cultural channels: from books, newspapers, advertising to social media and dinner table conversations. The total “cultural impact” is obviously far more difficult to quantify.

There is no cast-iron definition of film genre, or objective rules that enable us to affirm categorically that one film fits within a specific genre and can't be categorized within another genre.

Genres are overlapping - for example, an adventure film can also be a comedy – and sometimes a “genre” such as animation or documentary is actually a format which can embrace many different thematic genres.

While classification of a film by genre is by no means clear-cut or objective, we can use existing classification models to obtain a relatively neutral “mapping” of this subject.

Statistical analysis of genres in US films already exists - such as Sung Wook Ji's *Production Technology and Trends in Movie Content: An Empirical Study* (Wook, 2011) which identifies the annual Top 20 films from 1967-2008, based on data from *Variety* and Box Office Mojo and then uses the IMDB genre classification system for these films. The conclusions of this study are compared with the conclusions drawn herein, later within this text.

UK researcher Nick Redfern has also analysed genre data over time for US films. For example, in his work *Genre trends at the US box office, 1991 to 2010* (Redfern, 2012), he analyses the top 50 grossing films at the US box office each year from 1991 to 2010. He allocates each film into one – and one only – of nine genres: action/adventure, comedy, crime/thriller, drama, family, fantasy/science fiction, horror, romance, and other. Once again the conclusions of this study are compared with the

conclusions drawn herein, later within this text.

In order to classify the genre of each film for the purpose of the present analysis, we use the genre classifications provided in the Internet site IMDB (International Movie Database) which identifies one or more genres for each film listed within its database (constituted by over 275,000 feature films, as of June 2012).

This classification lacks certain nuances – for example an “art film” would be classified as a “drama”, while this same category would also include classical narrative historical and contemporary dramas.

Over 50% of films have more than one genre indication, the most common being “drama”, followed by “comedy” and “romance”. A film listed as both a drama and a comedy might fit within the category of “romantic comedy” but this is not necessarily the case.

In general the IMDB listing does not include many specific minor genres, although it does list certain specific genres such as film noir, sports or war films.

In order to achieve a comparison of different national cinemas, 22 key countries have been chosen for this study, as follows: US, UK, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Japan, S. Korea, Hong Kong, India, China, Russia, Iran, Israel, and Egypt.

This list includes many of the world’s leading national cinemas but inevitably excludes many others, such as Canada, Benelux countries, Eastern Europe, Greece, Turkey, Taiwan, Colombia, Chile... the list is endless.

However, by including key national cinemas from five continents, we can achieve an interesting overview of world cinema.

For each national cinema it is obviously impossible to include all films ever made – there must be a selection criterion. In this case, for the purpose of comparison between different national cinemas, the study uses a sample of the Top 100 most consulted films on IMDB for each country (using the IMDB’s MOVIEmeter<sup>292</sup> measure of popularity by page-views) and also the Top films from each country that generated US Box Office, according to IMDB data.

The MOVIEmeter criterion is imperfect since it reflects the level of popularity at a specific moment in time (in this case the results were determined on April, 22, 2012), which creates an inevitable bias to more recent films at that time, and also tends to accentuate the relative importance of specific genres. For example, a genre such as horror is likely to generate more IMDB page-views than its relative importance in terms of box office shares.

The US Box Office criterion is also imperfect since IMDB does not list the US box office of all foreign films that achieve a US release (and on rare occasions fails to list the US box office of US films) and is much more comprehensive for more recent films, whereas older films may not have their box office data recorded in the IMDB.

Analysis of the Top 100 films for each national cinema, using either the MOVIEmeter or the US Box Office criteria may also distort the results in that certain countries may have important successes in the past that are no longer applicable at present. For example, Italy records a fairly high number of westerns, due to the former Spaghetti Western phase, but this percentage is no longer representative of current Italian film output.

The choice of the Top 100 films may also distort the results towards certain genres. For example, the Top 100 US films includes a much higher proportion of action/adventure films than the Top 500 US films (see below).

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<sup>292</sup> Retrieved on 29/10/19 from [https://help.imdb.com/article/imdbpro/industry-research/starmeter-moviemeter-and-companymeter-faq/GSPB7HDNPKVT5VHC?ref=helpsect\\_pro\\_5\\_3#](https://help.imdb.com/article/imdbpro/industry-research/starmeter-moviemeter-and-companymeter-faq/GSPB7HDNPKVT5VHC?ref=helpsect_pro_5_3#)

Use of IMDB data allows us to draw up comparative percentages concerning the frequency of genres in each national cinema. For example, we find that 42% of the Top 100 US films are Action films. These percentages do not however correspond to watertight categories. This does not mean, for example, that the remaining 58% of the Top 100 US films fit into the other genre categories. Instead, it means that 42% of US films include the action genre, which may overlap with other genres.

Given that IMDB ascribes multiple genres to most films, if we add up the percentage recorded for each genre, the grand total will normally be well above 200%.

Notwithstanding these caveats, analysis of IMDB data offers some interesting results in terms of comparative trends and trends over time for some of the world's leading national cinemas.

## Genre Profile of 22 National Cinemas

On the basis of IMDB data of the Top 100 films from 22 different national cinemas, using the MOVIEmeter (popularity in terms of page-views) criteria, we can produce the following “genre profile” of world cinema:

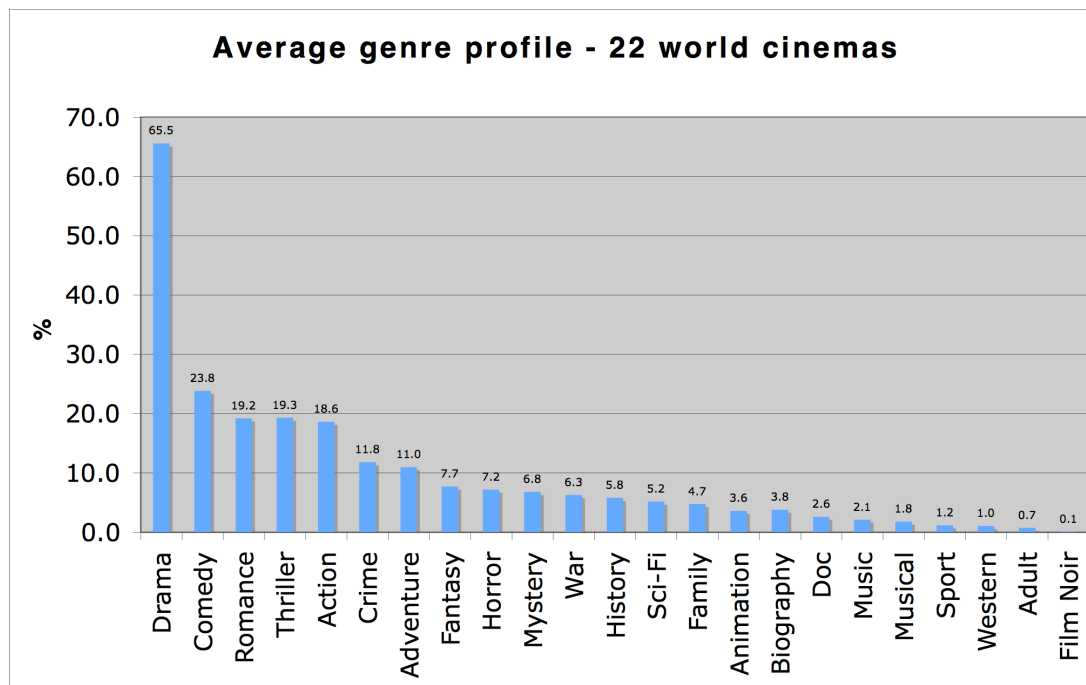


Chart 61 Average genre profile – 22 world cinemas

Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author's analysis

This chart demonstrates that the average profile of the Top 100 films from 22 national cinemas, based on IMDB MOVIEmeter data, shows that 65.5% of films include the drama genre. This reflects the fact that for the IMDB classification system, “drama” is a catch-all category, that is frequently combined with other genres. Films that have a clearly defined genre, for example horror, action or thriller may be identified solely in relation to this genre. However, for many films classified by IMDB, “drama” will be included within the genre tabs. If the classifier is uncertain of the type of film (particularly common for non English language films) the classification under the “drama” genre will also be higher.

After the drama genre, the next four main genres are comedy, romance, thriller and action. These genres are linked to core viewing responses –laughter, passion, suspense and adrenalin – and

also reflect four core categories of films. These genres are staple mainstream genres, which if well directed and produced can achieve a strong audience response.

Crime and adventure films are the next two most frequent genre categories – reflecting the fact that these genres are not exclusive to Hollywood films but found throughout world cinemas (see below). The adventure genre is often coupled to the action genre, to create the action/adventure hybrid genre. Crime films are often combined with the romance and/or thriller genres.

The next most common genres, in descending order, are fantasy, horror, mystery, war, history, sci-fi and family. These genres occur throughout the world but are more prevalent in certain countries and regions. For example, English-language nations have a higher number of fantasy and sci-fi films; horror films are regular productions in some countries but extremely rare in others.

Specific genres such as westerns or film noirs are rarer, but nonetheless reoccur on a regular basis.

Finally, this list also includes categories such as animation or documentary films, which are not truly “genres” but instead film formats, but given that they are included within the IMDB genre listing for feature-length films, they are included for comparative purposes.

We can now compare this genre profile to the profile based on films with a US release:

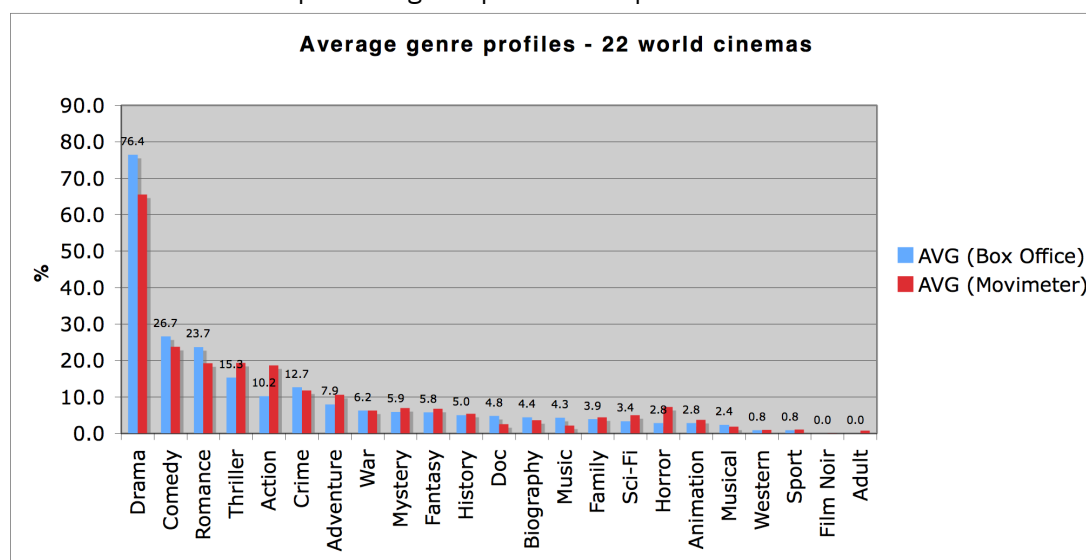


Chart 62 Average genre profile – 22 world cinemas – box office  
 Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author’s analysis

This chart compares the profile based on the MOVIEmeter criterion and that based on films with a US release. The essential difference, as noted above, is that the MOVIEmeter criterion will be skewed towards certain genres that attract greater interest amongst Internet users. The box office profile is closer to the “market pattern”.

In this case we see that 76.4% of world films that achieve a US release have drama as one of their genres. Since this is an average that is equally weighted for each country, the result is not that surprising since films from many countries are given a blanket “drama” classification within IMDB. It nonetheless is striking to note that “drama” continues to be the most prevalent perception of films throughout the world.

