

Strategies of Digital Surrealism in Contemporary Western Cinema

By

© 2018

Andrei Kartashov

Bakalavr, Saint Petersburg State University, 2012

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Film and Media Studies and the Graduate
Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

Chair: Dr. Catherine Preston

Dr. Ronald Wilson

Margaret Jamieson

Date Defended: 27 April 2018

The thesis committee for Andrei Kartashov certifies that this is
the approved version of the following thesis:

Strategies of Digital Surrealism in Contemporary Western Cinema

Chair: Dr. Catherine Preston

Date Approved: 27 April 2018

Abstract

This thesis joins an ongoing discussion of cinema's identity in the digital age. The new technology, which by now has become standard for moving images of any kind, has put into question existing assumptions and created paradoxes from a continuity between two different media that are, however, thought of as one medium. I address that problem from the perspective of surrealist film theory, which insisted on paradoxes and saw cinema as an art form that necessarily operated on contradictions: a quality that resonated with surrealism's general aesthetic theory. To support my argument, I then analyze in some depth three contemporary works of cinema that possess surrealist attributes and employed digital technology in their making in a self-conscious way. Leos Carax's *Holy Motors*, Pedro Costa's *Horse Money*, and *Seances* by Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson and Galen Johnson all point to specific contradictions revealed by digital technology that they resolve, or hold in tension, in accordance with the surrealist notion of *point sublime*. I find that neither work suggests a radical difference between analog and digital cinema but rather, they highlight the difference that exists within cinema as inherent in it.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Surrealism as Theory	4
1.1 The Point Sublime.....	4
1.2. Theory to Practice: Luis Buñuel’s Un Chien andalou	10
1.3. Surrealism as Deconstruction	13
1.4. The Hauntology of the Digital Image	18
2. Holy Motors: Body and Ghost	24
2.1. Reflexivity in Holy Motors	24
2.2. Dream Space of Holy Motors	29
2.3. Denis Lavant, The Absent Body.....	32
3. Horse Money: Fiction and Documentary.....	42
3.1. The Fontainhas Series: From Social Realism to Surrealism	42
3.2. The Problem of Surrealist Documentary: Costa and Land without Bread.....	48
3.3. DV Surrealism?.....	51
4. Seances: Past and Present.....	56
4.1. Seances as a Hauntological Project.....	56
4.2. Editing as a Mental Procedure in My Winnipeg and Seances.....	58
4.3. Surrealist Techniques in Seances.....	63
4.4. Colliding Cinemas	66
Conclusion	70
Works cited	74

Introduction

Surrealism emerged in the 1920s, a time when avant-garde movements proliferated in European art, but, unlike many other –isms of the time, it survived the era of its creation. As an organized movement, surrealism¹ outlived its creators and spread beyond France (several surrealist groups still exist across different countries); and in another manifestation of its unique longevity, acquired a broader meaning of a certain artistic sensibility, sometimes without any reference to the original movement.

This thesis investigates how theoretical principles of surrealism can be used to address the ongoing debate around cinema's identity in the digital age. Recent history of film has been marked by a fast change in its technology—from analog film to digital—which has profoundly impacted every aspect of the medium, from business to aesthetics to even cinema's identity within other media. As argued by Adam Lowenstein (2015), these changes have emphasized those aspects of cinema that were seen as essentially surrealist by the movement's thinkers and practitioners. This thesis follows this argument and focuses on cinematic works that were produced digitally and called attention to their digital nature within themselves in some way. French director Leos Carax's narrative feature *Holy Motors* (2012) offers at once a continuation of the filmmaker's earlier (analog) work and a break from it and explicitly comments on its own medium (it constitutes, in a way, a critique of digital technology). *Horse Money* (2014), directed by Portuguese Pedro Costa, is an instalment in a series of films in which digital technology was originally used due to ethical concerns and was instrumental in Costa's developing his innovative docu-fiction narrative

¹ As will be evident from what follows, my understanding of surrealism extends beyond the original, institutionalized art movement. For this reason, the word surrealism is not capitalized throughout this thesis.

style. *Seances* (2016) by Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson and Galen Johnson is a code-based video art work in which history of early cinema is reimagined and presented by the means of modern digital technology.

All three works discussed in this thesis employ surrealist themes and techniques, however, my objective is not to “prove” that they can indeed be defined as surrealist—an approach that Raphaëlle Moine (2006) rightly criticized as generification of surrealism. Rather, the main focus of this research is the theoretical principles of surrealism that the three works adopt. The most important of them, and central to this thesis, is the quest for the “point sublime”: a term coined by the movement’s founder André Breton that he defined as the location at which binaries “cease to be perceived as contradictions” (1969: 123). This thesis explores the emblematic surrealist binary of dream and reality that received a new relevance in digital cinema since the medium lost its ostensible indexicality, and, consequently, direct connection to reality. As such, surrealist thinking is related to the notion of hauntology, developed by Jacques Derrida as a challenge to ontology and its yearning for “metaphysics of presence.” My theoretical edifice is therefore situated at the intersection of surrealist thought and Derrida’s deconstruction and is described in Chapter 1.

While Chapter 1 is dedicated to exploring surrealist film theory and its connections to other media theories, Chapters 2 to 4 analyze the three case studies. The three works address and interpret the binary each in its own way, and each chapter therefore highlights one of its aspects in particular. In *Holy Motors*, the point sublime is located in Carax’s perennial actor Denis Lavant: a body trapped in the no longer corporeal medium (body and ghost). In *Horse Money*, the contradiction that Costa aims to resolve is one between reality and fiction—the problem that refers to the artistic practice of Luis Buñuel, the preeminent surrealist filmmaker who saw no paradox in portraying reality by means of surrealism, which sometimes are considered opposed to each other (fiction and documentary). And in *Seances*, history of

cinema itself is told from a surrealist point of view (past and present). Thus, all three pieces point to surrealism as a possible theoretical framework to explore the nature of digital cinema and find a continuity with analog cinema.

Just as surrealism itself existed as a conjunction of aesthetic theory and practice, I also understand the three works examined that way. Rather than merely material that provides illustration for theoretical concepts, I see *Holy Motors*, *Horse Money* and *Seances* as cinema reflecting upon, and expressing, its own identity, guided by a Deleuzian belief that films speak for themselves. While my major method of writing about these works is interpretation, it is therefore double-edged: on the one hand, interpreting them as primary sources, and on the other as a point of application for my own theorization.

1. Surrealism as Theory

1.1 *The Point Sublime*

The original surrealists took a great interest in cinema, as is evidenced by many accounts (see Lowenstein, 2015: 2; Richardson, 2006: 61-76). That enthusiasm towards film can be partly attributed to their fascination with popular culture in general. Considering surrealism's pronounced opposition to bourgeois art and search for an alternative sensibility, it is hardly surprising that they found potential in what the dominant cultural tradition rejected or placed low in the cultural hierarchy. However, Michael Richardson argues, "surrealism has nothing in common with the more recent revalorisation of popular culture that has tended to be effected under the rubric of postmodernism" (2006: 16). Their strategy was not to abolish the distinction between "high" and "popular" culture; rather, they viewed the latter as a subversive tool to disrupt the logic of contemporary culture in general.

It appears, however, that there were other reasons why cinema (a part of culture not readily accepted as art by many at the time) stood out from other popular media in surrealist thinking. That calls for referring to surrealists' own writings about film, as well as those of their contemporaries who addressed the issue of surrealism and film. Surrealist film theory exists in primary sources as a rather fragmented body of work by several writers; however, it does highlight that cinema, for the original surrealists, possessed a quality that made it an inherently disruptive medium, a surrealist art par excellence.

André Breton who summarized surrealism's key concept in two manifestoes of the movement, introduced the following definition of surrealist philosophy in the first of the two, published in 1924:

Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. (1969: 26)

Consequently, what drew surrealist theorists to cinema was the resemblance that they found between film and the work of human psyche, especially the work of the unconscious in dreams. That stance, informed by writings of Freud, presaged psychoanalytical theory of cinema of the late 20th century – perhaps most notably by Christian Metz who in *The Imaginary Signifier* (1982) compared cinema to daydreaming (Freud's *Tagtraum*) rather than dreaming, the former being a borderline state between reality and dream wherein disavowal is always at work. A short description of that principle is the famous formula coined by Octave Mannoni in reference to fetishism and picked up by Metz: “I know very well, but... [I disavow that knowledge]” (1969). That very ambiguity of film in relation to reality was crucial for surrealist thinkers as well, as I will show below, even if they did not specifically point to daydreaming as opposed to dreaming.

Linda Williams distinguishes two lines of surrealist film theory, one represented by Robert Desnos, another by Jean Goudal and Antonin Artaud. Desnos' approach is more literal in its rendering of the relationship between cinema and dream: focusing more on the content than on the container, he seemed to believe that cinema can “literally reproduce the content of dreams” (Abel, 1988: 338), and that, like in a dream, cinema's content is hidden desire (see Desnos, 1988a). Desnos himself acknowledged that such belief did not constitute a pronounced film theory:

I have always tried not to do criticism. In everything that relates to the cinema I have only expressed desires. ... However bad the scenario, however detestable the direction, it is still about flesh and blood here no less real than those of our dreams.

(in Williams, 1981: 23)

Desnos presaged the psychoanalytic film theory when he wrote about the importance of what Baudry would call “the cinematic apparatus” (“[Cinema theater's] darkness was like that of our bedrooms before going to sleep” (Desnos, 1988b: 398)) and pointed to identification as

central to cinema, in which, he believed, “the heroes... would ideally act out the spectator’s own repressed desires” (Williams, 1981.: 24). Therefore, in terms of its function, cinema is equivalent to dreams, whose purpose, as per Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (1999), is also wish fulfillment. Cinema, for Desnos, was a medium that was able “to defeat the constraints of the real world through the disruptive antisocial tumult of *amour fou* (mad love)” (Williams, 1981: 24).

A more complex approach was offered by Jean Goudal, a writer who was a contemporary of the original surrealist group but did not belong to the movement and was, in fact, critical of surrealist methods in literature. For Goudal, language is inherently a logical structure, and so the surrealist project to express the anti-logical through it was necessarily flawed, prone to “lapse into individual, incommunicable mode of expression” (1988: 355). Cinema, on the other hand, constitutes a “conscious hallucination” (ibid.): an effect described by Goudal in terms very close to Metz’s daydreaming, albeit in much fewer words and without being consistent in the distinction between hallucination and dream. Therefore, Goudal argues, in cinema surrealism finds its natural habitat. He writes: “Surreality represents a domain actually indicated to cinema by its very technique” (ibid.: 358), which possesses the same characteristics as dream: the visual, the illogical, the pervasive. As Williams puts it, Goudal writes of cinema as “both more and less real than reality”, being “a simulacrum of the real world but ... also at the same time radically artificial” (1981: 18).

Antonin Artaud’s views were in many ways similar to Goudal’s. Artaud’s involvement in cinema was overshadowed by his theater work, however, he was fascinated by film in his early years. That coincided with his brief involvement with surrealism: Artaud was a member of Breton’s group in 1924–1927, and later for a short period in 1928; in that latter year he wrote the script for Germaine Dulac’s *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, sometimes described as “the first surrealist film” (although Dulac was never associated with

surrealism²), as well as played a part in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Like Goudal, Artaud set cinematic expression in opposition to verbal language that he rejected throughout his life (see Williams, 1981: 20). As Jacques Derrida explains, "Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, offering itself to understanding or reception, offering itself as spectacle, immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes signification which I do not possess because it is signification" (1980: 175). As such, for Artaud cinema was a kind of "language" in which, unlike in verbal language, immediate expression was possible; in the absence of signification speech does not become stolen: "So nothing interposes itself any longer between the work and the spectator. Above all the cinema is like an innocuous and direct poison, a subcutaneous injection of morphine" (Artaud, 1972: 60).

Artaud did not support pure visual abstraction, either – a prominent strategy in French avant-garde cinema of the time. As Artaud wrote in his essay "Cinema and Reality" that prefaced his script for *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, of the two paths that he saw in contemporary cinema, neither one was right: "pure or absolute cinema" and "reflection of a world that depends on another [non-cinematic] source for its raw material and its meaning", i.e. a literary-based form (1988: 410). He argues:

It is not a question of finding in visual language an equivalent for written language, of which the visual language would merely be a bad translation, but rather of revealing the very essence of language and of carrying the action onto a level where all

² Artaud was unhappy about Dulac's direction of *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, as were the rest of Breton's group. In her article about the film, Maryann De Julio (2013) explores the fundamental difference between surrealism and Dulac's poetics that was the reason of their disagreement.

translation would be unnecessary and where this action would operate almost intuitively on the brain. (411)

In other words, the cinema that Artaud proposes bears a structural similarity to the process of the unconscious rather than merely expresses or represents it (as contrasted with Desnos's position). Like Goudal, Artaud finds that inherent qualities of cinema as a medium play in favor of that vision, and that written language (and, consequently, literature) can never achieve that.

As can be seen in these accounts of surrealist film theory, its preoccupation with dreams did not mean that it was opposed to realism as such, nor that it privileged the fantastic. Even Desnos objected to realism's conventions only insofar as it posed an obstruction to what he understood as cinema's purpose and admired the work of Eric von Stroheim whose films were realistic in content (1988c). As such, surrealist thinking defies the opposition of "realist" and "formal" theories that is often found in academic discourse about classical film theory (such as in Dudley Andrew's (1976) popular textbook), or the opposition of realism and fantasy; of documentary and fiction.

A contradistinction of the Lumière brothers and George Méliès as alleged originators of documentary and fiction in cinema is often used to illustrate that idea. Méliès, indeed, was a great influence on early surrealists; however, Michael Richardson argues, what surrealists saw in Méliès and what was key to their understanding of cinema was not the fantastic but the *marvelous* (2006: 19-21).³ The latter is a key category in Breton's aesthetic theory: "The

³ Richardson's argument, however instructive in its conclusions, seems to be inconsistent: he asserts that "Méliès was important for surrealists less for his subject matter than for his attitude [towards filmmaking]", and later admits that said attitude can be opposed to the Lumières' as magic to positivism (20) – which reinforces the same duality on the level of

marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful” (1969: 14). The difference from the fantastic is that the marvelous is contained in reality rather than departs from it; “intensifies rather than dampens perception” as Joyce Suechun Cheng and Richardson (2016) explain. Cheng and Richardson compare it to Roland Barthes’ *punctum*:

If, for Barthes, the punctum in a photograph is an unexpected accident captured by the camera that “rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow”, the surrealist marvelous likewise is an extraordinary appearance that *stands out* instead of retreating from reality. (240)

In *Surrealism and Cinema*, Richardson stresses that

[the marvelous] is not a state; it is certainly not something outside of or opposed to reality. Nor is it a privileged realm of marvels. If anything, it is a methodological principle, or a tool by which reality can be judged. ... This is something critics have always found difficult to follow in surrealism: the marvelous is as much opposed to the fantastic, or any kind of fantasy, as it is to realism. (2006: 20)

Indeed, fantasy may be defined as another side of realism, as it operates on “suspension of disbelief” and, just like realism, requires verisimilitude within conventional rules of the fictional narrative, however different from the author’s and the recipient’s everyday reality. The marvelous, on the other hand, “refuses the realist demand for verisimilitude, and reconciles – or holds in tension – the contradiction between real and imaginary” (ibid.).

method. It appears, however, that it was not the “magic” of Méliès as such that interested surrealists but rather the possibility of an artistic sensibility in cinema that his films brought about.