Comedy and romance figure as the next strongest genres with 26.7% and 23.7% of films respectively. The figure for the romance genre is significant since it used to be a staple genre in all national cinemas, but has declined considerably in certain countries.

Action films occur in lower frequency in films with a US release, as compared to their MOVIEmeter popularity and a similar phenomenon occurs for Horror films. This is because Internet users

are more likely to hunt for action and horror titles, but for “world cinema” films that achieve a US release, other genres such as drama, comedy and romance are far more prominent.

### The Hollywood Genre Profile

Having established a world cinema genre profile, we can now see how this varies country by country.

Commencing with the world’s leading film industry – the United States – we observe the following genre profile, based on the IMDB MOVIEmeter and Box Office criteria:

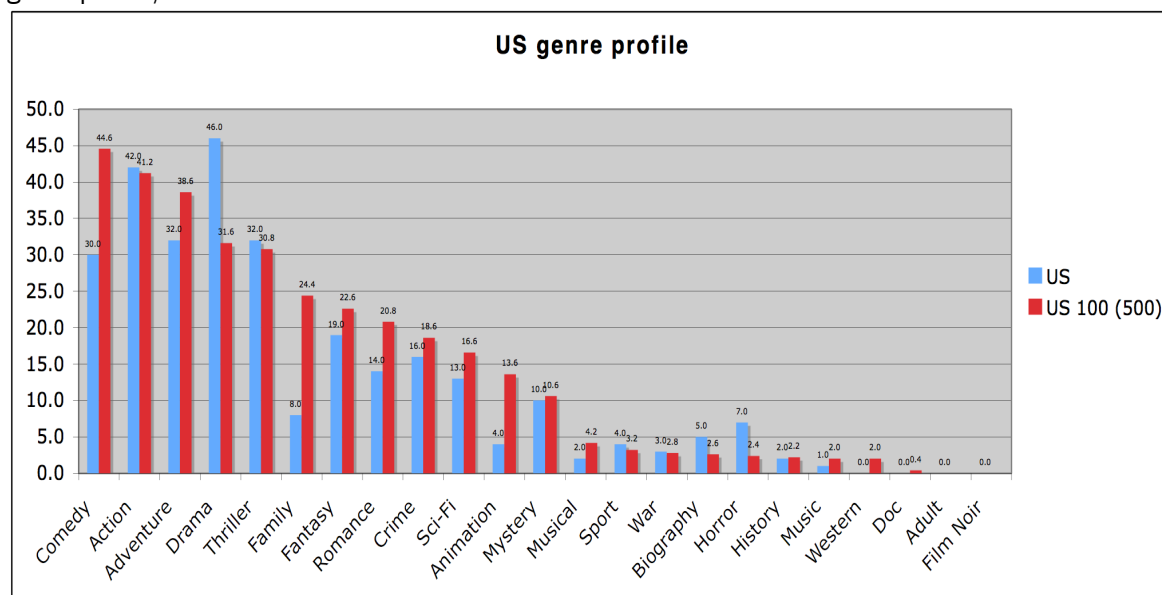


Chart 63 US genre profile

Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author’s analysis

The blue series (“US”) reflects the Top 100 MOVIEmeter titles, whereas the red series (US 100 (500)) reflects that Top 500 US films in the US box office, stated in percentage terms.

The first obvious conclusion to be drawn from this profile is that the US film industry is significantly different from the world cinema genre profile.

For example, in terms of the top 500 films with a US release, only 31.6% are classified within the drama genre, as compared to 76.4% of world cinema films.

Comedy is the most dominant US film genre, in terms of the Top 500 box office films, with 44.6% of films classified within this genre. This highlights how important comedy is to Hollywood films, although of course many of these “comedies” are combined with other genres. Interestingly, in terms of page views, comedies generate a lower proportion of interest.

Unsurprisingly, action and adventure films are staple diets of US film production, with 41.2% of the Top 500 films classified in the action genre and 38.6% in the adventure genre (many films will be classified in both genres, i.e. they are action-adventure films). These levels are far higher than the world cinema average of 10.2% and 7.9% respectively.

In terms of films with US release, family films and animation films are other core genres, with 24.4% and 13.6% respectively of the Top 500 films included in these genres. Once again page views for these genres are considerably lower, probably due to the fact that children are less avid users of the IMDB.

We can compare the US genre profile with the world cinema genre profile as follows:

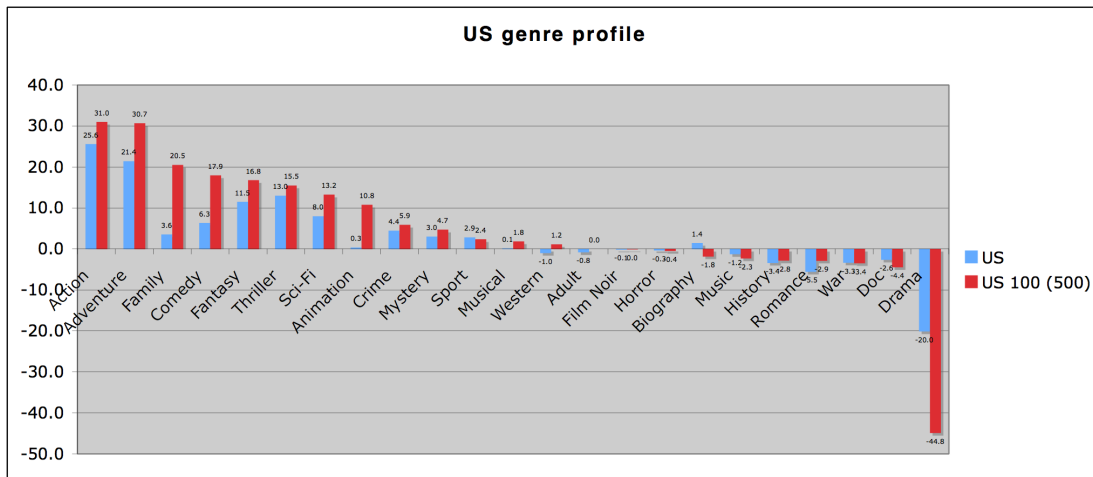


Chart 64 US genre profile compared with average for 22 world cinemas

Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author's analysis US 100 (500) = top 100 films, US = top 500 films

Hollywood cinema is characterized by action, adventure, family, comedy, fantasy, thriller, sci-fi and animation films, which occur in far greater frequency than the world average. For example, 31% more US films fall within the action genre than the world average, 30.7% within the adventure genre.

By contrast, the genres that are less common in US films are primarily the "drama" genre (44.8% below the world average), as noted above, and also specific genres such as History, Romance, War and Documentaries.

For US films, the most highly represented national cinema within the IMDB database, we can also analyse the genre profile in function of the Top 100, Top 250, Top 500, Top 750 and Top 1000 films in the US box office:

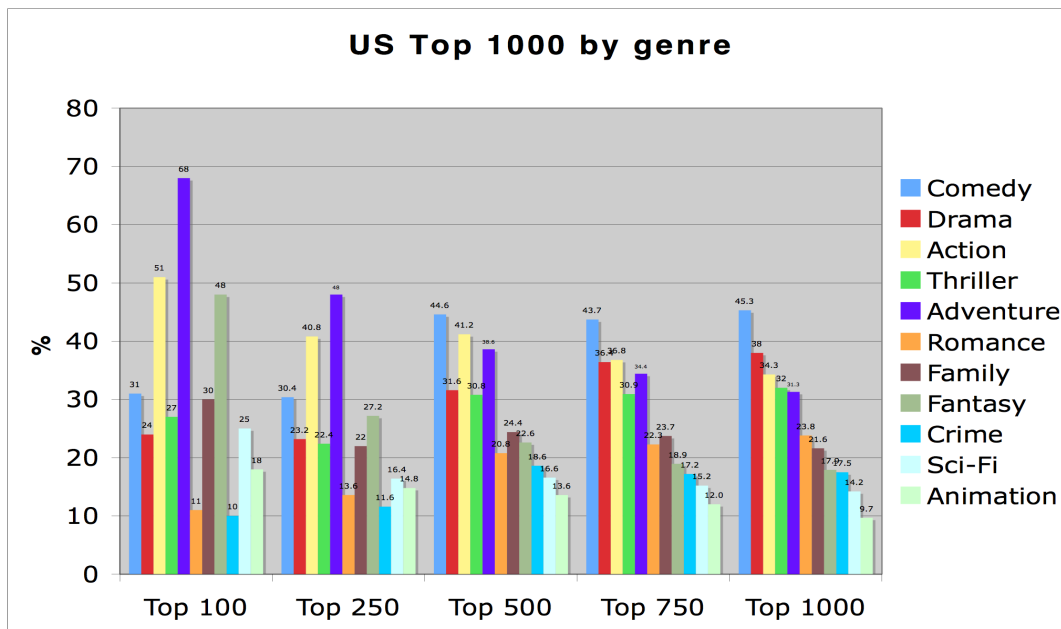


Chart 65 US genre for top 100, top 250, top 500 and top 1000

Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author's analysis

This chart confirms that comedy is the top genre in the Top 500 and Top 1000 films (44.6% and 45.3% respectively), however its relative position is much lower amongst the Top 100 and Top 250 films (31% and 30.4% respectively). A similar tendency is recorded for the Drama genre that is found in 24%

of the Top 100 films and 38% of the Top 1000. The Romance genre also mirrors this trend, found in only 11% of the Top 100, but 23.8% of the Top 1000.

The data also reveals that the genre with the strongest box office success is the Adventure genre which is found in 68% of the Top 100 films, 48% of the Top 250 films, but only 31.3% of the Top 1000 films. This reflects the fact that high budget “locomotive titles” or “tentpole pictures” featuring the Adventure genre, dominate the best-selling titles, but within the broader market their relative position is smaller.

For similar reasons, the Action genre records a similar, but more muted trend. 51% of the Top 100 US films incorporate the Action genre, as compared to 34.3% of the Top 1000 films.

Fantasy and sci-fi films mirror this trend. Fantasy films are 48% of the Top 100 films and 17.9% of the Top 1000, whereas sci-fi films are 25% and 14.2% respectively.

The Thriller genre has a more stable profile, found in 27% of the Top 100 films and 32% of the Top 1000. Crime films are more prominent as one extends the sample, representing 10% of the Top 100 and 17.9% of the Top 1000.

Family films and animation films are also major contributors to the biggest box-office successes, representing 30% and 18% respectively of the Top 100 films, and 21.6% and 9.7% of the Top 1000 films. The sharper drop for animation films reflects the simple fact that fewer animation films are produced, but those which are produced tend to achieve a higher presence amongst the best-selling films.

The high presence of family films is one of the hallmarks of the US film industry and contrasts significantly with the pattern found in other national cinemas, as mentioned above.

We can now analyse the genre profile of US films by decade, in order to try to understand historical trends.

Once again there are two main criteria – films with US release and the IMDB MOVIEmeter.

In this case, we will analyse the Top 100 films in each decade, although it is important to remember that by choosing the Top 100 we are skewing the results in favour of certain genres such as Action and Adventure and away from other genres such as Drama and Romance.