The quest for a point in which contradictions, such as between hallucination and fact, are resolved—the *point sublime* (sometimes translated as “the supreme point”)—is at the very heart of surrealist philosophy. Breton defined the point sublime as the location at which binaries “cease to be perceived as contradictions” (1969: 123); locating it “constitutes the very substance of surrealist endeavour” (Fijalkowski, Richardson, 2016: 248). As Fijalkowski and Richardson explain, that does not mean a “place where contraries coexist,” (250) because they would annihilate each other; but rather, they argue, “Breton ... seem[s] to be speaking of a *sublation* in the Hegelian sense: a place where antinomies are simultaneously surpassed and preserved” (251; emphasis in original). Cinema, as is seen from theories described above, is a medium that may achieve that due to its own paradoxical nature.

From the very beginning, surrealism was as much (or more) about creating art as it was about theorizing it. If theory designates cinema as a likely place to look for the point sublime, then practice makes an attempt to locate it there.

1.2. Theory to Practice: Luis Buñuel's Un Chien andalou

It seems pertinent to look into how theoretical standpoints of the original surrealists informed their filmmaking practice before I delve further into discussion of surrealist thinking, its implications in media theory and the discourse surrounding digital cinema. To that end, in this section I will briefly discuss Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un chien andalou* (1928), that poster child of surrealist filmmaking and a perennial benchmark for comparison, which is essentially how I use it in this thesis (although, of course, other examples of surrealist cinema will be mentioned in the following chapters as relevant). Buñuel (who, together with Dalí, only joined Breton's group officially in 1929, after the film had premiered) has a reputation of a “quintessential” surrealist filmmaker, and *Un Chien andalou*, as well as the later *L'Âge d'or*, are often regarded as an epitome of surrealist

cinema. As Breton himself once asserted, “Buñuel’s spirit... like it or not, is a constituent part of surrealism” (1993: 164).

It seems significant that one of the first images in *Un Chien andalou*, as well as the most iconic one of all Buñuel’s work, is an eye that is cut in half. While seeing is of course is the basis of cinematic experience, that infamous shot seems to metaphorically problematize it, setting a pattern for Buñuel’s all future work that often predicated on aberration of vision.⁴ It appears significant that the man who slices the eye is portrayed by Buñuel himself in an auteurist gesture *avant la lettre*: it is the director who puts seeing itself into question early on in the film and his career. A sequence of bizarre images that follows serves as a revelation of a different reality that is not usually visible: as put by Mexican poet Octavio Paz, “[Buñuel’s] films are more than a fierce attack on so-called reality; they are the revelation of another reality which contemporary civilization has humiliated” (1986: 52). In so doing, Buñuel also negates the claim to the absolute truthfulness of the camera’s vision; however, photographic realism was exactly what was drawing early surrealists to cinema.⁵ In “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” Bazin (1960) wrote about surrealism’s interest in photography (and, by extension, film):

[T]he surrealist does not consider his aesthetic purpose and the mechanical effect of the image on our imagination as things apart. For him, the logical distinction between what is imaginary and what is real tends to disappear. Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image. (8-9)

⁴ For examples of literal aberrations of vision in Buñuel’s oeuvre, consider, for instance, hallucination sequences in his later films *Los Olvidados* (1950) and *Él* (1953).

⁵ Also evidenced by the pictorial style of Salvador Dalí, a co-author of *Un Chien andalou*, or René Magritte whose paintings were meticulously realistic in their representation.

Images in *Un Chien andalou* are those seen by a dissected eye: objective by the virtue of the technology with which they are produced and subjective in their content. In their depiction of the unconscious work of human mind Buñuel and Dalí were influenced by psychoanalysis whose purpose is to interpret latent meaning in the expressions of the unconscious. In her book *Figures of Desire*, Linda Williams (1981) argues that the prevalent technique in the discourse of *Un Chien andalou* is metaphor, which she ties to condensation, a process that occurs in dreaming and operates with “images that, unlike words, in themselves have no codified meaning” (75). As such, “*Un Chien andalou* imitates the procedures of the unconsciousness” (ibid.). Williams then provides a close, shot by shot examination of the film’s metaphors from the perspective of the psychoanalytic film theory (a method that is likely consistent with Buñuel and Dalí’s intention). Williams’ conclusion is that, while the film sets up many binaries,

it does not do so to negate one or the other pole. Death does not negate love,⁶ neither does blindness negate sight. As in a dream, negation and contradiction do not exist.

As Freud observed... there is no “no” in dreams. The film does not assert or deny any one truth about desire; it simply reveals the opposing elements that structure it and the rhetorical figures that enact it. (104)

Nor, I shall add, there is a contradiction between desire as a content of *Un Chien andalou* and its photorealistic form that remains relatively faithful to conventions of continuity editing in individual scenes: as an example, the opening scene consists of 12 shots that are edited

⁶ While death and love are not usually understood as a binary in a way that blindness and sight are, Williams operates within psychoanalytical framework, in which death drive and love drive are, indeed, opposed to each other.

together in a cohesive fashion, however bizarre its subject matter.⁷ Richardson argues, after Petr Král, that both films by Buñuel and Dalí are based on conventions that “are largely drawn from Hollywood burlesque comedy” and “reveal a continuity of intention with Keaton, Chaplin, Harry Langdon, and so on” (2006: 28). Interplay between conventions of mainstream cinema and subversive content, without ever opposing the one to another, will become even more prominent in Buñuel’s later films, most of which are structured according to the rules of conventional style in terms of narrative, editing, and mise-en-scene.

1.3. Surrealism as Deconstruction

While Bazin may have been inspired by surrealism, ontological approach hardly fits into surrealist epistemology. Surrealism is decidedly subjective, and its subject is inherently unstable at that. Let us consider the definitive technique of surrealist production of meaning, automatic writing: a principle so central for Breton that his short definition of surrealism in the first Manifesto is “psychic automatism in its pure state” (1969: 26). The principle of automatism, exemplified by Breton and Philippe Soupault’s book *Magnetic Fields* (1919), posits that text is produced by its author beyond the author’s will, through liberation of the subconscious. It may be best understood in terms of Aristotelian Physics where Aristotle made a distinction between *tuche* and *automaton*, the former meaning chance in human

⁷ Williams points out that positions of the actors as well as some other details change between shots in that sequence, which, she argues, subverts “the very same assumptions about diegetic space and time [the shots] seem to want us to accept” (69). Without rejecting that interpretation altogether, it may be still that those changes between shots are simply continuity mistakes made by a first-time filmmaker.

actions, and the latter in unreasoning agents (Aristotle, 1970).⁸ The automatist's body, in the Manifesto, is compared to a "modest recording instrument" (Breton, 1969: 28). In other words, *the subject is a medium*.

In such a way, Breton subverts what Derrida describes as a yearning for a metaphysics of presence in Western philosophy. Surrealism acknowledges the absence in the production of meaning and the mediating status of the subject, and thus, the subject of surrealism is not ontological but hauntological, to use a term coined by Derrida. The word was proposed in his influential book *Specters of Marx* (2006), first published in 1993, as a deconstructionist challenge to a Marxist ontology in a post-Soviet era when the fall of the Communist project prompted Francis Fukuyama to declare "the end of history." In contrast to ontology that prioritizes being and presence, the subject of hauntology "is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes" (63). This paradoxical figure, "this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one" (5), deconstructs the very notion of, and desire for, presence; as such, specter is a close relative to trace, a term developed by Derrida in his earlier work *Of Grammatology*, defined by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak in a preface to her translation of the book as "the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack of the origin" (1997: xvii). Although specter and trace are not interchangeable terms, this definition can be applied to both. Impossibility of presence, for Derrida, is brought about by mediation that defines any utterance; "metaphysics of presence," he argues, is a failure to admit that production of knowledge is only possible within language, i.e. is necessarily mediated—a tendency that he criticizes as "logocentrism" of Western philosophy.

⁸ See discussion of further distinction between automatism and objective chance as a later development in surrealist philosophy in an article by Raihan Kadri et al. (2016).

Admittedly, there is no direct consequential link between surrealism and Derrida's writings; there are, however, close affinities in terms of how production of language is seen in surrealist and Derridean thought as "giving the space of writing over to the other" (Brannigan, 1999: 55).⁹ That we encounter ghosts as a metaphor of mediation in both is a coincidence, but a significant one at that. Indeed, in my earlier assertion that in surrealism the subject is a medium, the latter word can be understood in two ways, in terms of media theory and those of spiritualism, and, very much in a Derridean fashion, both meanings are relevant.

As Katharine Conley (2013) argues, spiritualism was a foundational narrative of surrealism: the movement was "haunted... from the beginning" (1), in fact, it began after André Breton who had associated himself with Dada, was introduced to spiritualism by the poet René Crevel. Although Breton rejected the supernatural and communication between the living and the dead as an actual possibility, before surrealism automatic writing had originally been a method of conjuration of spirits, and thus surrealism was inspired by the practice of spiritualism, if not system of beliefs. Surrealists adopted séance as a metaphor as they often did with the supernatural and fantastic, hence, for instance, their obsession with films like *Les Vampires* (dir. Louis Feuillade, 1915–1916) and *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (dir. F. W. Murnau). The latter film in particular features an intertitle that was repeated by surrealists "as a pure expression of convulsive beauty" (Jackson, 2013: 101) and understood by Breton as a metaphor of metaphors, "the essence of the metaphor" (Lyotard, 2011: 459): "Once he had crossed the bridge, the phantoms came to meet him." As Lyotard

⁹ Brannigan's excellent essay also investigates some other "intellectual and theoretical resonances" (55) of surrealism and Derrida, such as their shared politics of "Gothic Marxism" and "refusal of the programmatic" (ibid.).

put it, “the bridge [...] is the one that metaphor builds between words” (286); phantoms, thus, always expect surrealists “on the other side.”

Likewise, ghostliness as metaphor of mediation is consistently used in Derrida’s work. Even before the coinage of hauntology, Derrida had said that cinema “is an art of ghosts,” just as all modern visual media and electronic communication that operate by displacement are ghostly (*Ghost Dance*). He makes a reference not to surrealists but to Franz Kafka who used that metaphor in a more straightforward manner than surrealists in reference to media in 1922, arguing that “writing letters is actually an intercourse with ghosts and by no means just with the ghost of the addressee but also with one’s own ghost” (1990: 223). As Kafka himself explains it, “One can think of someone far away and one can hold on someone nearby; everything else is beyond human power... Written kisses never arrive at their destination; the ghosts drink them up along the way” (ibid.). For Kafka, therefore, a ghost is a figure present in the act of writing, standing in for, and thus indicating, absence of the sender and the addressee. Talking to Ken McMullen’s camera in the film *Ghost Dance*, Derrida agrees with Kafka and adds that modern technologies “enhance the power of ghosts and their ability to haunt us” instead of “diminishing realm of ghosts” as a contemporary technology would be expected to (*Ghost Dance*). A telephone call from an unknown American that interrupts Derrida’s argument provides, per the philosopher, an example of a ghostly technology at work; another example is cinema, the medium of that very meditation. Although Derrida does not elaborate on that point and never mentions film in *Specters of Marx*, we can see how Spivak’s above quoted definition of trace (“the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack of the origin”) applies to cinema if we consider its position relative to past and present. What the spectator sees is apparently past, a reality captured by the camera at some past moment, and yet it is perceived as present:

as Anne Friedberg put it, “for the cinema spectator, the past is presented as *always already present* [...] yet this present is in virtual form” (1994: 185; emphasis in original).

What connects photographic (and, by extension, cinematic) image to the past is a photochemical process that creates a physical imprint on a camera matrix; this relationship led many theorists in the 20th century, including most famously André Bazin, to see photographic media – still photography and cinema – as inherently realist. In one of his most quoted passages, Bazin declared that:

The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model. (1960: 8; emphasis in original)

An obvious paradox of this statement is that the photographic image is, of course, *not* the model in any literal sense: it is a two-dimensional, framed representation thereof. What Bazin seems to be saying in this quote is that photographic representation re-constitutes a presence: what we see is merely an image, yes, but an image of something that *has been* present.

In contrast to Bazin’s ontology, another influential thinker of the 20th century, Walter Benjamin (2008), wrote differently about film’s relationship to reality. For Benjamin, cinema is an art form germane to the “age of mechanical reproducibility,” in which an emphasis is laid on “value of exhibition” of art in general, at the expense of its “cult value”: a reproduction, Benjamin argues, lacks what he calls the “aura”: an art work’s “the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place” (21). For Benjamin, films are always reproductions of physical reality, and as reproductions, films necessarily lose the aura, i.e. sense of presence, of what is depicted:

The aura is bound to [actor's] presence in the here and now. There is no facsimile of the aura. The aura surrounding Macbeth on the stage cannot be divorced from the aura which, for the living spectators, surrounds the actor who plays him. What distinguishes the shot in the film studio, however, is that the camera is substituted for the audience. As a result, the aura surrounding the actor is dispelled—and, with it, the aura of the figure he portrays. (31)

In other words, for Benjamin cinema is defined by absence, a lost presence of reality before the camera. The difference between Bazin's and Benjamin's approaches may be described by using two different grammatical tenses of the English language: while for Bazin, as said above, cinematic image represents what *has been* present, for Benjamin it represents what *was* (and is not anymore). As such, Benjamin's approach can be understood along hauntological lines: in his argument, cinematic present is, like Derrida's specter, "always already absent."