The box-office criterion demonstrates the genres that have risen in prominence since the 1970s, on the basis of the Top 100 box-office films in each decade:

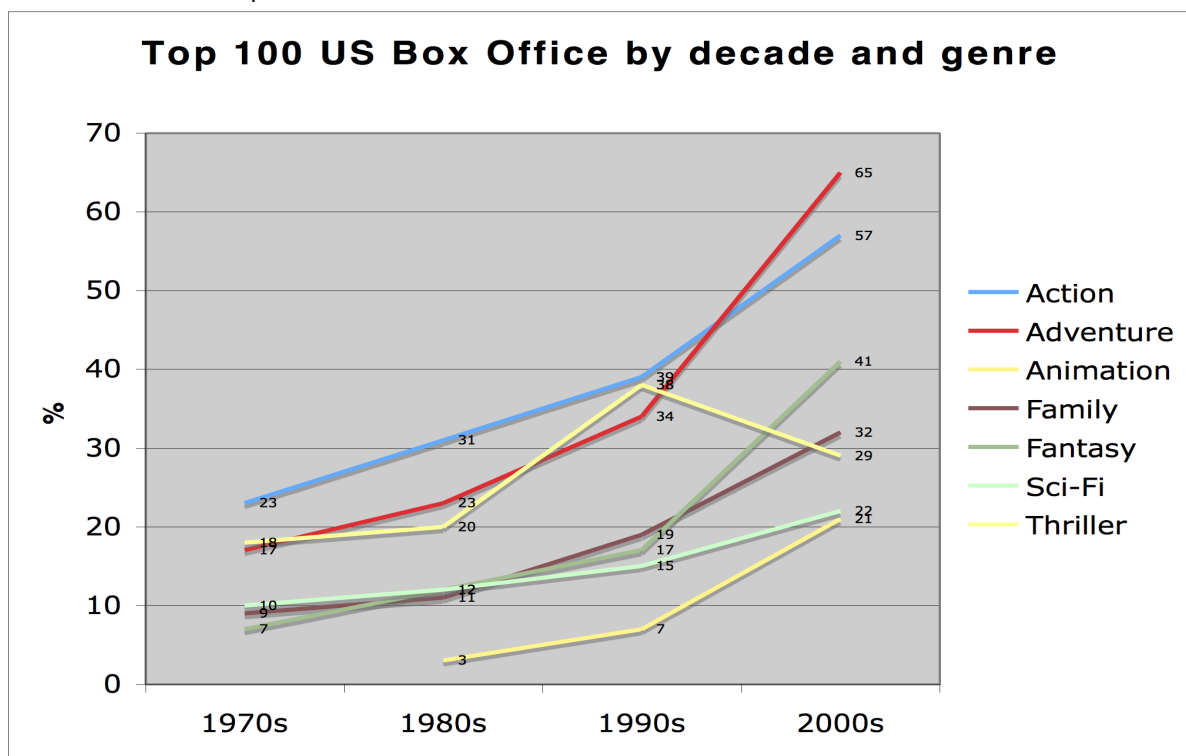


Chart 66 US genre profile by decade

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

This chart demonstrates how the genre profile of the US film industry has altered dramatically since the 1970s.

The strongest growth trend is recorded by the Adventure genre, which is only found in 17% of the Top 100 films in the 1970s and rises to 65% in the 2000s. The Action genre records a similar trend – 23% of films in the 1970s and 57% in the 2000s. The Fantasy genre has risen from 7% in the 1970s to 41% and sci-fi genre from 10% to 22%.

Animation films have risen from 0% in the 1970s and a meagre 3% in the 1980s to 21% in the 2000s. Family films have risen from 9% to 32%.

The Thriller genre has risen from 19% in the 1970s to 29% in the 2000s but was considerably higher in the 1990s, when 38% of the Top 100 films of this decade were classified in this genre.

The upward trends of these genres also reflect a changing audience profile, with a higher number of family viewers attracted by family and animation films, and also a higher number of viewers aged between 14-24 attracted to adventure and fantasy films.

The genres that have recorded downward trends are as follows:

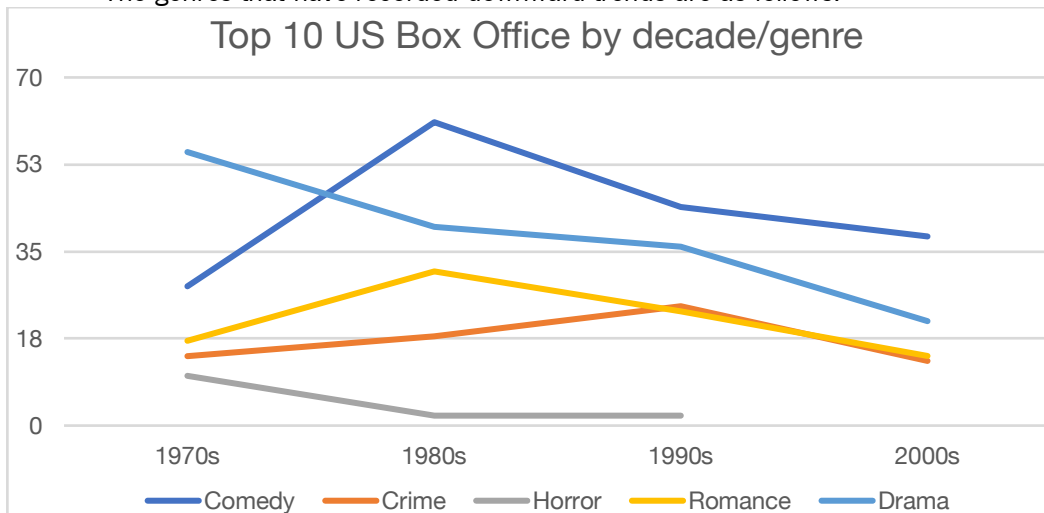


Chart 67 US genre profile by decade – downward trends

Source: IMDB (data extracted on April 22, 2012), Author's analysis

In the 1970s, using the IMDB classification system, 55% of the Top 100 US films were classified within the drama genre (i.e. closer to the world cinema average of 76.4%). However, this percentage has slumped since then and is now only 21%. This is a dramatic shift, but is tempered by the fact that if one uses a broader sample of films (e.g. the Top 1000 films from the 2000s, drama records a much higher percentage - around 45%).

Romance films were 17% of the Top 100 in the 1970s, rose to 31% in the 1980s and fell to 14% in the 2000s. Comedy films were only 28% of the Top 100 in the 1970s, then rose to a peak of 61% in the 1980s and have now fallen to 38% in the 2000s. The peak in the 1980s is in part associated with a large number of romantic comedies such as *When Harry Met Sally (1989)*, but above all to a broader presence of romance and comedy in many films.

The Crime genre amongst the Top 100 films rose between the 1970s and 1990s but fell in the 2000s.

The Horror genre had an important presence amongst the Top 100 films in the 1970s - found in 10% of titles but was only found in 2% of Top 100 titles in the 1980s and 1990s and 0% in the 2000s.



Using the IMDB MOVIEmeter criterion we can establish a longer time-series - from 1930 onwards:

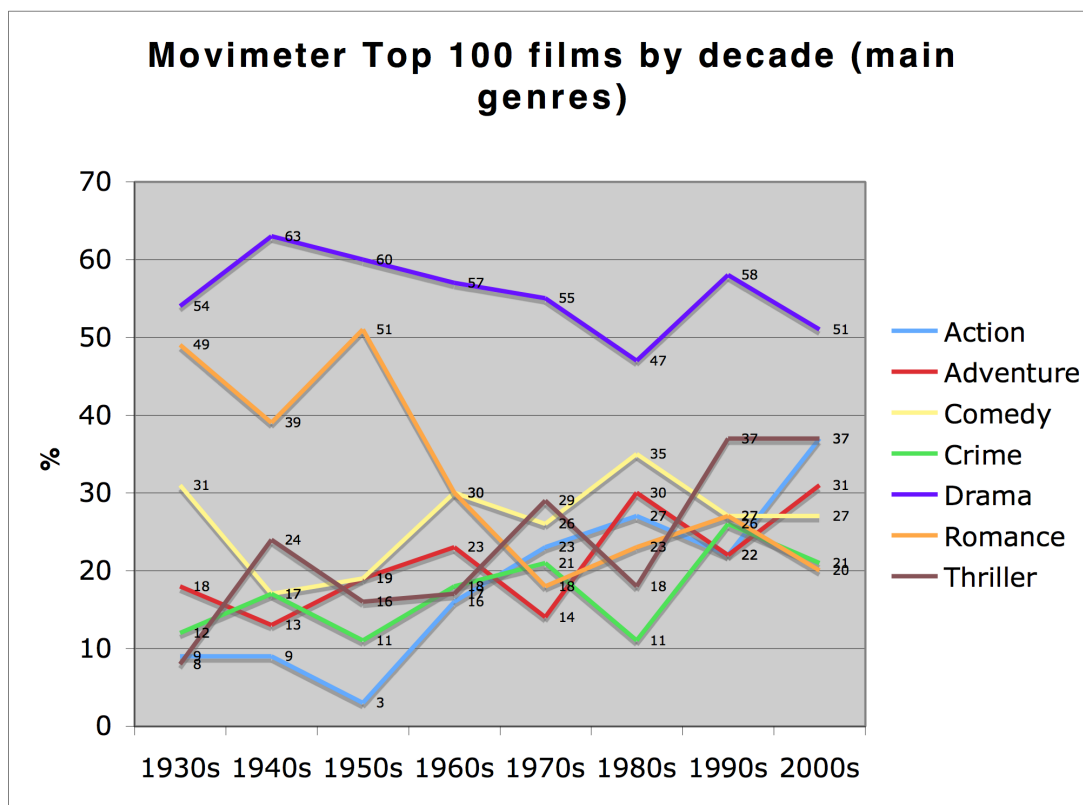


Chart 68 US genre profile by decade- Top 100 films- MOVIEmeter

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

This chart demonstrates that whereas the Top 100 Box office titles record a strong downward trend for the Drama genre, this is not mirrored in the MOVIEmeter criterion. Throughout this period, around 50-60% of the Top 100 films by decade, in terms of page views is found within the Drama genre. This partly reflects the user profile of IMDB itself - given that users are more interested in consulting information on Drama films.

The comedy genre has also remained fairly stable, with a dip in the 1940s and 1950s.

By far the biggest downward trend is recorded in the Romance genre. Between the 1930s and 1950s, 40-50% of the Top 100 films fall within this genre, but this falls to 18-26% from the 1970s onwards. This is a significant evolution which reflects a changing profile of the US film industry.

Action films have recorded the strongest growth. During the Hays Code era of the classical studio system – 1930s-1950s - Action movies were already produced, but since the 1960s they have risen progressively, rising to 37% of the Top 100 MOVIEmeter titles in the 2000s.

Crime films have risen progressively over the period and Thrillers have recorded even stronger growth – only 8% of the Top 100 MOVIEmeter titles from the 1930s were Thrillers, compared to 38% in the 1990s and 2000s.