1.4. The Hauntology of the Digital Image

The notion of cinematic realism was shattered by development and outspread of digital technologies. First forays into digital were made by Hollywood studios in the 1970s and 1980s to create visual effects utilizing computer-generated imagery. Digital cinematography and non-linear digital editing have been increasingly in use since the 1990s to become the industrial standard by the 2010s. Finally, digital projection all but replaced traditional 35-mm prints over the new century's first fifteen years; in 2015, about 90% of the world's film theater screens, and 96% of those in Western Europe and North America, were digital (Vivarelli, 2015). With all these developments, cinema has become a fully digital industry: with the exception of the few filmmakers who remain faithful to the old ways, most films do not involve any analog technology at any stage.

Digital reproduction that superseded mechanical is one step further in deauratizing, as Benjamin might have put it, cinematic image. It might be argued that an experience of seeing films in a theater, and on a physical print, constitutes a “cult value,” which is evidenced by proliferation of phenomena such as cinephilia and the aptly termed “cult film” that in large part owe their existence to film theater experience. Movies used to be only present “in time and space”: in a theater and according to the schedule. Introduction of home video to cinephilia resulted in what Thomas Elsaesser (2005) described as “disenchantment” within that culture.

Another important aspect is the digital’s relationship to realism: if aura, as Benjamin wrote, is contained in actor’s presence in time and space and is lost when that presence is reproduced, then what about so called “digital acting” in which a performer lends nothing more than his or her motion to a computer-generated character who inhabits a computer-generated space? In films like *Avatar*, there is not so much reproduction of actors’ presence in time and space as there is a production of a wholly new time and space.

Scholars have argued that the technological change challenges cinema’s claim to realism. In his influential article “What Is Digital Cinema?” (1995), Lev Manovich wrote, still early in the digital era, that cinema’s “privileged indexical relationship to pro-filmic reality” is lost once live action footage is digitized, because “the computer does not distinguish between an image obtained through the photographic lens, an image created in a paint program or an image synthesized in a 3-D graphics package, since they are made from the same material – pixels” (7). That means that cinematic images have lost their physical relationship with recorded reality: not an imprint but an immaterial string of ones and zeros; not a “footprint” (2) but a trace. It also means that images can be easily altered: as Shaleph O’Neill put it, “Digital photography techniques challenge [the] very relationship with reality by allowing us to manipulate and alter images *that look real enough but which might be*

radically different in origin” (2008: 16; emphasis added). Or, in other words, digital films offer (an illusion of) presence but lack an origin, i.e. have lost their ontological status; as Derrida would say, they spectralize. Indeed, modern technology seems to have only “enhanced the power of ghosts and their ability to haunt us” as the philosopher predicted.

For some theorists, crisis of realism meant a crisis of cinema; in the above cited article and elsewhere, Manovich suggested a division between the “old” and the “new” media, in which “there is only software” (Manovich, 2011). However, acknowledging the “enhancement” of “the power of ghosts” does not mean that such power was not exercised upon cinema prior to the change from photographic to digital technology. Manovich correctly points to the aspects of preceding scholarship that have been outdated, yet instead of trying to update prior media theories he prefers to scratch them altogether and write a new theory instead. I see such a stance as a failure to recognize that knowledge of the past (such as analog cinema at this point) must always be focused by the present instead of sticking to the knowledge contemporary to that past; arguing that digital cinema is not cinema just because a theory from the 1940s does not apply to it is like speculating that T. S. Eliot’s work is not poetry just because literary scholarship of Elizabethan England insisted that poetry must rhyme. I prefer instead Walter Benjamin’s stance who, in the appendix to “The Work of Art,” argued that

[t]he history of art is a history of prophecies. It can be written only by beginning from the point of view of a completely current present, since every age possesses its own new, though non-inheritable, occasion of interpreting exactly those prophecies that the art of past epochs contained within itself. . . . No one of [these prophecies] in reality has ever fully determined the future, not even the most imminent future. On the contrary, in the work of art nothing is more difficult to grasp than the obscure and

nebulous references to the future that the prophecies... have brought to light along the course of the centuries. (in Casetti, 2015: 211-12)

Adam Lowenstein made a successful attempt of updating older film theory in his monograph *Dreaming of Cinema* (2015). Lowenstein objects to reading Bazin's ontology as a naïve belief in cinema's indexicality and absolute truthfulness (which Manovich seems to imply in "What Is Digital Cinema?"); as he demonstrates, Bazin attaches a great significance to the viewer, without whom there is no reality to lay bare. He writes:

Bazin's sense of the photographic experience as a union of perception and imagination, of mechanical objectivity and affective subjectivity, mirrors André Breton's vision of a surrealist union between dream and reality in certain important respects... [B]oth men aim to dissolve distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity, perception and imagination, nature and representation. (14)

Perhaps even more importantly, Lowenstein discusses Bazin's distinction between "pseudorealism" and "true realism." The latter, as Bazin defines it, is "the expression of spiritual reality wherein the symbol transcend[s] its model" (1960: 6) – clearly not a straightforwardly indexical relationship, while the former is an attempt to replicate reality in what Bazin refers to as a "mummy complex".¹⁰ To clarify his point, Bazin turns to surrealists:

Photography can even surpass art in creative power. ... The surrealist does not consider his aesthetic purpose and the mechanical effect of the image in our imaginations as things apart. For him, the logical distinction between what is

¹⁰ Bazin's way of phrasing implies a value judgement: while "pseudorealism" is a possible strategy that does not contradict his ontology, he certainly considers it inferior to "true realism" that has imagination added as a surplus value to mere perception. Bazin's theory is prescriptive in certain aspects, as is that of surrealism.

imaginary and what is real tends to disappear. Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image. ... Hence photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, an hallucination that is also a fact. (8-9)

Lowenstein persuasively aligns Bazin's "true realism" with surrealism, which is all the more convincing as Bazin, himself once an "energetic practitioner of automatic writing" (Andrew, 1978: 58), uses surrealist photography as an example of "true realism." Lowenstein does not try to "say that every time Bazin speaks of "realism" in his work on the cinema, what he really means is "surrealism" (2015: 16), however, his analysis disconfirms the conventional interpretation of Bazin as a proponent of indexicality, to which misconception theories of digital cinema, such as Manovich's, often appeal. If cinema, as Lowenstein asserts, "always was and continues to be a deeply surrealist medium rather than an inherently realist one" (3), then the crisis of realism in cinema does not necessarily terminate a stage in the medium's development because realism was never a defining factor of it.

Indeed, assertions of a radical break between analog and digital cinema seem to have been premature. Common perception of cinema (as well as its general industrial structure and place in culture) remains unchanged in principle: tellingly, as Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener point out, there is not even a new word coined for post-photographic moving images (2015: 196); even more strikingly, the word 'film' is still in common use, and an image of a perforated film strip remains a widely recognizable icon of cinema, even though the absolute majority of cinematic works produced today do not have anything to do with actual film. Rather than pronouncing death of cinema, many researchers have called to redefining it, as did Anne Friedberg (2000), followed by scholars such as Elsaesser and Hagener who see the technological change as an instance of remediation, and Francesco Casetti who calls for "[reformulating] the genealogy of cinema by taking its new conditions of existence as a point

of departure” (2015: 211). Just like Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz’s view of the cinematic apparatus was obsoleted by changes in spectatorship and thus needs to be reexamined (as done by Casetti who proposes ‘assemblage’ as a replacement (2015: 11)), so does the idea of the ontology of the cinematic image; new technology merely highlighted this necessity. In chapters that follow I discuss three works of cinema that acknowledge and highlight the paradoxical, hauntological status of their medium, like surrealists did in their artistic practice.

2. Holy Motors: Body and Ghost

2.1. Reflexivity in *Holy Motors*

Holy Motors (2012) is the fifth feature film written and directed by the French director Leos Carax, made after a typically long hiatus (his previous had been *Pola X*, 1999) and marking the director's reunion with the actor Denis Lavant in feature form; between *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (1991) and *Holy Motors*, their only collaboration was the short *Merde* (2008), and *Pola X* remains the only feature film by Carax that doesn't star Lavant.¹¹ *Holy Motors* premiered at the 65th Cannes Film Festival to a great critical acclaim, and although the jury did not award any prizes to the film, it was prominently present in end of year polls as one of the best films of 2012.

The critical discourse around *Holy Motors* could be described as a mixture of fascination and bewilderment: typical epithets found in reviews are “cryptic” (Sachs, 2012), “incomprehensible” (Malcolm, 2012), “weird and wonderful” (Bradshaw, 2012). “It would be futile to... find a thread of narrative,” Roger Ebert wrote in his highly complimentary review (2012). Although a minority of reviews were critical, such as the above-quoted piece by Derek Malcolm, *Holy Motors* was generally successful in spite of its eschewal of standard storytelling strategies; in fact, the film was often praised precisely for its rejection of a logical and coherent narrative.

As Ebert observed, it is indeed difficult to summarize the content of *Holy Motors*. After a non-diegetic insert of Eadweard Muybridge's chronophotographic footage, the film opens with a brief prologue. A man (played by Leos Carax himself) wakes up in a bed. He finds a door hidden in the room's wall that leads to a film theater auditorium full of sleeping

¹¹ Neither does the director's first English-language film *Annette* that is expected to premiere in 2018.

people. After that, the film cuts to Monsieur Oscar (played by Denis Lavant) who, in the appearance of a wealthy businessman, leaves a modernist suburban mansion in a white stretch limousine. The limousine is chauffeured by Monsieur Oscar's assistant, Céline (Édith Scob) who informs him that he can find a brief of the day's agenda on the back seat. The businessman's appearance is revealed to be a costume, and for the rest of the day Monsieur Oscar is driven around locations in Paris for his 'appointments' that amount to his taking upon roles of very different characters and performing various narratives, then returning to the car. At his first appointment, for instance, Monsieur Oscar begs for money in the guise of an immigrant homeless woman; at another, he picks up a teenage girl from a party as her working-class father; still another sees him transform into a grotesque inarticulate gnome that wreaks havoc at the Père Lachaise cemetery (reprising the character from the short *Merde*), and so on. Those episodes that range from realist to fantastical, work essentially as vignettes that do not have any common thread except for Monsieur Oscar's participation; in the interludes he is seen in the car preparing for the next role, which involves putting on make-up and reading briefs specific for the appointment. Later it is revealed that there are more people who do the same thing as Monsieur Oscar; what is it that they do is, however, never explained, and fantastical circumstances are never accounted for, such as one appointment where Monsieur Oscar appears both as a contract killer and his victim, or the encounter with the businessman from the film's beginning, whom Monsieur Oscar also murders. After Monsieur Oscar is dropped off to his last appointment of the day (a man who returns to his apartment and is greeted by a family of chimpanzees), Céline drives the limousine to a garage with a glowing sign 'Holy Motors' above the entrance. The film concludes with two dozen limousines in the garage talking to each other.

While *Holy Motors* is too complex and evasive to be considered a straight allegory of cinema, it is quite evident that the film is highly self-reflective. Indeed, Denis Lavant

portrays, apparently, an actor. Monsieur Oscar does not play characters as much as transforms into them, and other people at his appointments earnestly communicate with him never betraying any awareness of the trickery, apparently treating the situation as reality, not illusion (although in one particular appointment it is revealed that the second participant is also an ‘actress’). Significantly, his performances also remind of traditional film genres, such as film noir, action film or a monster movie. Preparations in the limousine are presented as those of an actor: Monsieur Oscar uses professional make-up tools and a lighted mirror.

Moreover, the character is given a ‘cinematic’ name, Oscar. This marks a difference from the three previous collaborations of Carax and Lavant, in which the latter’s character was always named Alex. Both names refer to the director himself whose pseudonym ‘Leos Carax’ is an anagram of ‘Alex,’ after his real given name (he was born Alex Christophe Dupont) and ‘Oscar,’ after the Academy Awards.¹² I suggest that while in the first three films Lavant portrayed a version of the director himself, in *Holy Motors* he plays a cinematic part of Carax’s identity, or perhaps an embodiment of cinema itself.

Holy Motors also makes direct references to film spectatorship and filmmaking. As mentioned above, the second scene of the film’s prologue is set in a movie theater that the

¹² The origin of the ‘Oscar’ in Carax’s nom de plume is somewhat of a moot point. Many sources claim that Oscar is the director’s middle name, and Carax’s typical reticence makes it difficult to check facts of his personal life. I rely on Philippe Rège’s well-respected *Encyclopedia of French Film Directors* (2010) that lists Carax’s real name as Alex Christophe Dupont (175). Dave Kehr’s (1999) profile of Carax in the *New York Times*, based on an interview with the director, asserts that ‘Oscar’ is “a reference to [Carax’s] childhood fantasies of winning an Academy Award,” although not quoting Carax in this particular passage.

director himself walks in. One of Monsieur Oscar's appointments is at a studio where he performs several scenes in a motion capture suit. Changes in filmmaking technologies are explicitly discussed in Monsieur Oscar's conversation with an older colleague (portrayed by Michel Piccoli and simply referred to as The Man with a Birthmark in the credits) who visits the protagonist in his limousine.

Lastly, the very title 'Holy Motors' can be seen as a reference to cinema. The French word for motor, *moteur*, is a cue in the standard procedure of calling a shot on a film set, equivalent to the English 'roll camera' and 'roll sound.' Hardly coincidentally, the conversation between limousines in the film's last scene concludes with a complaint by one of the cars that they will soon be dumped because people are tired of large, "visible" machines and in this new age need "pas des moteurs, pas d'action" ("no more motors [rolling], no more action"): the word 'action,' which is the last in calling the shot, is followed by an "amen," and a fade to black.

The cues highlight the differences, but also a continuity between photographic and digital cinema. The word 'moteur' refers to a mechanical process that was obsoleted by digital technology, and the same can be said about the English equivalent, 'rolling': nothing actually 'rolls' in a digital camera or a digital sound recorder, although the word is still used as a matter of convention, just like the word 'film' that has also lost its direct meaning when applied to digital cinema.

Therefore, it can be argued that the reflexivity of *Holy Motors* was provoked by the transition from analog to digital cinema. Two scenes mentioned above, the motion capture studio and the conversation with Michel Piccoli's character, address specifically digital filmmaking practices. In another scene, Monsieur Oscar sees in a dream a digitally glitched view of Père Lachaise (Fig. 1). In this context, I see inclusion of the Muybridge footage in the opening credits sequence (and also on two occasions later in the film: the



Figure 1. Monsieur Oscar dreams a pixelated digital Paris in Holy Motors.

chronophotography is thus one of the framing devices) as a historical counterpoint to the modern cinematic practice in the form of the oldest photographic moving image. Although Carax is somewhat skeptical of digital filmmaking and is certainly nostalgic of the analog,¹³ *Holy Motors*, his first digital work, seems to suggest a continuity and persistence of cinema despite the technological change.