In terms of the smaller genres, two genres have recorded major growth:

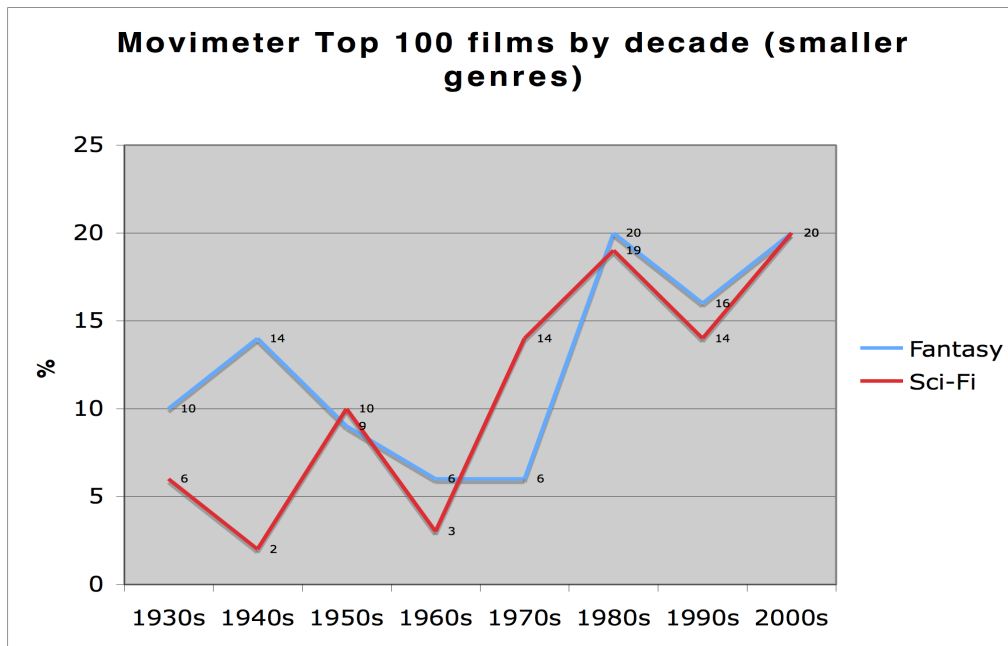
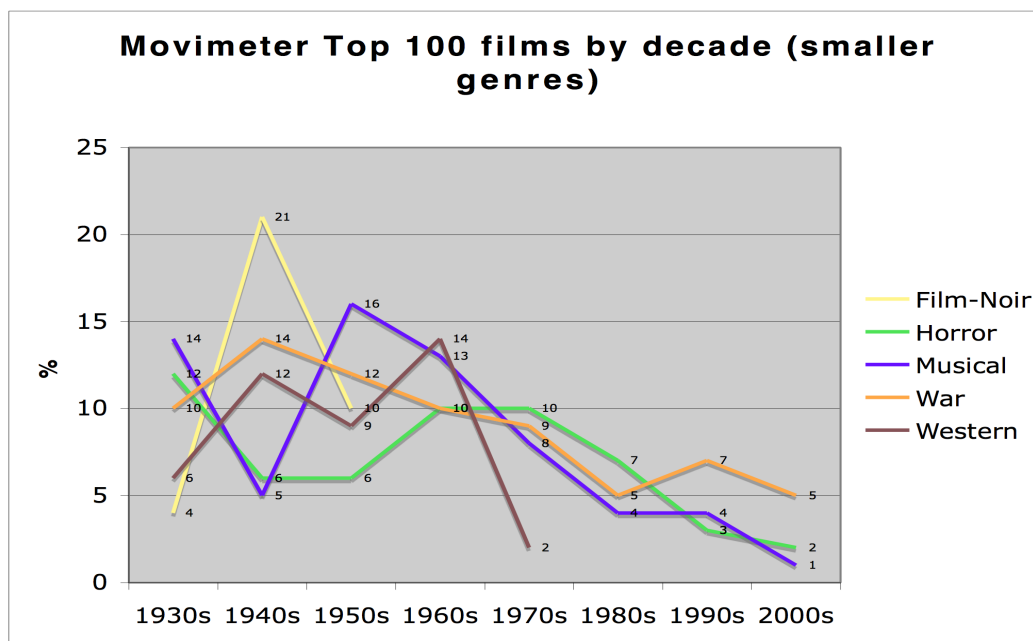


Chart 69 US genre profile by decade- Top 100 films- Fantasy and SciFi - MOVIEmeter

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

Hollywood has always produced Fantasy and Sci-Fi films but their relative importance has risen significantly since the 1960s. (Once again it's important to remember that this data reflects IMDB page-view popularity rather than box office success). The smaller genres that have recorded a declining presence are as follows:



The Film Noir genre, unsurprisingly, records its peak in the 1940s.

The Musical genre recorded its high point in the 1930s and 1950s and has fallen since then.

The War genre has fallen progressively since the 1940s.

The Western genre was a dominant genre until the 1960s, when it peaked, and fell dramatically from then.

The Horror genre records a high level of MOVIEmeter popularity in the 1930s, linked to the classic black and white Horror films, and also recorded high levels in the 1960s and 1970s but has fallen since then.

Notwithstanding the caveats required for interpreting this data, we can draw several key conclusions:

The US film industry has migrated away from films for older audiences (in particular dramas and romances), towards films directed at either the family audience (in particular animation films) and the teen and twentysomething audience.

Current Hollywood output is driven by films involving computer-generated animation (family films) or special effects (action, adventure, fantasy, sci-fi).

US films during the classic studio era were characterized by specific genres such as the Western, Film Noir, Musical, War films and, to a much lesser extent, niche genres such as Horror.

Current Hollywood is classified by Family Animation, Action-Adventure, Fantasy and Sci Fi films, which are particularly important for the top-grossing films.

US films have always maintained a strong Comedy genre element, which is one of the defining characteristics of Hollywood cinema.

Certain genres such as Crime and Thriller have maintained their popularity throughout this period, with a slight upward trend.

We can compare these results with the studies identified above by Sung Wook Ji<sup>293</sup> and Nick Redfern<sup>294</sup>.

Sung Wook Ji concludes as follows:

From 1967 to 2008, several genre labels, ("adventure," "family," "fantasy," "sci-fi," "animation," and especially "action") have become significantly more prevalent among the list of Top 20 box office movies in the U.S., while several others ("romance," "musical," "western," "war," and especially "drama") have faded from the top films list. (Wook, 2011. P. 15)

This obviously coincides with the findings of the current analysis.

Sung Wook Ji also suggests that this trend is not only audience-driven but above all technology driven:

Consistent with our primary hypothesis, we also find that the rising genres over this 42 year period have a strong tendency to also be "technology-intensive," in terms of their reliance on special effects and related production technologies. The falling genres, with the one relatively minor exception of "musicals," tend to be the least technology-intensive in their production process... Our results are evidence that a massive shift of Hollywood's production resources toward "high concept" action/adventure/ science fiction/fantasy (etc) blockbuster movies has occurred over the past

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<sup>293</sup> "Production Technology and Trends in Movie Content: An Empirical Study" by Sung Wook Ji (*Dept. of Telecommunications, Indiana University*).

<sup>294</sup> "Genre trends at the US box office, 1991 to 2010" by Nick Redfern.

several decades—because of the technology itself. Like video games, the most technology amenable film types can be made increasingly more exciting and alluring to audiences than in years past. Moreover, the cost of suspending disbelief in these movies has made them—other things equal—cheaper to make than such technology-unamenable genres as “drama” and “romance.” Movie characters can now be transported, transfigured, or killed in an incredible number of ways, but what can digital effects do for a kiss? Hollywood’s production investments have naturally followed. (Wook, 2011. P. 15)

He also extends this analysis to explain the rising number of family-animation films. Nick Redfern’s main conclusions include the following:

“The range of genres for the highest grossing films at the US box office has become narrower over the past twenty years. A limited range of special effects-based films from the action/adventure and fantasy/science fiction genres have come to dominate the US box office at the expense of character- and narrative-driven films (crime/thriller and drama films) that were previously identified as the most popular.” (Redfern, 2012, p. 10)

He concludes that: “There have been no large scale comparative studies of genre trends and the international dimension of this research remains unexplored.” (Redfern, 2012, p. 10)

The main issue at stake is that Hollywood had adapted and shifted its production priorities towards a new genre profile, that is now the dominant model of film consumption throughout the world, but national cinemas haven’t fully responded to this sea change. As a consequence, certain national cinemas may appear to be out of date, or out of touch, by cinemagoers. At the same time, the fact that technology drives many of the new, more popular genres, also means that there are increasing barriers to entry to making “blockbusters” that require expensive studio shoots, animation and digital effects.

### French Cinema Genre Profile

To provide closer analysis of a European country we can take the example of France.

Based on IMDB data of all French films in French language we have data from the pre-1950s to the 2010s.

The three main genres of French cinema are drama, romance and comedy.

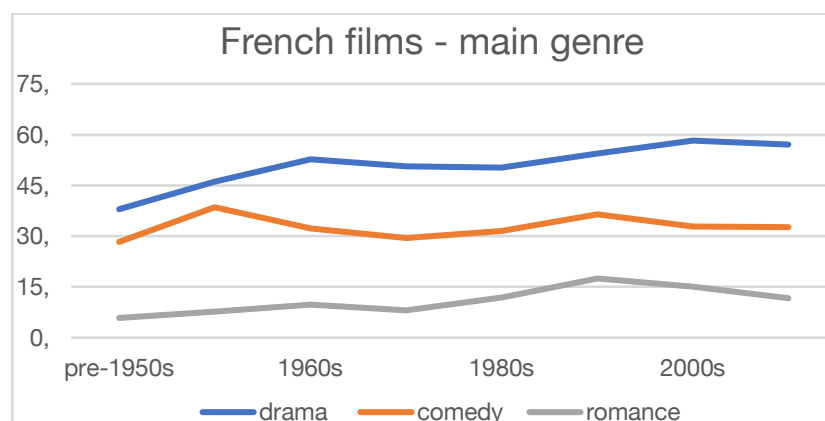


Chart 71 French films – main genres

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory - Lumière (data extracted on October 10, 2019), Author’s analysis

Unlike the situation in the US, the proportion of films classified in the drama genre by IMDB have

increased since the 1950s.

Comedy films were close to 40% in the 1950s – much higher than many European countries, and remain above 30%.

The romance genre had its high point in the 1990s and is now once again close to 10% of all French films, as in the 1960s. Three genres that clearly had a stronger presence in the 1960s were crime, adventure and war.

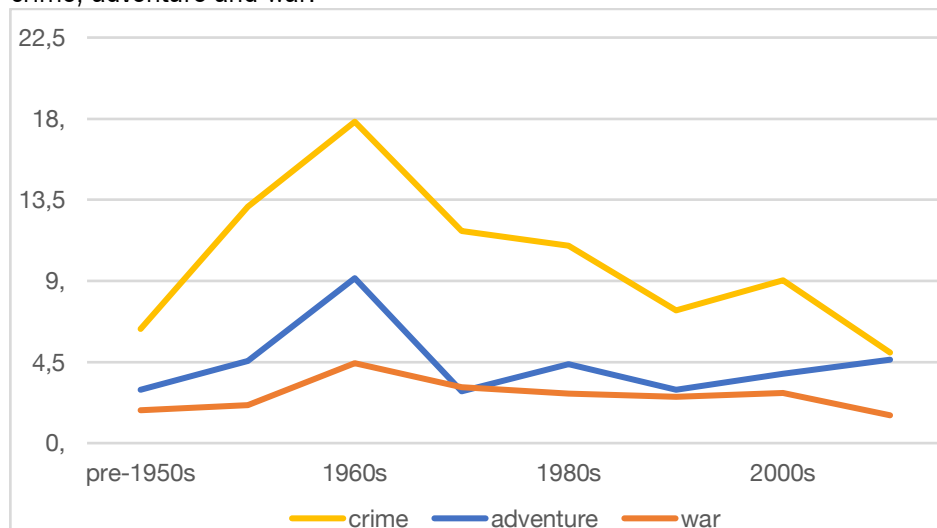


Chart 72 French films – minor genres

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory - Lumière (data extracted on October 10, 2019), Author's analysis

As in the United States, certain genres such as fantasy and sci-fi have enjoyed growth, but at a much more limited level than in the US.

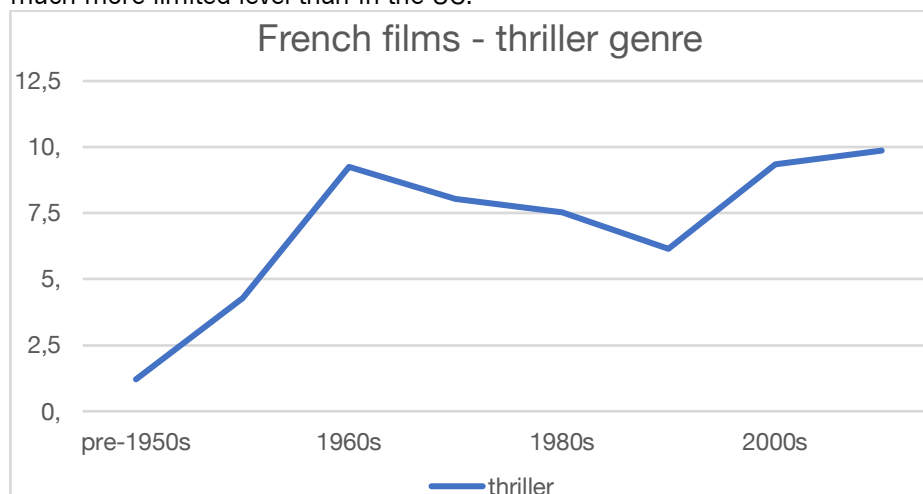


Chart 73 French films – thriller genres

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory - Lumière (data extracted on October 10, 2019), Author's analysis

The biggest growth area in French cinema has been thrillers, which expanded from the 1950s to the 1960s and have remained close to 10% of all French films since then.

Amongst other minor genres, action films enjoyed growth in the 1960s, fell back towards the 1990s and then grew again since 2000.

The horror genre enjoyed peaks in the 1970s and 2010s, often French coproductions with other countries.

The sci-fi genre has grown from 0% in the 1950s to around 2%, still only a small category. The mystery genre has grown from 2% in the 1950s to around 4% in the 2010s.

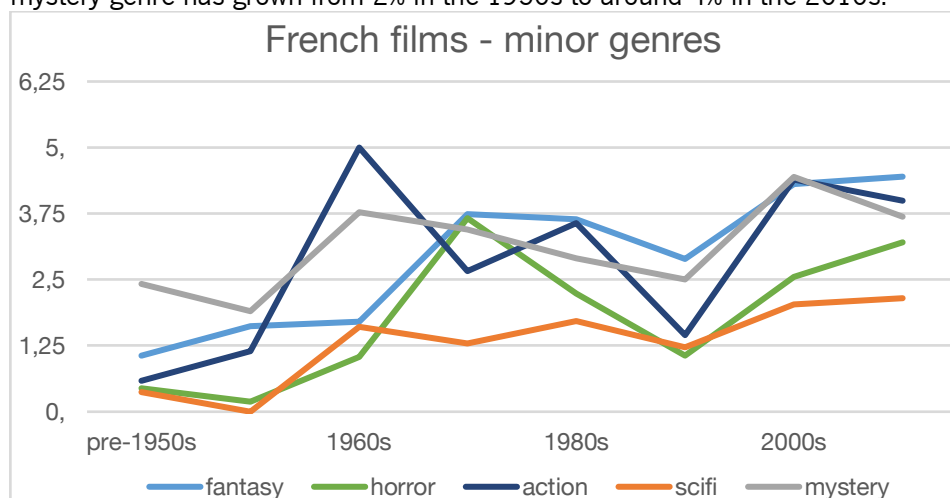


Chart 74 French films – minor genres 2

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory - Lumière (data extracted on October 10, 2019), Author's analysis

French films – one of the most successful national film industries – declined from the 1980s, and has recorded a slight recovery since 2000.

#### Share of French Domestic Film Market

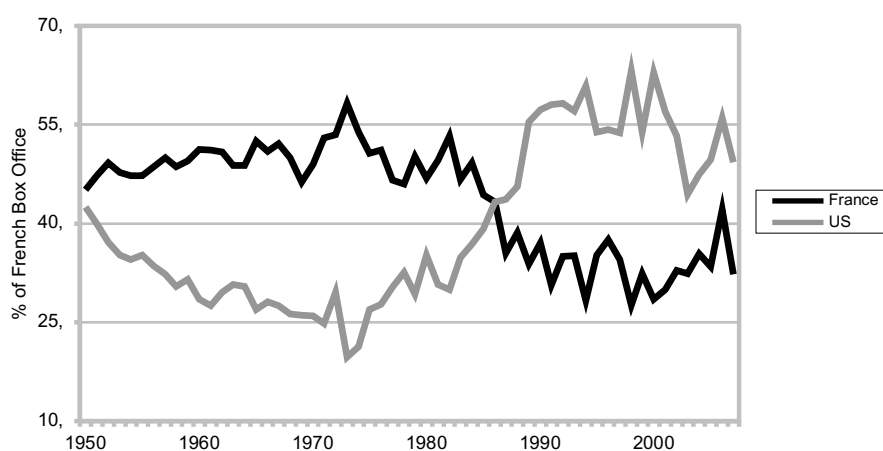


Chart 75 French films – share of domestic market

Source: Sean Pager: "Beyond Culture vs. Commerce" (2010)

Between 1945 and 1965 there was a progressive rise in the number of coproductions in Europe, that rose to the level of almost 50% by 1965, and also a high level of exports between countries.

By the mid 1980s onwards the level of infra-European film exports for non-English language films had slumped, notwithstanding major efforts by the EU's MEDIA programme from the early 1990s onwards. There have been some success stories since the 2000s – such as Scandinavian crime drama films.

## Cross-country comparison by genre

We will now analyse the other national cinemas, while recognizing that this will always be an overview rather than an in-depth analysis of each country.

For the purposes of this study, we have selected 22 countries, as identified above. For each country we have produced a sample of the Top 100 films from each country, using IMDB's Advanced Search function.

This function makes it possible to filter films by country of origin. However, this search will also deliver US and English-language titles shot in each country. Therefore in order to fine tune the search for most non-English language territories the search has been made using the country plus the language: for example French-language films from France. This provides a good mapping tool but will inevitably exclude some titles.

The Top 100 films from each country are ascertained using IMDB's MOVIEmeter criterion. This reflects the films that are most frequently viewed via IMDB users, but is not necessarily a representative sample of each national cinema's output, for the following reasons:

- 1) The Top 100 films are from all time periods and therefore may not be representative of current output.
- 2) The IMDB's MOVIEmeter criterion measures page views by Internet users of the IMDB English language site, which may skew the results towards English-language users.
- 3) Certain genres may be over or under represented.

In order to provide a second criterion, we have also measured the genre profile for national cinema films with a US release. For countries such as the UK, which have a very high number of US releases we have not introduced all films. However, for most countries we have included all the films that have had a US release and then calculated the respective percentages.

For the US, UK and France we have included the Top 500 titles with a US release.

For other countries, we have included all the films with a US release from each national cinema, according to IMDB data, as follows:

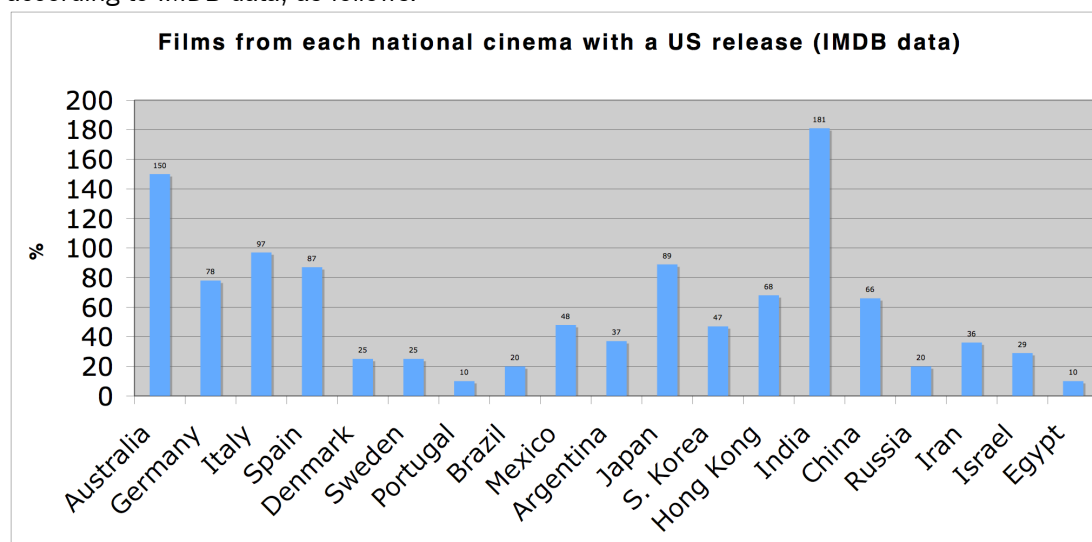


Chart 76 Films from each national cinema with a US release (excluding US, UK and France)

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

This number under reports the full number of films with US release, since IMBD data is incomplete in this regard. It nonetheless highlights the main film exporting countries (other than the UK and France) – such as India, Australia, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Mexico and South Korea.

The genre profile produced by this criterion is not necessarily a representative sample of each national cinema's output, for the following reasons:

- 1) Certain countries have a very small sample of films with a US release which will distort the results (For Portugal and Egypt we have duplicated the results from the MOVIEmeter criterion in order to avoid such distortion).
- 2) Films with a US release are those that work for the US market but do not necessarily reflect the international market.
- 3) Films that are exportable are only a small proportion of national film production. Certain important national films, in particular comedies, won't achieve a US release. Therefore the data will tend to over represent genres such as dramas and under represent other genres such as comedies.

Notwithstanding the above caveats, this methodology can produce some interesting comparative results.

## Drama

We can begin by looking at the drama genre, which as stated above, is the most frequently used genre in world cinema output (76.4% using the Top 100 US release criterion and 65.5% using the Top 100 MOVIEmeter criterion).

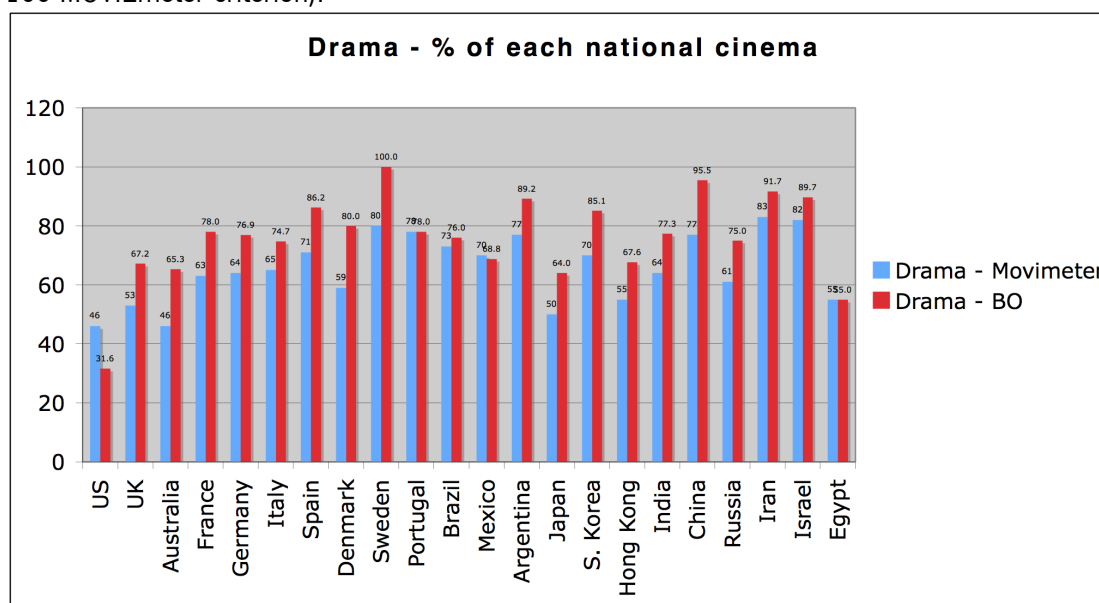


Chart 77 Drama genre- % share within each national cinema

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

This chart demonstrates that the box office data records a higher result for drama in virtually all countries except for the US.

The chart demonstrates that countries such as the US, UK and Australia are below the world average, whereas others are above.