The dialogue between Monsieur Oscar and The Man with a Birthmark is crucial in this regard:

MAN WITH A BIRTHMARK: Do you still enjoy your work? I'm asking because some of us think you've looked a bit tired recently. Some don't believe in what they're watching anymore.

¹³ Carax expressed his opinions on digital, for instance, in two interviews for the *New York Times*. Although they are thirteen years apart and Carax switched to digital in the interim, his views hardly changed: he is not opposed to digital filmmaking but laments photographic cinema, cf.: Kehr, 1999, and Lim, 2012.

MONSIEUR OSCAR: I miss the cameras. They used to be heavier than us. Then they became smaller than our heads. Now you can't see them at all. So I too sometimes find it hard to believe in it all. [...]

MAN WITH A BIRTHMARK: What makes you carry on, Oscar?

MONSIEUR OSCAR: What made me start, the beauty of the gesture.

In this exchange, Monsieur Oscar evokes the issue of credibility brought about by small (digital) cameras, or in other words, the alleged ontological crisis that I discussed in Chapter 1. And yet the “beauty of the gesture” persists. I will therefore now address what makes the “gesture” beautiful according to *Holy Motors*.

2.2. *Dream Space of Holy Motors*

The story in *Holy Motors* is framed by dreaming. The man in the prologue (played by Carax and identified as Dreamer in the credits) wakes up from a dream but seems to enter another dream in the movie theater where the audience is sleeping (the significance of that image is emphasized by placing the title card “Holy Motors” over the audience). Subjectivity is thus divided between the site of image production and the site of the audience, since both Carax and the spectators are sleeping in the prologue and it is impossible to tell who is *the* dreamer that sets the story in motion, or if there is one. Carax's appearance in the prologue is reminiscent of Buñuel's in the introduction to *Un chien andalou*. In both cases, the auteur sets up the ambiguous status of what follows: Buñuel's character by cutting an eye in half, Carax's Sleeper by seeing a dream within a dream.

Evidence of dream logic is present in the narrative structure of *Holy Motors*, which progresses from one story to another with no apparent connection between scenes, or, in some cases scenes are linked with a common element by association. For instance, while we



Figure 2. The resemblance of the businessman's mansion (Villa Paul Poiret in Mézy-sur-Seine) to a steamboat in *Holy Motors* links two narratively unrelated scenes according to the principle of graphic association.

do not see the screen of the film theater in the prologue, we can hear seagull cries and ship sirens on the soundtrack of the projected movie. The scene then cuts to the mansion that Monsieur Oscar leaves in character as a businessman, that is stylized to resemble a steamboat (Fig. 2); the sirens can still be heard, overlapping from the prologue. This kind of montage by association is consistent with Freud's description of dreamwork in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1999). In another instance, Kylie Minogue's song "Can't Get You Out of My Head" can be heard at a teenage party, and in a later scene Minogue appears in person as "Jean," a colleague of Monsieur Oscar's.

The structuring principle of *Holy Motors* is also reminiscent of *Un chien andalou*, as is the reality that it portrays. Carax's film does not present a fantastical reality as opposed to every day as much as a different *kind* of reality, in which, for instance, "there is no 'no'" (Williams, 1981: 84) as in dreams according to Freud and in *Un chien andalou* according to Williams: Monsieur Oscar can be the killer and the killed at the same time, and death does not exist since he always comes back to life. In his sardonically bizarre letter to the Los

Angeles Film Critics Association, in which Carax excused himself from accepting their award for best foreign-language film in person, the director compared cinema to another side of reality:

Foreign-language films are very hard to make, obviously, because you have to invent a foreign language instead of using the usual language. But the truth is, cinema is a foreign language, a language created for those who need to travel to the other side of life. (in Weisman, 2013)

This latter formula is reminiscent of Octavio Paz's above-quoted assertion that "[Buñuel's films] are the revelation of another reality" (1986: 52) of the elsewhere of a dream, or in Breton's terms, of surreality. Monsieur Oscar's opinion of small digital cameras points to the role of technology in that revelation. For him, the invisibility of modern cameras makes it "hard to believe in it all"—a sentiment likely shared by Carax who in an interview in 1999 said that he "wouldn't know where to put a little camera like that. I like big things—they're easier to hide behind" (in Kehr, 1999). If technology marks a boundary between representation and reality (as in Metz who compared cameras to a fetish that enables disavowal) then it becomes impossible to distinguish between the two when "visible machines" (as the limousines call themselves) are obsoleted and technology is not perceptible anymore.

Evan Perschetz (2014) in his essay on *Holy Motors* explores this ambiguity on perceptual level by analyzing critical responses to the film. He finds that critics were largely divided between seeing Carax's work as an object of beauty and as a commentary on cinema. Perschetz aligns these two views with Francesco Casetti's (1998) theory of interpellation; he argues that *Holy Motors* strategically situates itself between two modes of enunciation described by Casetti: "commentary" (*discours*) and "narrative" (*histoire*). "*Holy Motors*

employs the full spectrum of cinematic interpellation” (Perschetz, 2014: 50) and in so doing, maintains the ambiguity and by design never resolves it.

As in Buñuel’s work, vision is aberrated and one is never sure whether what one sees is real or not; the state is always liminal (as in dreaming); thus, liminality becomes a principle and the question of reality is suspended. Digital technology blurs the boundary to reconcile realities in the surrealist point sublime.

2.3. Denis Lavant, *The Absent Body*

The invisibility of cameras that Monsieur Oscar laments also shatters the ocularcentric paradigm of understanding cinema that dominated film theory from the beginning but has been challenged by recent scholarship.¹⁴ Indeed, if the camera, for Metz, is a fetish, then in the absence of camera fetishistic pleasure is impossible, since there is nothing to enable disavowal. Indeed, the limousine that drops off Monsieur Oscar to his appointments and picks him up from those is the only visible evidence of the constructed nature of his performances. As such, the limousine could be seen as Metz’s fetish (especially since a stretch limousine as a symbol of wealth and glamor is arguably a fetish of contemporary Western culture). And yet, during the acts themselves there is no evidence of recording technology present; significantly, even in the scene that shows the process of image making there is no camera, because it is a motion capture performance for which no actual camera is required. The camera used to be seen in film theory as an instance of truth (as in Godard’s famous aphorism “Cinema is truth twenty-four times per second”), and so its disappearance attests to the questionable status of reality in digital image making. In terms of narrative, it

¹⁴ Critiques of the ocularcentric approach and discussion of “the return to the body” in film scholarship can be found in Elsaesser and Hagener’s *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* (2015: 124-126).



Figure 3. Motion capture performance in Holy Motors.



Figure 4. Rendering of the performance.

fundamentally complicates the viewers' understanding of the plot: in Henry Carroll's words, "In *Holy Motors* we can never know when Oscar goes out of character because we can never know the relationship between the lens and the performers" (2014: 6). It also calls for refocusing attention from sight to the body in front of the camera, or the absence thereof, to find a point of reference in lieu of the absent camera. In doing that, we follow Walter Benjamin who shrewdly centered his argument of cinema in "The Work of Art..." around a performer's body and was interested in cameras only insofar as they enabled mechanical reproducibility of that body.

I will now take a closer look at the motion capture scene as exemplary of the film's dealing with issues of cinematic (re)presentation. In one of his appointments, Monsieur Oscar arrives in a studio. On the empty, dark set of the studio, dressed in a tight suit with glowing sensors, he performs a series of action scenes with minimal props and no visible crew or camera; he is then joined by a female performer ("The Cyber-Woman" according to the credits, played by Zlata) wearing a similar suit, and the two imitate a sexual encounter. The scene concludes with a rendering of their performance as two fantastical creatures in a setting that reminds of a video game, complete with sound effects (Figs. 3 and 4). The performers' bodies as such disappear from the image, remaining on the screen only as a trace (their motion).

In Benjamin's terms, such digital performance amounts to deauratization, i.e., loss of presence of a work of art in time and space. The word "presence" is especially important in this definition. In regard to cinema, according to Benjamin, aura is construed by an actor's presence in front of the camera—the "original" that is then copied (technically reproduced) in each print (or file, in the digital age) and each particular instance of the film's exhibition. Thus, for Benjamin, film viewing involves an effort to trace the presence of a body on the screen as a fundamental part of experiencing the medium. Benjamin speaks of presentation as opposed to representation: "[T]he fact that the actor represents someone else before the audience matters much less than the fact that he represents himself before the apparatus"; the actor "assert[s] his humanity (or what appears to [the viewers] as such) against the apparatus" (2008: 31).

Another major thinker who worked with the concept of human presence on the screen was Gilles Deleuze. Significantly, his philosophy of cinema does not pay as much attention to the spectator. Body, for Deleuze, is "what makes us think" (1997: 189), but much of his discussion of embodiment is concerned with actors' bodies. According to the author, the body has been especially important for certain filmmakers of the Post-War era, especially in the avant-garde and in the new wave movements of the 1960s and later. John Cassavetes' method is key for understanding the cinema of the body:

When Cassavetes says that characters must not come from a story or plot, but that the story should be secreted by the characters, he sums up the requirement of the cinema of the bodies: the character is reduced to his own bodily attitudes, and what ought to result is the gest, that is, a 'spectacle', a theatricalization or dramatization which is valid for all plots (ibid.: 192).

Presence, and presentation, of Denis Lavant in front of the camera has always been a constitutive part of Carax's aesthetic. The actor starred in three first features by Carax: *Boy*

Meets Girl (1984), *Mauvais Sang* (Bad Blood, 1986), and *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (Lovers on the Bridge, 1991). Although there is no narrative continuity between the three films, in all of them Lavant played versions of the same character named Alex. That is Carax's real given name; the two men are the same age (Carax is barely seven months older) and can be seen as having a physical resemblance. It is safe to say, then, that Lavant's character in those early collaborations was an alter ego of the writer-director, especially if we also consider the fact that Alex's love interest in each film was portrayed by Carax's romantic partner at the time, Mireille Perrier in *Boy Meets Girl* and Juliette Binoche in both *Mauvais Sang* and *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*.

It is, therefore, difficult to make a case that Carax's stories fully derive from Lavant's body like the stories of Cassavetes according to Deleuze: they seem to be shaped, first and foremost, by Carax's autobiography and his auteurist vision of himself. Two things, however, are important. Firstly, this relationship between the director and the actor produces a duplicated presence: while Lavant is present in the film by himself, he is also a surrogate of Carax's who delegates his own self-presentation to the actor. This aligns well with embodied cinema strategies of the French new wave, which Carax inherits.¹⁵

Deleuze writes that in the French new wave bodies were the point of departure and a constitutive element, to the point that even scenery in those films were made to accommodate the body. Indeed, Jacques Rivette, one of the generation's leaders, claimed as much:

[A] method designed... to establish an écriture based on actions, movements, attitudes, the actor's 'gestural', in other words. The ambition... is to discover a new

¹⁵ It has to be noted that Carax's relationship with the cinema of his older colleagues of the new wave generation is not one of straightforward ancestry. Daly and Dowd explore affinities, but also significant differences in detail (2003: 36-42).

approach to acting in cinema, ... where the movement of bodies, their counterpoint, their inscription within the screen space, would be the basis of the mise-en-scène. (In Rosenbaum, 1977: 89)

According to Deleuze, the “model actor” of this “cinema of postures” (1997: 193), was Jean-Pierre Léaud. Like Lavant, Léaud also came to fame playing a director’s alter ego: in his teens he made his acting debut in François Truffaut *400 Blows* (1959) as “Antoine Doinel,” a character based on Truffaut’s own experiences, and then reprised the role in four more films over the following twenty years, up to *Love on the Run* (1979). He also appeared in films by Godard, Rivette and Eustache, among others. There is little doubt that the new wave directors were role models for a young Carax who fulfilled Deleuze’s prediction that “the post-new wave will continually work and invent in these directions: the attitudes and postures of the body, the valorizing of what happens on the ground or in bed, the speed and violence of coordination” (ibid.: 195). The lineage is directly pointed at, for instance, in *Mauvais Sang*, in which Juliette Binoche’s character is made to resemble Anna Karina’s character in Godard’s *Vivre Sa Vie* (1962), and Michel Piccoli who starred in *Le Mépris* (1963), also by Godard, plays a key part.

Secondly and consequently, just like in the case of Truffaut and Léaud, Lavant’s role as an alter ego should not lead us to underestimate his own embodiment. A former acrobat and mime, Lavant performs in a very physical manner that also shapes the films that he and Carax made together. Each one of the three early collaborations includes scenes of purely physical, muscular action by Lavant: a dance sequence in *Boy Meets Girl*; the famous scene of a long, energetic run in a Paris street in *Mauvais Sang*; acrobatic tricks in *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*, in which Alex is a street performer (which is to say, the character is an extension and presentation of not only the director but also the actor, as street performer had been Lavant’s original occupation). I find in those scenes what Deleuze described as

theatricalization of the everyday body, performed in a way that characterized Godard's films, as opposed to Rivette's that focused on the passage from the everyday to the ceremonial body:

Godard's solution... seems at first sight simpler [than Rivette's]: it is... that characters begin to play for themselves, to dance and to mimic for themselves, in a theatricalization which directly extends their everyday attitudes. The character makes a theater for himself. (1997: 194)

Holy Motors marks a shift in Carax's approach as the film lays bare the process of theatricalization. Lavant's body in the limousine is presented in a very trivial, unglamorous, even unappealing manner—in other words, as everyday body; at one point, for instance, we see Monsieur Oscar resting from the latest appointment in a flung-up bathrobe. But the film also follows Monsieur Oscar's transformations for the roles he plays when he puts on costume and makeup and reads his briefs: "preparations for a stereotype ceremony" (ibid.: 192) not unlike those Deleuze finds in experimental films by Morrissey and Warhol.

In *Holy Motors*, therefore, Carax's method is closer to Rivette's who literally made theater a recurring theme in his work, filming, for instance, theatrical rehearsals in Paris *Belongs To Us* (1961) and *Out 1* (1971):

The characters are rehearsing a play; but the rehearsal precisely implies that they have not yet achieved the theatrical attitudes which correspond to the roles and the plot of the play... on the contrary, they resort to para-theatrical attitudes which they assume in relation to the play, in relation to their role, and each in relation to the others... These attitudes will thus secrete a gest which is neither real nor imaginary, neither everyday nor ceremonial, but on the boundary between the two, and which will point from this position to the functioning of a truly visionary or hallucinatory sense. (ibid.: 194)

I find the similarity of the above quoted passage to the surrealist notion of point sublime quite evident: situating the body in the passage between everyday and ceremonial is essentially the same as the surrealist gesture of resolving contradictions, and the “truly visionary or hallucinatory sense” that Deleuze writes about can be identified with the point sublime itself.

The motion capture vignette in *Holy Motors* is emblematic of this aspect of the film as it presents the process of theatricalization in a very explicit way, as one continuous shot in which the camera pans from Monsieur Oscar and the Cyber-Woman in performance (Fig. 3) to the screen on which their performance is presented as enhanced by computer-generated imagery (Fig. 4). While digital rendering in motion capture, for the purposes of this argument, amounts to essentially the same process as costumes and makeup, it is the digital technology that provides the most ostensive example. The malleability of the digital image also reveals Monsieur Oscar’s hauntological status, since his body is rendered elusive by the technology. Indeed, Monsieur Oscar is very much a ghostly figure in the narrative: like a ghost, he is beyond the binary of living and dead. He appears as both one and another in a scene modeled after a film noir, in which Monsieur Oscar is both the assassin and his victim; at another appointment, he is an old man on a deathbed who dies but then gets up from the bed and returns to the limousine.¹⁶

¹⁶ Very curiously for the purposes of this study and especially in the context of spectrality, Monsieur Oscar as the dying man bears a striking resemblance to Jacques Derrida (who had died in 2004, eight years prior to the release of *Holy Motors*), as some reviewers have also noticed (Bleasdale, 2012; Goldsmith, 2012). Although there is no other indication of a connection, one still wonders if this likeness can be interpreted as Carax’s admission of being consciously influenced by Derrida’s philosophy.



Figure 5. Denis Lavant as Alex runs through streets of Paris to David Bowie's "Modern Love" in *Mauvais Sang*...



Figure 6. ...and reprises the run on a treadmill as Monsieur Oscar in *Holy Motors*.

As we know from Derrida, any mediation (theatricalization), and not just digital mediation, is a subject of hauntology. In *Holy Motors*, Carax admits as much; in fact, in the motion capture vignette he makes a retrospective hauntological gesture by quoting the iconic scene of Alex's running from *Mauvais Sang*: Monsieur Oscar in his sensor suit runs on a treadmill against a background that resembles that from the earlier film (Figs. 5 and 6); thus an equivalency between the two scenes is suggested. Moreover, the film's commentary on the mediation (and spectralization) of the body is extended to the earliest form of the moving image through the inclusion of Muybridge's anatomical studies; as Henry Carroll put it, in so doing Carax "[implicates] all of film history before he has even started the narrative proper" (2014: 5). By pointing to Carax's own earlier works and to the origins of cinema, *Holy Motors* therefore does not assert that haunting is a problem that is unique for digital media, but rather that the digital media reveals the problem and provokes reflection.

The result of this provocation is transformation of Carax's (and Lavant's) subject. Their first three films together constructed their subject through their narrative coherence, serial continuity and reliance on Carax's own persona as a point of origin. Importantly, even in those early works Lavant's character was defined by ambiguity that Fergus Daly and Garin Dowd (2003) in their book on Carax describe with oxymoronic terms *autiste-bavarde* ('autistic man-chatterbox') and *enfant-vieillard* ('elderly child'), which "[serve] to emphasise

the fact that Carax gives us very clear indications that Alex, and by extension Carax's world... is characterised by its oscillation between poles, and by its penchant for 'ambiguities'" (5). However, this characterization amounts to ego-construction of "Carax's self-generated personal mythology" (4). This is not the case in *Holy Motors*, in which the protagonist and the auteur are explicitly separated (as Carax appears in person in the beginning) and their semiotic relationship is disrupted; and in which the process of making meaning(lessness) is laid bare.

Holy Motors, thus, subverts the constructive work of the early Carax by engaging in deconstruction. Monsieur Oscar is a fragmented, schizophrenic subject. Carax's schizophrenic project is alluded to in the deathbed scene, in which Monsieur Oscar as the delirious dying man says, "I have a plan: to become a madman," a quote from Fyodor Dostoevsky's letter to his brother Mikhail (1996: 13). It is also significant that the phrase is uttered in the original Russian: use of a foreign language once again points to liminality, death, or, per Carax's above-quoted passage, the "travelling to the other side of life" in cinema.

The schizophrenic subject of *Holy Motors*, like Antonin Artaud according to Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, has discovered "the collapse of the surface," (1990: 92) i.e. of signification that the Carax of *Holy Motors* no longer finds satisfactory, which necessitates "pushing poetic language to the threshold of sense and bodies into mannerist or burlesque postures and attitudes" (Daly and Dowd, 2003: 71), in the Artaud tradition. Carax's subject has been revealed to be malleable and fluid, a site of potential becomings that are activated in *Holy Motors* in the form of Monsieur Oscar's 'appointments,' or 'acting jobs.' Lavant's body, thus, is Deleuze and Guattari's "body without organs," defined not by the traits of the actor's actual body but by its potential traits.

The emergence of digital filmmaking and Leos Carax's introduction to it led him to explore the hauntological nature of mediation and shift his attention from the theatrical body, defined in opposition to the everyday body, to the process of becoming, which lies beyond that binary, and subsequently, to reveal the multiplicity of potentials concealed within actuality. Such revelation is the goal of the surrealist search for the marvelous ("an extraordinary appearance that *stands out* instead of retreating from reality," according to Cheng and Richardson). While Carax's filmmaking identity has changed, the body of his perennial actor, Denis Lavant, continued to be the point from which that identity is (de)constructed both in the analog and the digital period of the director.

3. Horse Money: Fiction and Documentary

3.1. *The Fontainhas Series: From Social Realism to Surrealism*

Like body and ghost, fiction and documentary, which correspond to fantasy and reality, are each other's opposites. Yet for surrealists that was not necessarily the case, as is evidenced by Luis Buñuel's sole venture into non-fiction filmmaking in *Land without Bread* (*Tierra sin pan*, also known as *Las Hurdes*, 1933). In this chapter, I explore how that opposition is resolved in the work of Pedro Costa, mostly focusing on his latest feature film *Horse Money* (*Cavalo Dinheiro*, 2014).

The work of the Portuguese filmmaker Pedro Costa, like Leos Carax's, tends to seriality. *Horse Money* is his eighth feature length work and the fourth in a series of films centered in and around Fontainhas, an impoverished, largely immigrant-populated neighborhood in Lisbon that was "slum-cleared" in mid-2000s, after which Costa followed its former inhabitants who relocated elsewhere. With the exclusion of two portrait documentaries, all Costa's films after 1997 are about the community and its members, some of whom appear in several films of the series: *Bones* (*Ossos*, 1997), *In Vanda's Room* (*No Quarto da Vanda*, 2000), *Colossal Youth* (*Juventude em Marcha*, 2006; also known in English by literal translation *Youth Onwards*), and *Horse Money*. Costa's upcoming film *The Daughters of Fire* (also known as *Vitalina Varela* in some sources), expected to premiere in 2018, will continue his commitment to the stories of Fontainhas' former residents, according to reports (Hudson, 2018).

Costa's poetics has significantly evolved within the series. *Bones* is the most conventional of the four films—it is a narrative social realist drama, structured around a scripted central conflict. The film stars non-professional actors, actual residents of Fontainhas, but they share screen time with professionals, specifically, leading Portuguese actresses Isabel Ruth and Inês de Medeiros, and portray fictional characters, even if based on

real-life experiences. *Bones* also adhered to the conventions of film production that included a large crew, professional equipment and shooting on 35-millimeter film.

In Vanda's Room was a radical break from those standards. Residents of Fontainhas in that film appear as themselves, performing their real-life stories. For example, the titular heroine, Vanda Duarte, had appeared in *Bones*, but in the earlier film she portrayed a fictional character, "Clotilde," while in *In Vanda's Room* her identity and biography are factual. Same is true for the second main character, Vanda's sister Zita Duarte who had played an unnamed supporting character in *Ossos*. The film, however, does not fully fit into a definition of a traditional observational documentary, as scenes were rehearsed and recorded in multiple takes, and locations, although real, were significantly altered (Neyrat, 2010). Importantly, Costa had also abandoned industrial mode of production and shot the film on an amateur Mini-DV camera that he manned himself, without a crew save for a sound recordist who only joined him six months into production. He continued this bare-bone approach in *Colossal Youth*; in terms of narrative, however, in that film fictional elements were reintroduced and blended with actual experiences of a Cape Verdean immigrant Ventura who starred as himself—a man relocated into social housing because Fontainhas had been "redeveloped" (i.e. torn down) by city authorities. As Jacques Rancière put it, "in *Colossal Youth*, realist illusionism gives way more and more to mythological reconstruction"; in certain scenes "one has the impression of having passed to the other side, of being surrounded by the residents of Hades itself" (2015: 50).

Horse Money goes further in the direction pointed to in *Colossal Youth*. Once again focusing on Ventura, the story finds him in a strange hospital-like space, possibly a mental institution, that he wanders in and around, trying to cope with memories of his past and encountering his acquaintances from the lost neighborhood, as well as from his old life in Cape Verde, all of that presented in highly stylized images. Some scenes suggest dream or

hallucination, most notably a flashback to a knife fight that Ventura had been in as a young man and an encounter in an elevator with a character that could be described as a ventriloquist living statue of a Portuguese soldier. As such, Costa's aesthetics returns to fiction, but instead of making a full circle and going back to the social realism of *Bones*, the director has developed a largely plotless narrative mode rich with bizarre, fantastical or otherwise non-realistic elements. However, many non-fictional aspects of Costa's earlier works remain in place, such as the character of the non-actor Ventura, a retired blue collar worker who immigrated to Portugal from Cape Verde in the 1970s and spent most of his life in Fontainhas.

Although some aspects of Pedro Costa's cinema have been described as "surrealist" by reviewers, his work has not yet been analyzed in surrealist terms. Costa himself has never suggested any affiliation, having even once referred to surrealism and other avant-garde movements of the early 20th century as "intellectual muck" (in Moutinho and da Graça Lobo, 2015: 19). In spite of the filmmaker's disdain, there appears to be more common between his aesthetics and surrealism than Costa himself would be willing to admit.

Surrealist qualities of Costa's latest work are already evident in the title *Horse Money* that juxtaposes two words in a serendipitously nonsensical manner that Breton described in the first manifesto, barely connected to the narrative. A horse named Money is mentioned in a story that Ventura tells a friend, but it is incidental to the main storyline. Costa explained in an interview that he simply thought that the title sounded good:

I like the title; I like it in English. I think it's a good combination. What else can you ask for, horse and money. Speed, power, nerve, breathing. I think it's good to have a film with the word money in the title... Probably it has some meanings, I'm dreaming this up, immigrants, adventurers, dangerous guys that risk something, and have these words on their mind, get the money, earn the money. It's not really the race, it's the

dream, the ambition, the nightmare. What I like is the pure simplicity, the concreteness of two words. (in Peranson, 2014)

In terms of narrative, *Horse Money* aligns quite well with early surrealists' theory of cinema as representation of a mental process in a liminal state. The film lacks overt cues to whether its sequences are a dream, a hallucination, a memory, or a combination of these; and does not make a clear distinction between fantastical and "realistic" content—presentation might be described in Goudal's terms as "conscious hallucination." Pathology is implied by that Ventura appears to be in a mental hospital, as suggested by an early scene in which he is examined by a doctor. His responses to the doctor's simple questions are evidently illogical or incoherent:

DOCTOR: Do you know who brought you?

VENTURA: The MFA brought me. The revolutionary army. [...]

DOCTOR: Can you describe what happened to you?

VENTURA: It's because of the mold in our walls.

DOCTOR: Where are you currently living?

VENTURA: In my shack... Fontainhas. [...]

DOCTOR: How old are you?

VENTURA: I am 19 and 3 months.

DOCTOR: How did you get lost? Where?

VENTURA: Fontainhas...

DOCTOR: Are you currently working?

VENTURA: Bricklayer. Retired. [...]

DOCTOR: What date is it today?

VENTURA: March 11, 1975.

DOCTOR: Do you know who the president is?

VENTURA: Seems to be one General Spínola...

Ventura's confused mind blends together several timelines. He identifies himself as a "retired bricklayer" but in the same dialogue makes a contradicting claim that he, an ageing man with a grey beard, is nineteen years old. Ventura refers to a traumatic event, the Carnation Revolution that happened in Portugal in 1974, however, the details are also mixed up in his responses: General António de Spínola who had led the coup d'état was President in 1974, and by March 1975 another military officer, Francisco da Costa Gomes had taken over. Ventura also believes that he still lives in Fontainhas ("mold in our walls" might also be a reference to the living conditions of the ghetto), although by that time the neighborhood does not exist, and in *Colossal Youth* eight years prior he moved to project housing in a different area.

The loss of Fontainhas that Ventura disavows made him twice displaced, after his migration from Cape Verde to Portugal, and contributed to the sense of fundamental confusion that he experiences. In *Horse Money*, he finds himself in a temporal disjunction, in which he cannot distinguish between his youth, his times in Fontainhas, and the present. Ventura's mind roams freely between the three temporal planes, and thus the film includes flashbacks to the events of the Carnation revolution, in which Ventura does not look any younger than he does in other scenes (an approach that reminds of Bernardo Bertolucci's *Spider's Stratagem* (*Strategia del ragno*, 1970) and Carlos Saura's *Cousin Angelica* (*La prima Angélica*, 1973)). There is also an encounter with a revolutionary soldier, and a scene in which Ventura visits his old job office, abandoned and dilapidated, and finds there his nephew who is waiting for his salary that the employer owned him more than twenty years ago. The time is "out of joint," and Ventura spectralizes across timelines as a ghostly figure. Jacques Rancière (2015) who published an essay about *Horse Money* also notices a spatial disjunction, which places Ventura on a border between "our social world" and "a mythical



Figure 7. The windows of Ventura's hospital chamber in Horse Money open onto a white void.

hell,” represented by the upstairs of the hospital and its labyrinthine lower level (50). The film, according to the author, amounts to an “exorcism” of Ventura’s ghosts (53). Yet even what Rancière refers to as “our social world” is presented in a non-realistic manner: for instance, in an early scene Ventura is visited by his friends, ostensibly in a hospital ward, yet the windows of his room open to a radiant white void (Fig. 7).