We can demonstrate this graphically, by comparing each national cinema's genre profile with the world average, as follows:

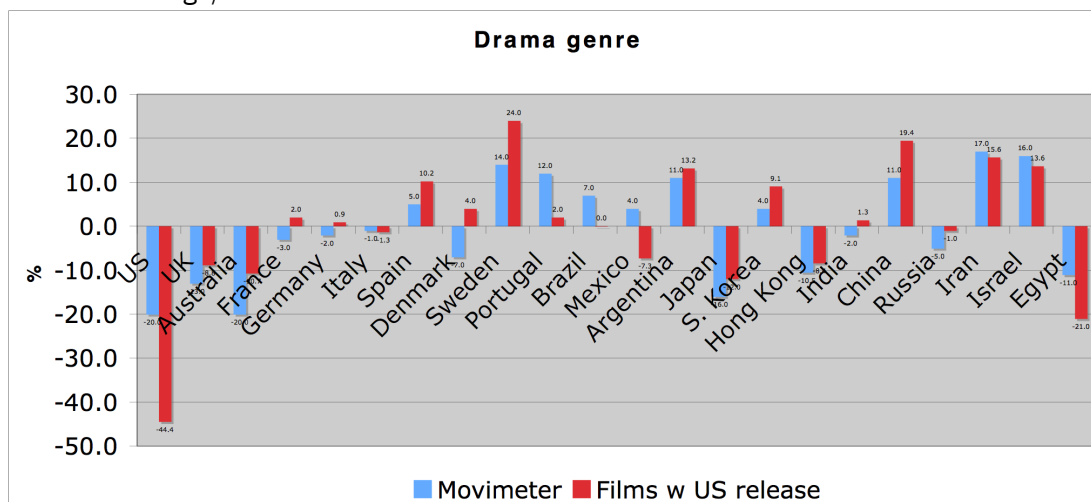


Chart 78 Drama genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

The first striking conclusion is the difference between the US genre profile and the world average, given that the US is 44.4% below the world average in terms of films with box office release and 20% below in terms of the MOVIEmeter criterion.

The other two major English-language exporting territories – Australia and the UK – are also below the world average. This result is partly skewed by the fact that films listed from both countries include studio-financed films, especially the UK which has a high number of studio-financed features – thus inevitably producing a profile closer to that of the US.

Japan, Hong Kong and Egypt also have a lower proportion of drama films than the world average, reflecting their emphasis on films from other genres, including action pictures and comedies.

Countries with a higher than average proportion of drama films include the Ibero-american territories (especially Spain, Portugal, Brazil and Argentina), the Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Sweden) and also South Korea, China, Iran and Israel.

## Action

For the Action genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 18.6%, Box Office = 10.2%).

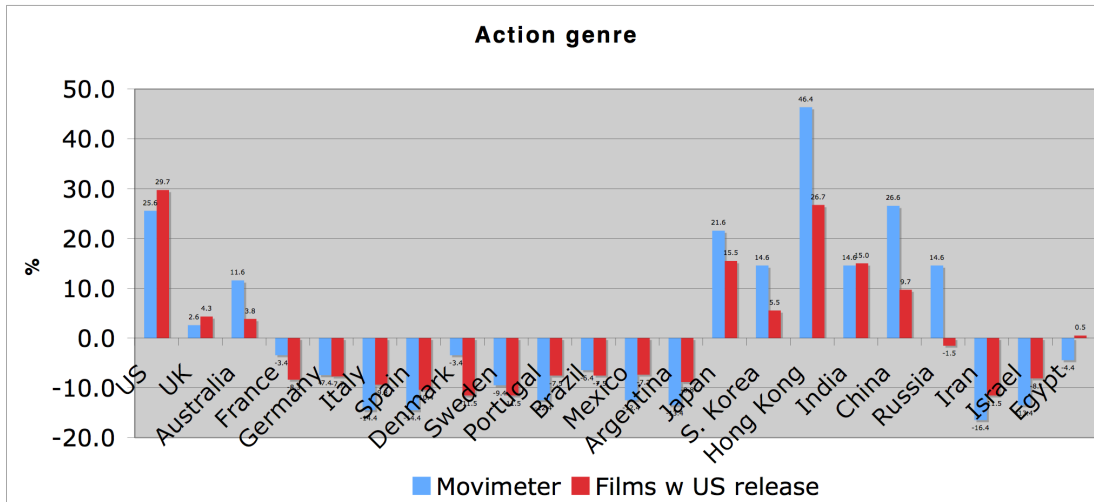


Chart 79 Action genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

The US film industry has a higher-than-average proportion of action films, but this also occurs in Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, India and China) and in Russia. The UK and Australia also follow this pattern, but to a lesser extent.

Other territories, including continental Europe, Latin America and the Middle East have a lower-than-average proportion of Action films.

## Adventure

For the Adventure genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 11%, Box Office = 7.9%).

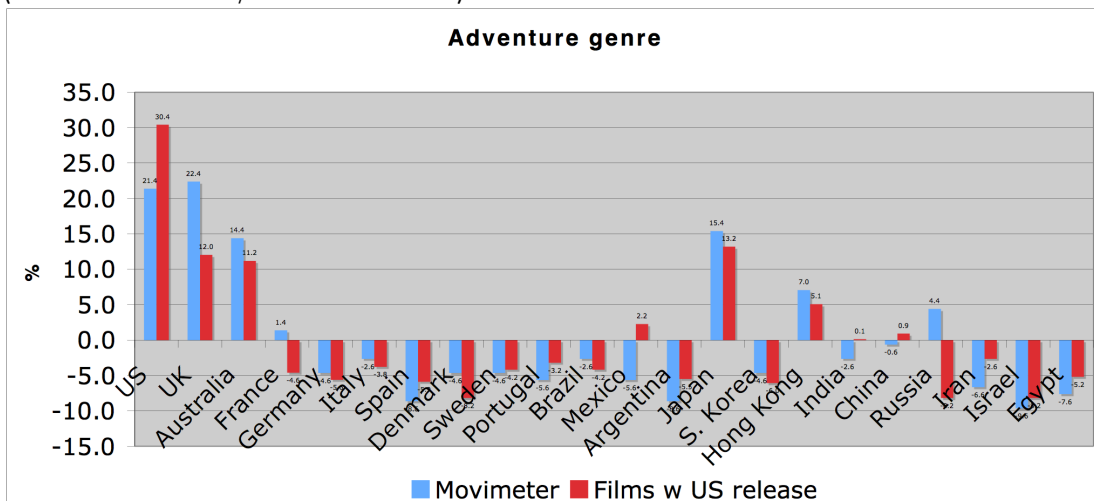


Chart 80 Adventure genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

Whereas Action films are produced in several parts of the world, notably Asia, the Adventure genre is much more strongly tied to the English-language territories (US, UK and Australia) and also Japan (in this case linked to the Animation genre).

Given that the Adventure genre is one of the key elements of contemporary blockbusters, this result is significant. The Adventure genre also links into a fantasy universe that currently has stronger roots in English-language territories than in the rest of the world.

We can see this by looking at the profile for Fantasy films and Sci-Fi films, which are closely linked to the Adventure genre.

## Fantasy

For the Fantasy genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 7.7%, Box Office = 5.8%).

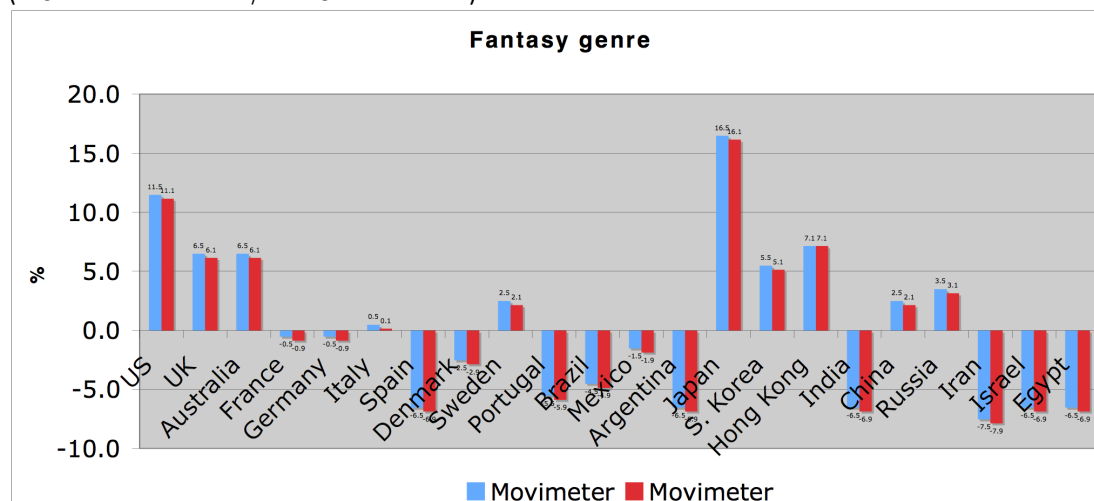


Chart 81 Adventure genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

This pattern is closer to that recorded for the Action genre. The Fantasy genre is strongest in the English-language territories (US, UK and Australia), Far East Asia (Japan (linked to animation), S. Korea, Hong Kong and China) and Russia. Sweden is also slightly above the world average.

The Iberoamerican countries (Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina) notwithstanding their strong literary traditions associated with fantasy and magic realism have a lower-than-average proportion of fantasy films, as do the Middle Eastern countries and India.

## Sci-fi

For the Sci-Fi genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 5.2%, Box Office = 3.4%).

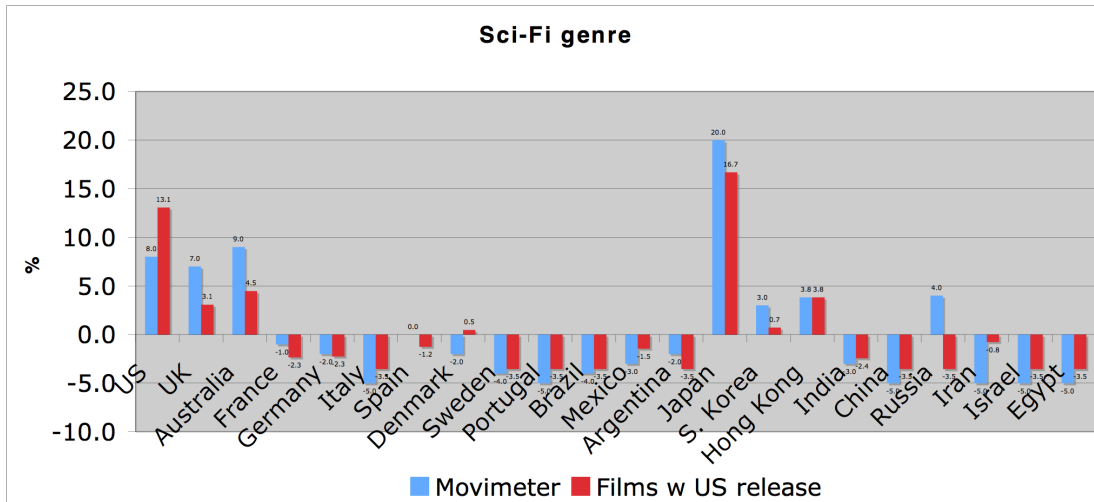


Chart 82 SciFi genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

These results mirror the pattern found with Adventure and Fantasy genres. Japan has the highest proportion of Sci-Fi films (primarily linked to Animation films), followed by the US, UK and Australia. South Korea, Hong Kong and also Russia (for MOVIEmeter titles) also have a higher than average number of Sci Fi films.

We can now look at other core genres such as comedy, romance, thriller and crime.

### Comedy

For the Comedy genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 23.8%, Box Office = 26.7%).