Before I analyze how these qualities of the film engage in a dialogue with its non-fictional aspects, it feels pertinent to mention that *Colossal Youth*, the previous instalment of the Fontainhas series with Ventura as the lead, featured a direct reference to surrealism. In that film, Ventura memorizes, and then repeatedly reads aloud, a letter based on a poem by Robert Desnos that he wrote for his wife Youki Desnos in a Nazi concentration camp not long before his death (the text is only somewhat altered in the film):

Being together again will brighten our lives for at least 30 years. I'll come back to you strong and loving. I wish I could offer you 100,000 cigarettes, a dozen fancy dresses, a car, that little lava house you always dreamed of, a three-penny bouquet. But most of all, drink a bottle of good wine and think of me.

Like Costa's films themselves, Desnos' letter appropriated in *Colossal Youth* is a document of human suffering imbued by all kinds of bright, fantastical imagery.

3.2. *The Problem of Surrealist Documentary: Costa and Land without Bread*

Strong non-fictional elements in the Fontainhas series place these films in the grey zone somewhere in the middle of the “fiction-documentary continuum” (Stam, 2015: 185) with a gradual shift towards fiction from *In Vanda's Room* to *Horse Money*; Robert Stam mentions Costa's work as an example of a “fiction-documentary hybrid” (ibid.: 211). The phrase “surrealist documentary” may sound like a paradox, and indeed it is, which does not mean that such form is impossible; in fact, Luis Buñuel's third film *Land without Bread* was a non-fiction film, and “paradoxical documentary” is precisely how Bill Nichols describes it, alongside with films like *F for Fake* (Orson Welles, 1975) and *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, co-directed by Christine Cynn and Anonymous, 2012) (2016: 172). As discussed above, surrealism does not privilege fantasy over reality, and surrealist documentaries, in which neither takes the upper hand, provide evidence of that.

Land without Bread is preceded in Buñuel's filmography by *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or* and was his first directorial work without Salvador Dalí. Made during the Republican rule in Spain before the Civil war, the short film is a study of Las Hurdes, an isolated mountainous region in the country's west with a centuries-long reputation of dismal living conditions and economic and cultural backwardness. Narrated by an authoritative off-screen voice, *Land without Bread* highlights misery and desolation of the impoverished community.

The film, however, is informed by Buñuel's surrealist sensibilities in a "[combination of] an avant-garde impulse with a documentary orientation" (Nichols, 2016: 22), which resulted in several breaks from a conventional documentary approach. First and foremost, some depictions presented as non-fiction are in fact staged, which is revealed in a paradoxical gesture within the film itself: in the infamous scene of a goat's death there is a puff of smoke that can be very clearly seen in the right-hand side of the screen, suggesting a gunshot and not an accidental death that the narrator claims it to be. Gwynne Edwards points to this and other instances of staging in *Land without Bread* to conclude that "[it] seems more than likely that other episodes were also staged," which, according to the author, was a case of Buñuel's "[shaping] his material... in order to capture and hammer home an essential truth" (2005: 44).

Instead of treating this technique as mere trickery, which does not explain why the staging is not concealed, I follow Mercé Ibarz's (2004) understanding of the film's consciously constructed nature as a (surrealist) gesture of a deliberate paradox. This is even more apparent in Buñuel's use of sound that at times clashes with the image. Ibarz points to one scene, in which the narrator tells the audience that the baby on the screen is dead and its mother grieving, while the baby is quite obviously alive and just sleeping.

Neither the sick girl nor the baby is dead: the narrator tells us they are but the images contradict him. The deliberate ambiguity of the documentary pact with the spectator is here exposed, relying on communicative strategies that would subsequently become common practice in publicity, propaganda and television. (31)

Costa, likewise, introduces conspicuously artificial elements to his ostensibly non-fictional narratives, sometimes also in an overtly ironic way resembling of Buñuel. In those instances his affinity with Buñuel is the clearest. Such as, for instance, Costa's use of an insurgent song of the Carnation revolution era in *Colossal Youth* that plays diegetically in the film and is

quoted in the title. The song's upbeat feel and optimistic lyrics counterpoint and thus highlight the poverty and hopelessness of those who did not benefit from the societal transformation that the revolution promised (this exclusion is also the central theme of *Horse Money*, which is haunted by the memory of the revolution). That, in turn, points to the goal that both Buñuel and Costa pursued in their documentary endeavors. Ibarz summarizes it in reference to *Land without Bread*:

In deciding to shoot a documentary, Buñuel's guiding principle was not to look for 'exotic' places that would be unknown to the spectator. He did not set out on a search for the Other/Different... Buñuel went in search of the Other/Same.

But not the Other/Same of the kind sought in two other key documentary themes of the time: the cities of Vertov, Ruttmann or Vigo, or the labour of the working classes of Ivens, Grierson or Strand. He went in search of *an Other/Same excluded from progress*, the images of which were already engraved in the spectator's minds. (31; emphasis added)

It is also to this end that Costa uses his artifice. While his films are shot on real locations, he uses complex framing and composition and sophisticated lighting setups that yield a look akin to Rembrandt's paintings (Fig. 8). That way, the scenes of urban poverty are treated in the same way as mythological and religious subjects of classical art, amounting to, as Stam put it paraphrasing Thom Andersen, an "aesthetiz[ation] of poverty" that he sees as a "virtue, since the poor are no more bereft of beauty than the rich" (2015: 214). Similarly, Ibarz finds that the "extremely elaborate and obvious" construction of *Land without Bread* "is related to popular narrative forms, particularly oral folk tales, that maintain tension through exaggeration, contradiction and reiteration, to arrive at a story that can be termed 'mythic'" (30). In his transformation of documentary form, Buñuel, and Costa after him, sought "to achieve the sort of image Walter Benjamin demanded in his analysis of the surrealist image:



Figure 8. A series of portrait tableaux vivants at the midpoint of *Horse Money* features Rembrandt-like mise-en-scene typical of Costa.

an image that can be no longer ‘measured contemplatively’, and instead becomes a moral metaphor and a new type of political action” (31).

3.3. DV Surrealism?

Costa’s project of “aestheticizing poverty” determined, and was determined by, his use of digital video. Like Buñuel who used a novel technology—sound—in making *Land without Bread*, Costa was a pioneer who converted from film to digital to work on *In Vanda’s Room* at the time when few filmmakers did.

In the early 2000s, digital cameras were still unable to capture images of cinematic quality, and therefore uses of them in feature-length cinema were conspicuous and purposeful (setting aside amateur and micro-budget productions, for which that was an economic necessity). Among early experiments, the films of the Dogme 95 movement used digital technology to achieve a “rough” quality of the image; Mike Figgis’ *Timecode* (2000) and

Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (*Russkiy kovcheg*, 2002), to film in extremely long takes. Costa's decision to shoot *In Vanda's Room* on Mini-DV was made out of ethical concerns. As explained by the director himself, making *Bones* in Fontainhas with large crew and equipment disturbed the neighborhood and felt for him like an intrusion: "The trucks weren't getting through—the neighborhood refused this kind of cinema, it didn't want it" (in Neyrat, 2010). With a Mini-DV camera, on the other hand, he was able to work in a two-man crew and thus achieve an intimate relationship with his characters, sisters Vanda and Zita Duarte, as well as to record a huge amount of footage over a long period of time. This approach allowed him to capture and present the sisters' daily routine more faithfully than the traditional, intrusive and time-restrictive practice would.

This strategy, of course, predated digital cameras: Costa who spent two years visiting Fontainhas to make the film and made friends with locals followed the tradition of documentarians like Jean Rouch whose career began in the 1940s. As Robert Stam explains, Rouch's goal of cohabitation—living with the subjects prior to filmmaking—fosters more intimacy with the filmed subjects. The production ideals of minimal crew and handheld equipment make film productions less intimidating by minimizing intrusion into the subjects' everyday lives. (2015: 201)

DV allowed a new level of freedom, such as an option of hour-long uninterrupted filming and a possibility of recording and storing a virtually unlimited amount of footage. However, in addition to convenience, the new technology had some implications in terms of aesthetics and the image's semiotic status.

In 2001, when fully digital films were still rare, Lev Manovich described two tendencies in digital cinema:

The first treats a film as a sequence of big budget special effects, with may take years to craft during post-production stage. The second gives up all effects in favor of

“authenticity” and “immediacy,” achieved with the help of inexpensive DV equipment. (2001: 2).

He termed this latter tendency “DV realism” and mentioned *Timecode*, Dogme 95 films *Celebration (Festen)*, Thomas Vinterberg, 1998) and *Mifune (Mifunes sidste sang)*, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, 1999) as well as *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) as notable representatives. Although the term itself was quickly outdated (Mini-DV proved to be short-lived), the tendency described by Manovich continued in other films shot on cheap consumer cameras, such as those of the so-called Mumblecore movement (i.e. Joe Swanberg’s early output: *LOL* (2006), *Hannah Takes the Stairs* (2007) and others), that are also characterized by casting non-professional actors, improvised dialogue and mundane subject matter.

Manovich identifies the two strategies of digital cinema with the so-called Lumière tendency and Méliès tendency, i.e. with “realist” and “constructivist” approaches, respectively. However, as discussed above, the distinction is hardly satisfactory as a universal model of film theory, and Costa’s cinema is an illustrious case as to why. His insistence on faithfulness to reality is emphasized by his use of literal documents within *Horse Money*: in one scene, Cape Verdean woman Vitalina Varela reads aloud her correspondence with the Portuguese embassy in Cape Verde regarding issuance of a visa (because of paperwork delays she did not get her visa on time for her husband’s funeral in Lisbon). This way Costa highlights the paramount importance of governmental documents for an immigrant experience, but the sequence can also be seen as an emblem of his docu-fiction approach. Official correspondence is, of course, utilitarian and is not meant to be performed, yet just that happens in the film, itself a performance of real-life experiences. It seems significant that *Colossal Youth* also featured a letter (by Desnos); an unofficial title of the first three Fontainhas films is “Letters from Fontainhas,” coined by the DVD publisher Criterion

Collection for their box set (which was released before *Horse Money* and therefore only includes three films, but the title can be extended to the latest instalment of the Fontainhas series).

Use of (written) letters that are read aloud by the characters points to the uneasy relationship between the event of utterance and its mediation, or between fact and its representation. While Manovich's binary simplifies the matter, his assessment of the digital moving image as different from the photographic in its semiotic status (non-indexical) is correct. Costa's use of digital photography is therefore ambivalent. The medium suggests a faithful representation of reality because of its raw look, as well as long takes and depth of field characteristic of camcorders (Bazin associated both long takes and depth of field with realism). And yet at the same time it is not faithful precisely because digital is non-indexical (i.e. deauratized, i.e. spectral). Vitalina Varela's letters are factual because they are documents, but they are hauntological because of the same (because writing, as discussed in Chapter 1, is always haunted).

This is something that was very well understood by Buñuel whose *Land without Bread* is often interpreted as a critique of the pretense to objectivity found in ethnographical research and documentary. Ibarz suggests that the film "is conceived as a commentary on and provocation to its generic equivalents: the 'urban symphony', newsreels, travelogues, scientific films" (2004: 35); Nichols agrees saying that Buñuel's surrealist documentary turns science on its head to underscore the sensationalism that surrounds "attractions" concocted from elements of everyday Hurdano life. *Land without Bread* condemns the very procedures of fieldwork, detailed description, and objective commentary that would form the backbone for ethnographic encounter in the decades to come. (2016: 18)

Likewise, Costa's digital works can be construed as a critique of the social realist drama, a genre he himself contributed to with *Bones*, that claims to present the life as it is but does so by means of a fictional narrative and professional production: something that Costa rejected as unethical. Instead of claims to objectivity, the director embraces the necessarily ambiguous relationship to reality that his images have.

The role of digital is acknowledged by Costa's referring to the history of photography in *Horse Money*. Just like Carax put Muybridge's chronophotographical footage in the beginning of *Holy Motors*, Costa opens *Horse Money* with several photographs of New York's impoverished neighborhoods from Jacob Riis' book *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). As Nichols notes, Riis' photographs are usually understood as a precursor to the documentary tradition but not a part of it because such a designation would be tautological: at the time of the book's making, "it was taken for granted that such work conformed to the basic function of the photographic image to document a preexisting reality" (2016: 234). Riis' photographic images are ostensibly indexical while Costa's digital ones are not. However, the juxtaposition (emphasized by the series of *tableaux vivants* in the middle of *Horse Money* that compositionally resemble Riis' photographs) implies a continuity of documentary/anthropological tradition.

Therefore, like for Carax, for Costa digital technology does not produce a break. Rather, it provokes a correction to the preexisting notions of image making. The idea that forms a basis of the Fontainhas films' aesthetic choices is that pure documentary is impossible, hence its unapologetic use of fictional elements, resulting in a hybrid docu-fiction form.

4. Seances: Past and Present¹⁷

4.1. *Seances as a Hauntological Project*

Analog and digital are cinema's past and present: another opposition that may seem irreconcilable—yet *Seances* (2016), a video art work made by the filmmaker Guy Maddin in collaboration with Evan Johnson, Galen Johnson, and the National Film Board of Canada, seeks to resolve it in another instance of a quest to the point sublime. This work that explicitly makes history of cinema its subject is my third and final example of surrealist strategies in contemporary digital cinema.

Seances exists as an installation that was first exhibited at Tribeca Film Festival in April 2016 and as a website seances.nfb.ca. A project whose ostensible goal is to recreate a number of lost films from early to mid 20th century using a digital form of what Lev Manovich would call “database cinema” (2001: 15) or “soft cinema” (Manovich and Kratky, 2005), *Seances* explicitly makes the relationship between film's (analog) past and (digital) present its subject. As an artistic statement published on the project's website asserts, “*Seances* is at once anachronistic and completely of its time. It spans a vast historical breadth, from early cinema all the way to present-day” (“Seances”).

Maddin, a well-known aficionado of early cinema who has consistently referred to that period in film history,¹⁸ first conceived what would become *Seances* as a project to re-

¹⁷ A version of this chapter was published in the Issue 85 of *Senses of Cinema* (December 2017).