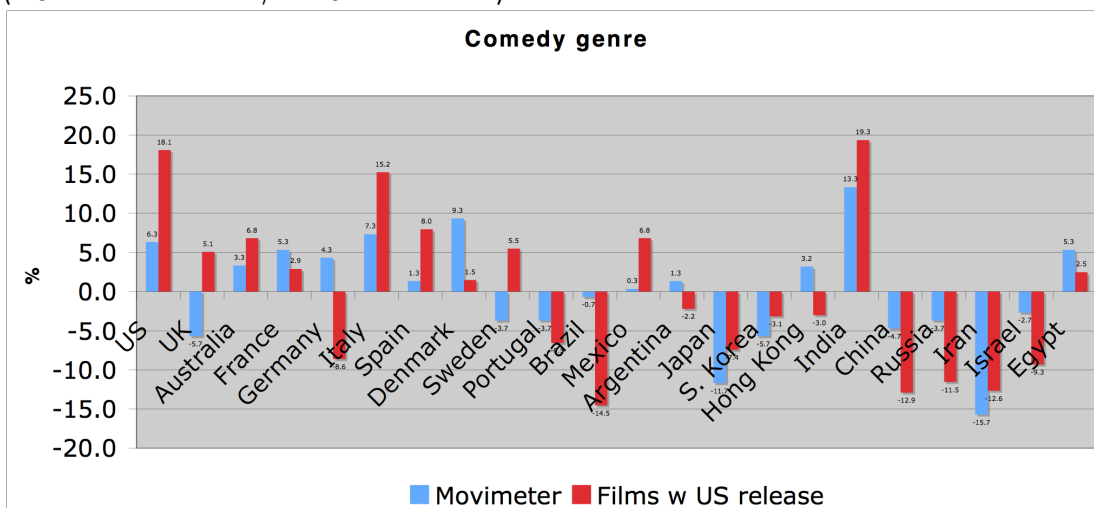


Chart 83 Comedy genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

US films have comedy as one of their hallmark characteristics (especially in terms of the genres of films with US release) as do Italy and India, and to a lesser extent the UK, Australia, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Mexico and Egypt.

Surprisingly the MOVIEmeter data for the UK shows that the UK has a lower-than-average proportion of comedies, but this is partly the result of page views of action, adventure and fantasy films lensed in the UK.

Germany records the opposite situation, which reflects MOVIEmeter searches of domestic German comedies, whereas in terms of US releases, German comedies are comparatively rare.

Countries with a lower-than-average proportion of comedies include Portugal, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, China, Russia, Iran and Israel.

## Romance

For the Romance genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 19.2%, Box Office = 23.7%).

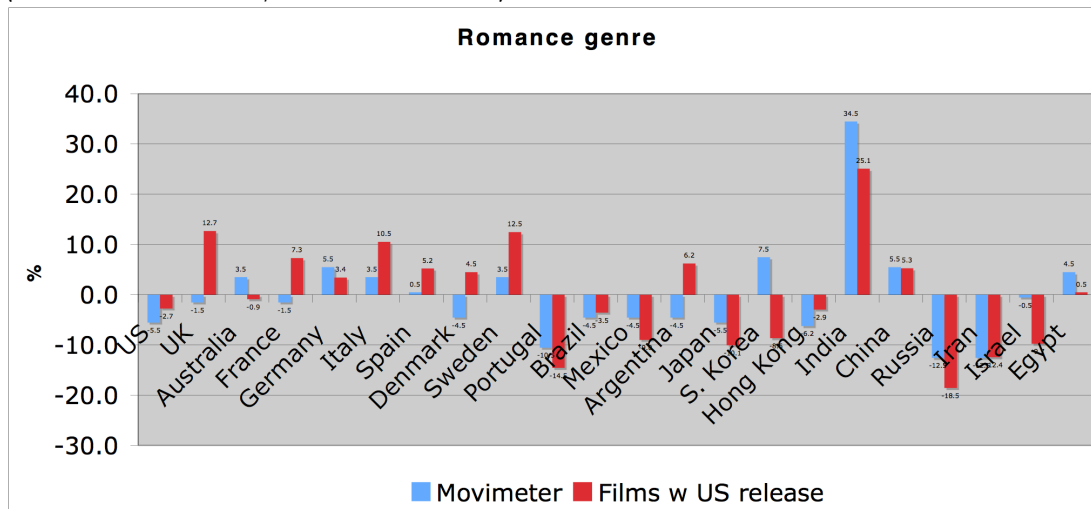


Chart 84 Romance genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author’s analysis

The “champion” of the Romance genre is unquestionably India, given that over 50% of Indian films are classified within the Romance genre – comparable to the level that was recorded in Hollywood until the mid 1960s.

The other main group of countries with an above-average proportion of Romance films is the European countries, with the notable exception of Portugal. China and Egypt also have a slightly above average number of Romances.

Brazil and Mexico have a lower than average proportion of Romances, while Argentina records conflicting results between the MOVIEmeter and US release criteria.

The US has a lower-than-average proportion of Romances, as noted above, as does Japan, Hong Kong, Russia, Iran and Israel.

## Thriller

For the Thriller genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 19.3%, Box Office = 15.3%).

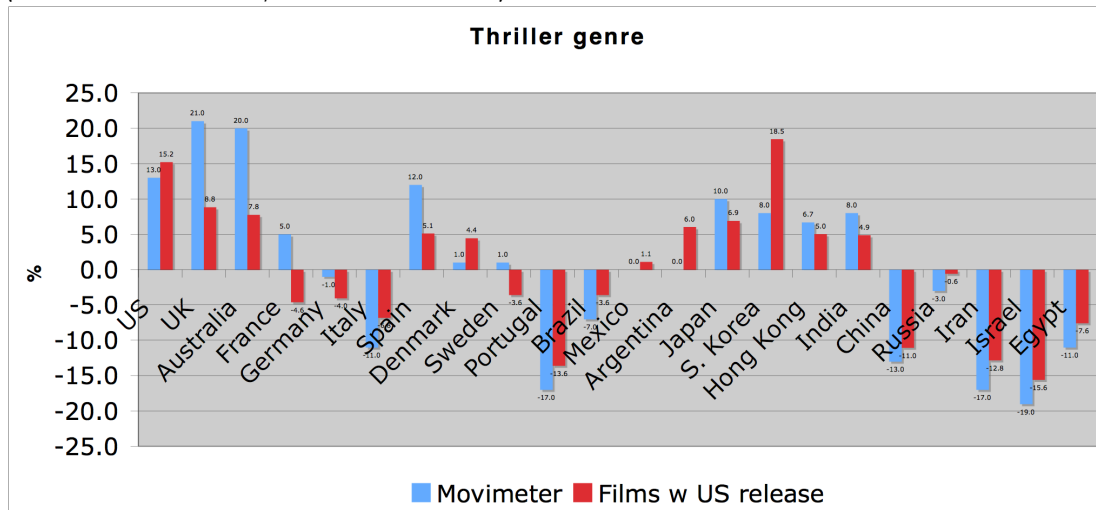


Chart 85 Thriller genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

The countries with the highest proportion of Thrillers include the English-language territories (US, UK and Australia) several Asian territories (Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and India) and also France (for MOVIEmeter titles, reflecting domestic thrillers without a US release), Spain, Denmark and Argentina.

Thrillers are rarer in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, China, Iran, Israel and Egypt.

## Crime

For the Crime genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 11.8%, Box Office = 12.7%).

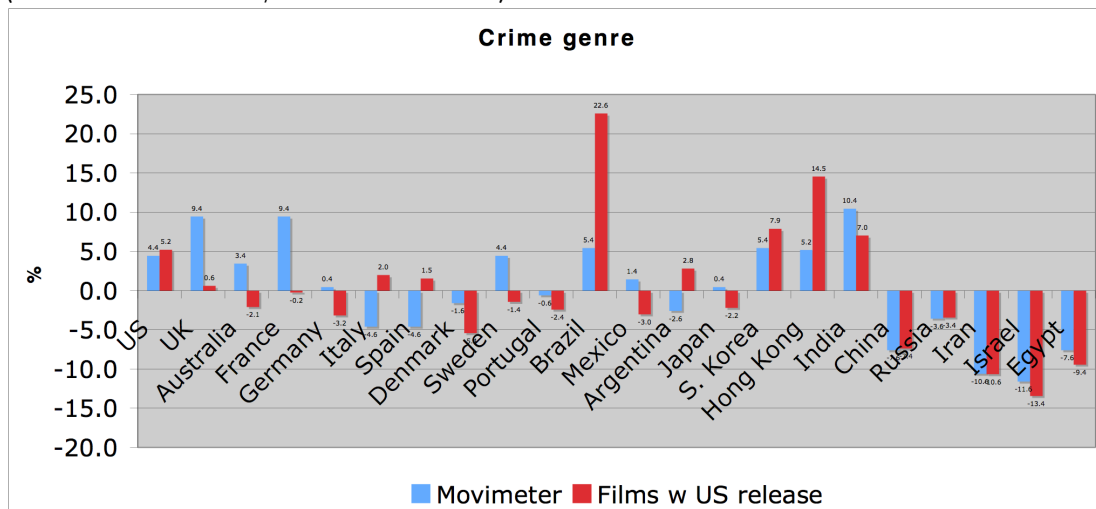


Chart 86 Crime genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

In this case, Brazil has the highest proportion of Crime genre films, although this figure is distorted by the fact that one third of Brazilian films released in the US (only 20 titles) use the crime genre, but this is not representative of all Brazilian cinema – therefore the MOVIEmeter figure of 5.4% is more accurate.

The main countries with a higher-than-average proportion of crime genre films include the English-language territories, France, South Korea, Hong Kong and India. Countries with a much lower-than-average proportion are China, Russia, Iran, Israel and Egypt.

## Horror

For the Horror genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 5.8%, Box Office = 7%).

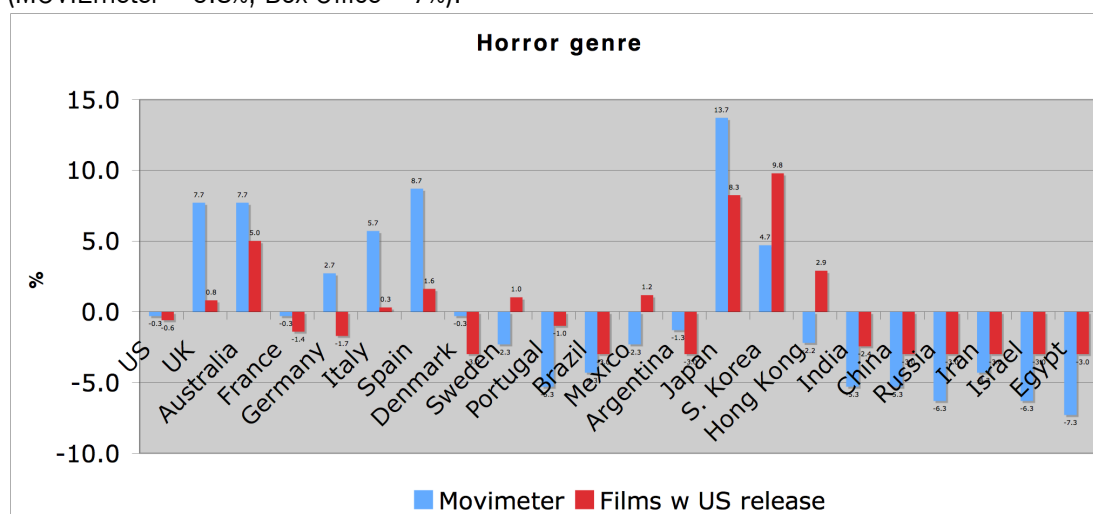


Chart 87 Horror genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author's analysis

The countries with the highest proportion of horror films in terms of the MOVIEmeter and US release criteria, are Japan, South Korea and Australia. Hong Kong has a higher-than-average score in terms of films with a US release.

Countries with a high proportion of horror films in the MOVIEmeter criteria (i.e. reflecting special interest amongst Internet users, which may be higher than the box-office representation) include the UK, Italy and Spain. Germany also records a higher than average MOVIEmeter score due to classic German horror films from the 1920s and early 1930s.

On this basis we can conclude that the countries with the strongest trademark image in horror are the UK, Australia, Spain, Italy, Japan, South Korea and to a lesser extent Hong Kong.

## Family films

For the Family film genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 4.7%, Box Office = 3.9%).