¹⁸ For example, one of the most famous films by Maddin, *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003), is mostly black and white, features intertitles and expressionist set designs reminiscent of Weimar Germany's cinema, while his use of sound in *Archangel* (1990) is inspired by early talkies. These stylistic features are staples of Maddin's aesthetic.

create early films that are considered lost (or were unrealized in some cases). Maddin chose one hundred real movies of which some accounts exist, including films by F.W.Murnau, Kenji Mizoguchi, Alexander Dovzhenko, Ernst Lubitsch, Alfred Hitchcock, among others, and filmed some of them publicly at Centre Pompidou in Paris and Phi Centre in Montreal in 2012 and 2013. Maddin and his crew only shot thirty films out of the hundred, that were later edited into the feature film *The Forbidden Room* (dir. Guy Maddin and Evan Johnson, premiered in February 2015 at the Berlin Film Festival) and formed a basis for *Seances*.

In its final form, *Seances* is a code-based artwork that automatically creates unique video sequences from that material in real time. The program cuts the source videos into scenes and shots that for each viewing are automatically reassembled into unique combinations, complete with additional color and sound effects, digital noise, and random images from YouTube videos glitching into the image, so that every user sees his or her own “film” each time. In the video installation, the spectator is able to choose what fragments the program will use through a touchscreen set up outside the screening room; in the online version, users cannot influence the content at all. Resulting videos may not be downloaded or streamed again and thus are themselves “lost” after each viewing.

The title of *Seances* is a wordplay: while in English “séance” only means an attempt to communicate with spirits, in French, where the word originated, it has a broader definition and is often used for a movie show as a standard term. The project of Maddin, Johnson and Johnson started in Francophone cities, Paris and Montreal, and at the time was known as *Spiritismes*: a French word that specifically means a spiritualist session. However, the new name was adopted not only as an English translation of the original title, but was intended to make the pun, which Guy Maddin acknowledged in interviews:

Séance, in French, is just the standard term for “screening.” It literally means “a seating” — in both the paranormal and moviegoing meanings, it literally is a seating

in the dark where you go to be enchanted by something you want to believe in. (In Shawhan, 2015)

Indeed, every viewing of *Seances* is made to resemble a theater screening. A part of the installation is a dark room: a small screening hall where the videos are projected. In the web version, the streaming player does not have most options typical for online video: pause, rewind, repeat, or share, and so the viewer has as much control over what they watch as in a film theater. And, of course, every viewing is a conjuration of films that are lost; called “a testament to loss and ephemerality in the age of the Internet” in the artistic statement (“Seances”), *Seances* is an attempt to communicate with ghosts of film history through the means of modern digital technology.

4.2. *Editing as a Mental Procedure in My Winnipeg and Seances*

From the beginning of his career, Guy Maddin has found inspiration in early cinema and, more generally, the very era of the 1920s, to the point that many of his works are set in that time and all of them employ stylization of silent avant-garde film and early talkies to some degree. As such, Maddin’s films refer to the past, but without a claim to authenticity; as critic Dennis Lim put it, “in most of Maddin’s films, the past is not exactly recalled so much as hallucinated” (2006: 5). Like in the European art film tradition, as seen in the work by Resnais, Fellini, Tarkovsky and Saura and harking back to Buñuel, the method draws upon failure of recollection more so than upon its success. In his outstanding book on Maddin’s film *My Winnipeg* (2007), Darren Wershler notes that “when we cannot remember something exactly, what we see in our mind’s eye connects to a range of powerful possibilities: déjà vu, dream images, fantasies, scenes recollected from favourite plays, movies and television programs” (2010: 103). For Maddin, these are things of the same order; in other words, the past in his work is always imaginary and always mediated.

My Winnipeg, a quasi-documentary about Maddin's home city, is an exemplary work in this regard. Some of the stories that the narrator (Maddin himself) tells about his family and his city are outright fantastical and yet the images are stylized to resemble archival footage. Maddin's strategy reminds of the "mockumentary" genre that "self-consciously undermine[s] documentary's apparent transparency and verisimilitude" (Stam, 2015: 218), while his ironic use of the authoritative voice-over links to *Las Hurdes*: like Buñuel's surrealist documentary, *My Winnipeg* is a study of a place, and Maddin's competent-sounding voice delivers exaggerations and fictions about Winnipeg as facts. In a way similar to Pedro Costa's, Maddin creates a hybrid between fiction and non-fiction; however, in contrast to the Fontainhas series, the film styles itself as a personal narrative by Maddin, and unlike in *Las Hurdes* and many mockumentaries, the stories are so apparently outlandish that they are hardly intended to deceive anyone (it is safe to assume that the implied viewer of *My Winnipeg* understands that the Nazis never invaded the Canadian city like it is claimed in the film). The film's purpose is different—it presents a subjective experience of a recollection, or more precisely, a recollection in dream: when the narrator appears on screen he is always asleep. His unreliability is further emphasized by the fact that while the voice that we hear is Maddin's, the man that we *see* as Guy Maddin (explicitly addressed by that name) in the film is not actually him but an actor, Darcy Fehr.

Therefore, Maddin's representation of the past is not meant to be objective, nor is it intended as pastiche—although his nostalgic appropriation of historical texts and use of parody remind of Frederic Jameson's (1988) definition. It is, rather, a presentation of a mental process, as in Robert Desnos' theory of film, in which preceding texts are not as much a material for a postmodernist game of remixing and repurposing but the stuff of memory, a filler of recollection gaps. Indeed, as Wershler reminds citing sociological evidence, there is

an almost universal tendency for personal history to be mixed with recollections of scenes from films and other media productions. “I saw at the cinema” would become simply “I saw.” (2010: 104)

Maddin has found digital technology to be extremely beneficial for communicating subjective experience. In *My Winnipeg* and all his other late films Maddin and his collaborator, editor John Gurdebecke employ a film editing technique that Maddin calls “scrolling”: cutting to and fro across footage with some images being rapidly repeated several times. “Scrolling” was introduced in *Cowards Bend the Knee* (2003) and has been used by Maddin and Gurdebecke ever since. The director has explained that the technique is meant to represent a mental state:

We wanted to create the effect of a daydream about, say, your favorite romantic moment. The way you might think to yourself about a memory: “Wait, I didn’t go slowly enough, I didn’t enjoy that enough.” So you go back in your head and work back up to that moment again—and then stop there for a while, and then maybe just rock back and forth before zooming off to the next thing you want to daydream about. There’s a little bit of that left in our editing style. It really fit with *Cowards* perfectly, because it was a *remembered* story; I wanted the way of remembering this story of mine to be neurological and skittish like that. (In Myers, 2015; emphasis in original)

Moreover, in another interview Maddin tied his peculiar editing style to a feature of his individual perception, as opposed to that of a general “you” in the quote above:

I have a neurological ailment that made me think eventually of this style. I have a kind of, this thing, it's very harmless. It's called myoclonus. ... I got one in the base of my skull. And it created just little neurological flickers that produced tiny little twitches, the kind you just sort of imagine you have most of the time. But just like a

ghost touching you with the fingertip. I get them about ten times a minute, just in completely random different places on my body. (In Canavese, 2008)

This rationale, however, was secondary to the technology that made it possible. *Cowards Bend the Knee* was the first film by Maddin in which he and Gurdebecke worked with a computerized non-linear editing (NLE) system as opposed to the traditional cutting table. Scrolling was discovered by accident, born from the process of digital editing and termed after a process of actually scrolling through footage to find the right image. In Wershler's explanation,

[Maddin] and John Gurdebecke developed [scrolling] during the editing of *Cowards Bend the Knee*, with the help of Apple's Final Cut Pro video-editing software. In the digital editing process itself, once fast-forwarding or reversing begins, it is quite easy to move too far past the specific image one is seeking, then too far back, then forward a little slower but still missing the mark, then slightly too far back again, and so on, gradually zeroing in. (2010: 105)

Interestingly, together with this stylistic development, which marks a change from a more conventional editing patterns of Maddin's earlier films, his themes have also shifted. William Beard notes that from *Cowards Bend the Knee* and on, Maddin's films began incorporating explicit references to autobiography and thus their prevailing theme turned from amnesia to remembering (2010: 194-195). I will not go as far as to assume that scrolling alone provoked that shift, but the correlation is striking; and seeing that Maddin parallels the technique with the work of memory, it seems likely that NLE has at least contributed to the thematic turn.

Surrealist techniques, such as, for instance, the game of exquisite corpse, predicate on surrealist engagement in randomness and chance, Mallarméan "throw of the dice", which originated in automatic writing. Therefore, it is important that scrolling was discovered by chance and, as described above, itself has an element of randomness to it, produced by

unintentionally moving too far forward or back past the desired image. It can be, therefore, considered to be similar to automatic writing in editing, in which the effect is produced spontaneously. While *The Forbidden Room* also employs scrolling in editing the same footage, *Seances* brings the principle of automatism to another level.

Adam Lowenstein (2015) also equates scrolling through video to surrealist practices, but on the spectator's end. In *Dreaming of Cinema*, he discusses the DVD edition of *The Sweet Hereafter* (dir. Atom Egoyan, 1997) and its added features like chapter selection and commentary track as an example of surrealist "enlarged spectatorship" (39-42), in which a spectator is able to create their own edit, as it were, producing an "alternate version of *The Sweet Hereafter*, discovered through a disorienting, chance encounter with digital media and assembled through intermediation" (42). In *Seances*, likewise, editing by design partly occurs during watching, but without human involvement on the part of the producer or the spectator. If the automatist's body is a "recording instrument" as Breton put it, then *Seances* that substitutes the body as a producer (or "recorder") of text for a code is a technological update to automatic writing where the human is removed as unnecessary. Randomizing force of the software links stories in unpredictable ways, yielding a quasi-narrative in which subplots begin in media res without explanation and end abruptly without resolution.

This is a dream logic that was emulated by Dulac in *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, and by Buñuel and Dalí in *Un chien andalou*. The difference, however, is that both of those films were constructed in production and thus could be said to present the work of an individual mind or minds. *Seances*, on the other hand, offers a unique experience: in other words, if watching *Un chien andalou* is like seeing someone else's dream, *Seances* is closer to dreaming individually. Therefore, while made to resemble a theater screening in which everyone sees the same film, *Seances* actually subverts the usual relationship between the

producer and the spectator. It is the same principle that Breton and Jacques Vaché used in their moviegoing habits. Breton wrote:

I never began by consulting the amusement pages to find out what film might chance to be the best, nor did I find the time the film was to begin. I agreed wholeheartedly with Jacques Vaché in appreciating nothing so much as dropping into the cinema when whatever was playing was playing, at any point of the show, and leaving at the first hint of boredom – or surfeit – to rush off to another cinema where we behaved in the same way and so on... I have never known anything more *magnetizing*. (2000: 73; emphasis in original)

Bits of films follow each other in *Seances* according to the same randomizing principle, and while it can be argued that Breton and Vaché's method requires an active spectator while Maddin and the Johnson brothers' does not, Breton's comings and goings are, in the same way, instances of surrealism's involvement in chance. The action of going from one theater to another is only required from the spectator because there is no other technical way to provoke a chance encounter. Breton as a spectator moving between film shows in different cinemas reduces himself to an agent of chance. *Seances* eliminates the necessity of that procedure by being an agent of chance in itself.

4.3. Surrealist Techniques in *Seances*

Guy Maddin has repeatedly claimed admiration for surrealist films and been described as a surrealist (see, for instance, Maddin, 2010: 65, 80, 113; Beard, 2010: 7-8, 36). In particular, he cited Buñuel's and Dalí's *L'Âge d'Or* and neo-surrealist David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) as two films that inspired him to be a filmmaker (Maddin, 2010: 113).

In the first surrealist manifesto, published in 1924, André Breton (1969) quoted the poet Pierre Reverdy to describe one of the surrealist aesthetics' key strategies as "juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities" (20). Examples that the manifesto

provides are quoted from Reverdy himself, such as: “In the brook, there is a song that flows,” or “Day unfolded like a white tablecloth” (36); the principle was also applicable to other arts beyond literature, including cinema. Iconic images from *Un Chien Andalou* serves as an example: a human hand that is simultaneously an ant nest and decomposing donkeys lying on a grand piano dragged by a priest.

Breton posits that “man does not evoke” (36) such images, i.e. they are produced automatically beyond the author’s will. *Seances* makes such juxtaposition a principle, according to which fragments of narratives morph into each other in very unlikely ways that have nothing to do with the logic of cause and effect; not to mention that the narratives themselves are often based on a surrealist premise. For instance, one of the videos I watched started as a story of boy scouts at a German-Quebec war, then turned to a deaf barber who regains hearing by putting bullets into his ears and concluded with a tutorial of how to use a bath; random images from other stories were intervening along the way. Each video in *Seances* also has a surrealist juxtaposition for a title: the names of individual videos are two or more words put together in random, grammatically correct combinations that are generated by computer, such as “Madly the Teabags Dream”, “Clocks and Boutiques” or “Love Songs of the Scattered Cowards.”

Seances’ videos are non-linear, composed from different image sequences and different media: now and then the lost films remade by Maddin and the Johnson brothers are invaded by YouTube videos that glitch through their texture. Most often, the YouTube images in *Seances* are quite trivial: kids talking on camera, culinary tutorials, cat videos and such; the way they are employed as “found objects” reminds of surrealist genre of “ready-mades”, most famously practiced by Marcel Duchamps. The principle of assembling different images and forms, in turn, is akin to collage, a visual art form extensively practiced by the original surrealists (see Adamowicz, 1998) and Guy Maddin himself. In particular, the use of

outdated forms of imagery is analogous to Max Ernst's collage novels that reworked nineteenth century engraved book illustrations to be used in the innovative genre. As a collage artist, Maddin also prefers that practice, citing "books and magazines of his youth" as a source material for the collages ("Collage"). The combinatory nature of *Seances* makes it similar to the "cubomania," invented by the Romanian surrealist poet and artist Gherasim Luca. In that method, an existing image is cut into squares that are reassembled in a random fashion to create a new image. As Krzysztof Fijalkowski points out, "in contrast to the collage novels and to surrealist collage practice as a whole, the cubomania explicitly blocks any tendency to either narrative or visual coherence, however ambiguous, surprising, or uncanny these might be"; in it "[a]ll is in motion, nothing falls into place to allow linear readings" (2015: 8). Maddin et al. offer a digital update to the surrealist collage that bears a striking resemblance to Lev Manovich's imaginary project of "database cinema," which he wrote about in 2001, still early in the digital age: "[I imagine] a narrative "film" in which a computer programs assembles shot by shot in real time, pulling from the huge archive of surveillance video, old digitized films, Web cam transmissions, and other media sources" (15).