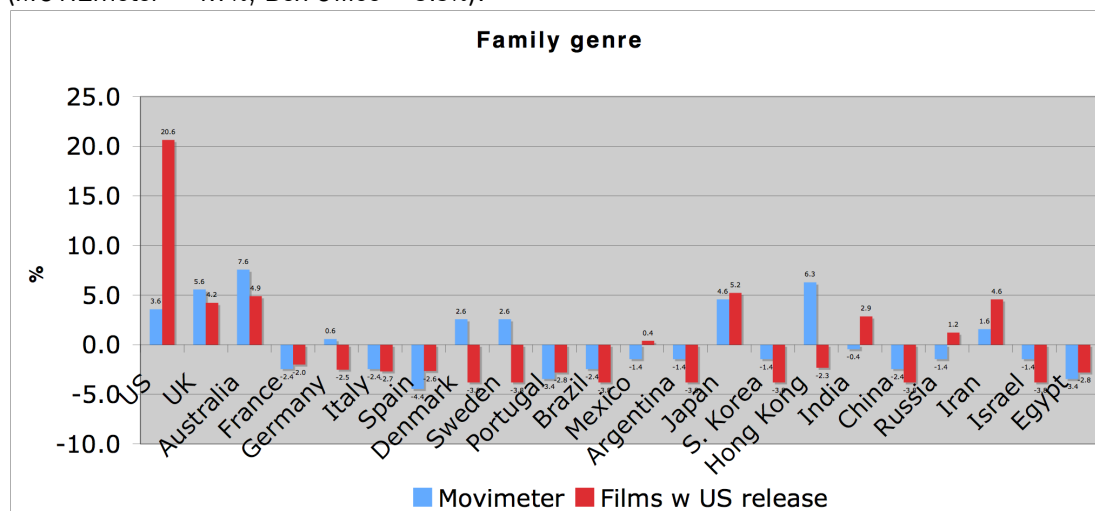


Chart 88 Family film genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author’s analysis

As indicated above, the US is the “champion” of family films, above all in terms of box-office releases. The UK and Australia also produce a higher-than-average number of family films, as do Japan (primarily linked to animation) and Hong Kong. The other countries of note in this genre include Denmark, Sweden, India and Iran.

## Animation

For the Animation genre we have the following results in comparison with the world average (MOVIEmeter = 3.6%, Box Office = 2.8%).

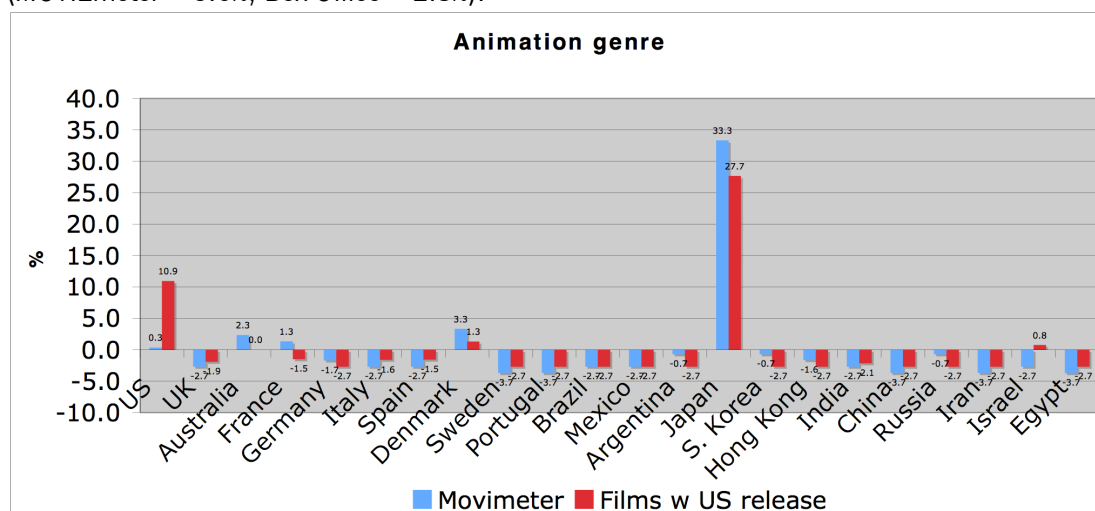


Chart 89 Animation genre- % share within each national cinema – comparison with world average

Source: IMDB (data extracted on September 25, 2012), Author’s analysis



On the basis of this data the two “champions” of the animation genre are Japan (with one third of their Top 100 films falling within this genre) and the US (especially in terms of box office success). Australia, France and Denmark also record above average results. For most other countries the absolute level recorded is zero.

Obviously this does not fully reflect the strength of either the feature film or TV animation industries in these countries, but does highlight how one country, in this case Japan, can use animation to carve out a specific niche in the market.

### Other genres

In relation to the other smaller genres, we will not produce charts for each genre. However, we can highlight the countries with above-average proportions of films in relation to each genre, as follows:

- Biography – UK and Germany
- Documentary – Germany, Denmark, Russia and Israel
- History - Germany, Denmark, China and Russia
- Music – Australia, France and Sweden
- Musical - India
- Mystery – US, UK, Australia, France and Spain
- Sport – US, Germany
- War – Germany, China, Russia and Israel
- Western – Australia and Italy (due to Spaghetti Westerns)

### Comparative table

Using the above analysis we can now establish a table, listing each of the 22 countries and the genres in which they have an above-average proportion of films, in comparison with the world average. This is not equivalent to their dominant genres – which continue to be drama, comedy and romance. Instead it highlights what we might call the “prominent genres” – i.e. those that stand out within each national cinema, in comparison with the world average.

Obviously it is important to bear in mind that an above-average proportion in a genre such as Adventure or Family films may represent a far higher absolute relevance than for a minor genre such as History or Sport. We also include data on the % of the domestic box office occupied by national films, in each country:

Country	% of domestic BO in 2012	Prominent genres (higher than world average)
US	97%*	Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller, Crime, Mystery, Family, Animation
UK	36.2%* (14% for indp. films)	Adventure, Comedy, Romance, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller, Mystery, Crime, Horror, Family

Australia	3.9%	Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller, Mystery, Horror, Family
France	41.6%	Comedy, Romance, Thriller, Crime, Mystery, Music
Germany	21.8%	Comedy, Romance, Biography, Documentary, History, Sport
Italy	37.5%	Comedy, Romance, Horror
Spain	15.7%	Drama, Comedy, Romance, Mystery, Thriller, Horror
Denmark	28%	Drama, Comedy, Thriller, Family, Documentary, History
Sweden	19.8%	Drama, Comedy, Romance, Fantasy, Family, Music
Portugal	0.7%	Drama
Brazil	11.6%	Drama, Crime
Mexico	5.6%	Drama, Comedy, Action
Argentina	12%**	Drama, Romance, Thriller
Japan	54.9%	Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller, Horror, Family, Animation
S. Korea	53%	Drama, Action, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller, Crime, Horror
Hong Kong	25%**	Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Sci-Fi
India	90%	Action, Comedy, Romance, Thriller, Crime, Musical
China	52%	Drama, Action, Fantasy, Romance, History, War
Russia	15.7%	Action, Fantasy, History, War
Iran	60%**	Drama, Family
Israel	25%**	Drama, Documentary, War
Egypt	80%	Comedy, Romance

*Table 46 Comparative table – Main genres per country*

Source: IMDB data (data extracted on September 25, 2012), author's analysis

\* includes US/UK inward investment films, financed by the US studios

\*\* estimate

Source: data for EU countries and Russia is the provisional 2011 data from the European Audiovisual Observatory. Australia data is for 2011 from Screen Australia. Brazil - 2011 data from ANICA. China - 2011 data from the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT). India - estimate for 2011. Japan - 2011 data from the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan (Retrieved on 29/10/ from [http://www.eiren.org/statistics\\_e/index.html](http://www.eiren.org/statistics_e/index.html)). Mexico - 2010 data, National Film Chamber. South Korea - 2011 data, Han Cinema. Egypt - 2009 data, Cannes Film Festival.

## Key conclusions

- 1) The American and European film industries have moved in opposite directions. The US film industry (essentially films produced and distributed by the Hollywood Majors) has consolidated its capacity to engage with audiences in its domestic market and abroad. Hollywood now earns around 2/3rds of its admissions and box-office revenues outside the US. The European film industry, by contrast, has disaggregated. European films are less able to cross borders than they were in the 1950s and 1960s. To a certain extent it is a misnomer to speak of a European film industry, instead there is an amalgam of national industries. The French film industry (which is also by far the best-financed) has been the most successful in consolidating its domestic market and generating foreign sales. The UK film industry has also been relatively successful, above all due to its privileged relationship with Hollywood (including the role played by tax breaks).
- 2) The domestic market is important for all national film industries. The critical mass of the US market provides key revenues for the Hollywood Majors and continues to be the bedrock of their financing structure. Europe's Big 5 countries depend upon success of their national films in the domestic market. For smaller countries such as Denmark or Sweden with a strong export record, their top films still earn close to 50% of their admissions in the domestic market.
- 3) English-language films have a much stronger export capacity. This is a well-known fact, demonstrated by the data. Territories such as France, Germany and Spain have produced a small number of English-language productions that have helped boost the respective country's export performance.
- 4) Some of Europe's best exporting films are documentaries and animation films. These films can easily have an English-language version and have proven to be very successful in selling abroad.
- 5) France, the UK and Germany have made a major commitment to producing feature documentaries with a worldwide appeal. Examples include *Earth (1998)*, and *Oceans*.
- 6) Unlike the situation for live action films, there is a developing European animation film industry, for cinema and TV, with key bases in France, the UK, Germany Spain, Benelux and Scandinavia. The majority of films are targeted at children, but there are also projects for adults such as Jan Kounen's €18 million 3D sci-fi adventure film, *Windwalkers (2015)*.
- 7) The 3D digital cinema revolution (18% of European screens are equipped for digital 3D) has also spawned a growing number of 3D films based on clearly identifiable genres.
- 8) Several of Europe's best exporting films involve clearly identifiable cultural icons. Examples include *Goodbye Lenin (2003)* and *The Lives of Others* (fall of the Berlin Wall) and *La Vie en Rose* (Edith Piaf).
- 9) Classic auteur films continue to have good export potential, but there are fewer European auteurs with a strong export record. Unlike the situation in the 1960s when Europe had a long list of acclaimed auteurs, the list is now much shorter, and includes the likes of Lars von Trier, Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, Roman Polanski, Pedro Almodovar and imported auteurs such as Woody Allen. The admissions per film of the works from these auteurs has been declining in recent years and is far smaller than the 1960s heyday.

- 10) An increasing number of European films that succeed in crossing borders depend more on having a clearly identifiable genre, in particular fantasy, horror and thriller, than a well-known auteur. Examples include Sweden's Millennium franchise and Spanish horror films [e.g. *The Orphanage* (2017), *Julia's Eyes* (2010) or the Rec franchise].
- 11) Key titles within each national box office are national comedies, but these have great difficulty in achieving export success.
- 12) The standard distinction between Hollywood cinema as a genre-based cinema and the rest of the world as "art cinema" or "world cinema" category is deeply misleading and fails to reflect genre "cross-breeding" throughout the world.
- 13) The international perception of many national cinemas is based on art films and does not comprehend the full range of genres produced.
- 14) Exploration of how each national cinema can contribute to a core genre, such as crime, thriller, horror and noir can reveal fascinating creative flows and is far more enriching than the clichéd dichotomy between Hollywood and "World Cinema".
- 15) Whereas European cinema does not have a strong tradition in certain commercial genres such as the Action genre, other parts of the world do have such a tradition, particularly in Asia.
- 16) In general national cinemas with prominence in Action and Adventure genres also have higher shares of their domestic box office.
- 17) In general, national cinemas with a broader range of prominent genres also have a higher domestic market share. The main exception, within this sample, is Australian cinema.
- 18) Key prominent genres for continental European national cinemas are Comedy and Romance, followed by genres such as Thriller and Crime in several countries.
- 19) Ibero-american national cinemas (Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina) focus primarily on the Drama genre and have a smaller range of other prominent genres. These national cinemas also have a lower relative market share of their domestic box office.

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