Maddin's use of ghosts as a metaphor of a force behind the surrealist juxtapositions of *Seances* points back to the spiritualist origins of surrealism as "psychic automatism." In a similar way, *Seances* adopts spiritualism as a metaphor.¹⁹ In this work, the digital medium

¹⁹ Like Breton, Maddin of course is not a spiritualist; as he said in an interview on *The Forbidden Room*, "I don't believe in ghosts unless I'm holding a camera, or engaged in a project. Then ghosts are handy things and I believe in them as story elements" (in Myers, 2015).

becomes, indeed, a *medium* in the spiritualist sense; what this medium summons is ghosts of lost films, returned, as it were, from the oblivion by Maddin, Johnson and Johnson.

4.4. Colliding Cinemas

Seances' preoccupation with loss (in the artistic statement the project's conceptual framework is defined as "a new way of experiencing film narrative, framed through the lens of loss"; "Seances") returns us to Derrida's hauntology, described in similarly negative terms of absence and lack. The loss that defines *Seances*' metaphorical lens is found on two levels of the text: the project is based on lost works of film history (is a product of loss) and generates videos that disappear after the first and only viewing (produces loss).

The former of these two aspects situates *Seances* quite well within Guy Maddin's filmography, which had been tremendously influenced by cinema of silent and early sound eras and already included adaptations of early cinema before *Seances* appeared (Maddin's short works *Odilon Redon, or The Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity* (1995) and *The Heart of the World* (2000) were based on Abel Gance's feature films). The past is perhaps the most prominent theme in Maddin's work,²⁰ always in fictionalized form. Kenneth White (2006) interprets his film through the notion of nostalgia, which the author associates with Jacques Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. However, while characterizing Maddin as a postmodern filmmaker does seem appropriate (for reasons described by Beard (2010: 11)), it would be reductive to define *Seances* as just a case of postmodern nostalgia: the project's radical, post-cinematic form makes it expressly a work of this day and age. What Maddin and the Johnson brothers do in *Seances* is discovering future potentials of the medium (perhaps

²⁰ William Beard's monograph (2010), the only comprehensive study of Maddin's work existing today, is tellingly titled "Into the Past."

revolutionary if we adopt the term “digital revolution”) by closely looking into things of the past. Walter Benjamin described such inclination as a distinctive feature of surrealism:

[Breton] can boast an extraordinary discovery. He was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the ‘outmoded’, in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct... The relation of these things to revolution—no one can have a more exact concept of it than [surrealist] authors. (1978: 50)

All the recreated films really existed but were hardly anything like Maddin and the Johnson brothers’ reimaginings: for instance, Mikio Naruse’s *The Strength of a Moustache* (1931) was chosen to be remade because of its peculiar title, and made into an absurd story in which a young boy uses a fake moustache to make his blind mother believe that he is his own father, while the latter is absent, which is what the boy tries to conceal. Guy Maddin and Evan Johnson admit that this bizarre plot is their invention, as are many others in *Seances* (in Peranson, 2015). As such, *Seances* constitutes a history of cinema assembled from films that do not exist – or in other words, a hauntological history of cinema.

On the level of form, videos in *Seances*, assembled and rendered in real time and then destroyed, try to emulate, by ways of digital technology, an experience of aura. “It is your only chance to see *this* film,” declares a title on the start screen of *Seances* (emphasis in original); in that, a unique “presence in time and space” is established, akin to that in pre-television, pre-video era, when a movie goer did not have a chance to revisit a film after its theatrical run had been over. On the level of form, *Seances* communicates the sense of soon to be lost by imitating color distortions and morphs caused by disintegration of celluloid: a testament to fragility and ephemerality of (analog) film history and an evidence that the “film” you are watching is real and is about to disappear forever. Quite paradoxically, both methods of reinstating a sense of authenticity associated with analog cinema (singularity of

each viewing and visibility of physical film material) work digitally, out of an antithesis to what is imitated. The uniqueness of each viewing is made possible thanks to sophisticated software by Nickel Media, a Canadian IT company that collaborated on the project; while each video created in *Seances* is original and not a reproduction, in a sense that it has been composited specifically for one viewing and may not be copied, in fact it does not have an original at all. The sense of presence is created from a void, as there is not even a digital video file, incorporeal as it may have been, of what we watch; only a situational combination of video files with no single point of origin. As for the visual effects, they are of course created digitally, to represent a physical dying in something that cannot physically die, or at any rate is not susceptible to physical wear and tear.

In such a way, *Seances* collides (or “juxtaposes,” to use the expression from Breton’s manifesto) two realities of cinema. The first reality is that of film’s analog past: it is defined by materiality of physical film and, as discussed above, is thus ontological. Its principal metaphor is a mummy, per Bazin who wrote about a “mummy complex” of plastic arts whose fundamental purpose, according to the theorist, is “[t]o preserve, artificially, [man’s] bodily appearance” and thus “to snatch it from the flow of time, to stow it away neatly, so to speak, in the hold of life” (1960: 4–5). Another reality is that of film’s digital present: immaterial and hauntological; the metaphor for the digital is a ghost, as described by Derrida.²¹ *Seances* constitutes a work of art in which both planes are present simultaneously:

²¹ The point of departure of Derrida’s argument in *Specters of Marx* is “the specter of Communism” which appeared in the first sentence of the Communist Party Manifesto and, according to Derrida, still haunted Europe in the time of his writing – after the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union collapsed. The opposition of analog and digital, as seen in *Seances*, seems to mirror Derrida’s vision of Marxism. If a hauntological Communism continued to

its aesthetic is rooted both in the analog past of cinema's lost history and the digital present, potentially open to the future; it is impossible without any of the two. In preserving both analog and digital aesthetics and yet surpassing them to achieve a synthesis of the antinomies, *Seances* seems to operate in the point sublime of film history.

haunt the world in the 1990s as a *ghost*, its ontological, material version in the form of the Soviet Union had become a thing of the past, of which material evidence persisted: Vladimir Lenin's *mummy* that is exhibited in a mausoleum at the Red Square in Moscow to this day.

Conclusion

Digital image making disturbed the previously existing notion of “realist” and “constructivist” approaches to filmmaking due to its malleability and incorporeality that implies the absence of an “original,” a lack of a Benjaminian “here and now.” That disturbance, sometimes even perceived as a crisis is almost surprising considering that a filmic image is, after all, a sign, and that a sign is just that and not its referent is a commonplace idea, very often illustrated by the painting *Treachery of Images* by surrealist Renè Magritte, in which a meticulously painted image of a smoking pipe is placed next to a caption that reads “This is not a pipe.” A cinematic illustration of the same idea can be drawn from the famous nightclub scene in David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive* (2001): “¡No hay banda! There is no orchestra!” announces the MC before revealing that what we (and the two heroines) thought to be live music is in fact only a record. In Lynch’s film, Hollywood’s cinematic fantasy, the reality of Los Angeles and the protagonist’s dreams (that comprise the plot through the most part of the movie) are woven together in a surrealist manner, to the point of being indistinguishable from each other.

It is understandable that photography and cinema provoke this confusion due to their extraordinary similarity to represented objects that exceeds that of any other medium. That feature of cinema is precisely what was exciting for surrealists who, in Linda Williams’ (1981) words, “delighted in the difference between the film image and the “reality” it supposedly reflects,” focusing on “the misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the image—its endless paradox of believable falsehood” (143). To explain their interest in the problem of image and reality in cinema and other visual media, Williams cites another Magritte’s painting, entitled *Not to Be Reproduced* (Fig. 9; the pun resulting from this reproduction is not intended). Williams writes:



Figure 9. *Not to Be Reproduced* (René Magritte, 1937) is used by Linda Williams to illustrate the notion of the "believable falsehood" of images.

It is hard to say which reflection lies, that of the mirror or that of the canvas. But since mirrors only reflect what is *seen* and since the only thing seen here is the back of the

man, which *we* see, the painted mirror does not lie at all. On the contrary, it exposes the lie painted mirrors have perpetrated for centuries, that they are a kind of eye that sees what we know is not there but is only posited through our tenacious faith in the representation of reality. (144)

Likewise, the many guises of Monsieur Oscar in *Holy Motors* and his transformation into a monster through motion capture are not a lie; rather, they reveal a lie that had always been there but was made apparent by digital cinema. Surrealism proves to be a valuable theoretical framework to study the technological divide because surrealists always understood that cinema, like any other medium, is neither “realist” or “constructivist”: it is both, and at the same time—or in other words, it is surrealist. It requires a union of “perception and imagination” (Lowenstein, 2015: 14) that the works studied here make explicit: as body and ghost in Leos Carax’s *Holy Motors*, as non-fiction and fiction in Pedro Costa’s *Horse Money*, as past and present (of cinema itself) in *Seances* by Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson and Galen Johnson.

In conclusion, let us once again return to David Lynch, whose oeuvre are a powerful testament to cinema’s ability to locate the point sublime. Unlike in *Mulholland Drive* and the works studied here, in his latest television series *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017, created by Lynch and Mark Frost, all episodes directed by Lynch) mediation is not a prominent theme. However, throughout the show, which deals with uncertain identities and multiple planes of existence, its characters question the nature of diegetic reality, as if aware that they are a part of a fictional universe; in one particular scene, a character played by Lynch himself sees a dream in which Monica Belucci, appearing under her own name, quotes a phrase from the Upanishads: “We are like the dreamer who dreams, and then lives inside the dream. But who is the dreamer?”

In the final episode of the series, several realities seem to merge into one. The episode includes footage from the beginning of the original series (*Twin Peaks*, 1990-1991, created by Lynch and Frost, Episode 1 directed by Lynch), from which the dead body of Laura Palmer, the mystery of the show, is removed (by means, without doubt, of digital manipulation), since Laura was retroactively saved, thus creating an alternative reality in which the episode apparently takes place. Later, in the final scene of the episode and the entire series, FBI agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), the protagonist of both the original and the sequel, arrives in the titular town of Twin Peaks accompanied by Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) who is now living, to reunite her with her mother. However, the person that they encounter in the Palmers' house is not Laura's mother as Cooper expected but the woman who owns the house that served as a set for the crew in reality. Thus, in the alternative reality of the episode, fictional universe of preceding episodes (and the original series) merges with extra-diegetic reality. In the narrative, this "broken" reality is produced by changing past events (saving Laura Palmer from death)—that is to say, on the level of mediation, by a digital intervention to the image (removal of Laura's body from original footage). As in cinematic works discussed above, digital technology in *Twin Peaks: The Return* provokes the emergence of a paradoxical reality in which perception and imagination are indistinguishable. The characters' reaction is that of a fundamental confusion, as seen in the series' last words uttered by a shocked Agent Cooper: "What year is this?" *Twin Peaks: The Return* does not answer this question, nor the one asked by Belucci in the dream sequence. The finale takes place in the point sublime, in which these questions are irrelevant and the paradox needs not to be resolved, because, as in *Holy Motors*, *Horse Money* and *Seances*, the paradox is precisely the point.

Works cited

- Abel, Richard. *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*. Volume 1: 1907-1929. Princeton UP, 1988.
- Adamowicz, E. *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Andrew, Dudley. *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction*. Oxford UP, 1976.
- . *André Bazin*. Oxford UP, 1978.
- Aristotle. *Aristotle's Physics. Books 1 & 2*. Translated by William Charlton, Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Artaud, Antonin. "Reply to an Inquiry." *Collected Works*, vol. 3, Calder and Boyars, 1972, pp. 59-60.
- . "Cinema and Reality." *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*, by Richard Abel, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 410-412.
- Bazin, André. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." Translated by Hugh Gray, *Film Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1960, pp. 4-9.
- Beard, William. *Into the Past: The Cinema of Guy Maddin*. University of Toronto, 2010.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia." Translated by Edmund Jephcott, *New Left Review*, no. 108, 1978, pp. 47-56
- . "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility: Second Version." Translated by Harry Zohn, Edmund Jephcott, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* by Benjamin, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2008, pp. 19-55.

- Bleadsdale, John. Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax. *CineVue*, 24 May 2012, <https://cine-vue.com/2012/05/cannes-2012-holy-motors-review.html>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Bradshaw, Peter. Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax. *The Guardian*, 23 May 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/may/23/holy-motors-review>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Brannigan, John. "We have nothing to do with literature": Derrida and Surrealist Writing." *The French Connections of Jacques Derrida*, edited by Julian Wolfreys, Brannigan, Ruth Robbins, SUNY Press, 1999, pp. 53-70.
- Breton, André. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. University of Michigan, 1969.
- . *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism*. Translated by Mark Polizzotti, Marlow and Company, 1993.
- . "As in a Wood." *The Shadow and Its Shadow*, translated and edited by Paul Hammond, City Lights Books, 2000, pp. 72-77.
- Canavese, Peter. Review of *Brand Upon the Brain!*, directed by Guy Maddin. *Groucho Reviews*, 2 May 2008, <http://www.grouchoreviews.com/interviews/256>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Carroll, Henry. "Invisible Cameras: Audience—Lens—Character Relationships in Holy Motors." *Film Matters*, vol. 5, no. 3, September 2014, pp. 5-9, DOI: 10.1386/fm.5.3.5_1.
- Casetti, Francesco. "The Figure of the Spectator." *Inside the Gaze: The Fiction Film and Its Spectator* by Casetti, Indiana UP, 1998, pp. 16-44.
- . *The Lumière Galaxy: 7 Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. Columbia UP, 2015.

- Cheng, Joyce Suechun, and Michael Richardson. "The marvellous." *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, edited by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Richardson, Routledge, 2016, pp. 239-247.
- "Collage." *Guy Maddin*, <http://guy-maddin.com/collage>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Conley, Katharine. *Surrealist Ghostliness*. University of Nebraska, 2013.
- Daly, Fergus and Garin Dowd. *Leos Carax*. Manchester UP, 2003.
- De Julio, Maryann. "Another Look at Germaine Dulac's The Seashell and the Clergyman." *Senses of Cinema*, no. 69, December 2013, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2013/feature-articles/another-look-at-germaine-dulacs-the-seashell-and-the-clergyman>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, edited by Constantin V. Boundas, The Athlone Press, 1990.
- . *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, University of Minnesota, 1997.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago, 1980.
- . *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, 2006.
- Desnos, Robert (1988a). "Dream and Cinema." *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*, by Richard Abel, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 283-285.
- (1988b). "Fantômas, Les Vampires, Les Mystères de New York." *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*, by Richard Abel, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 398-400.
- (1988c). "Avant-Garde Cinema." *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*, by Richard Abel, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 429-432.

- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. "M. M. Dostoyevskomu. 9 avgusta 1838. Peterburg [To M. M. Dostoyevsky. 9 August 1838. Saint Petersburg]." *Sobranie sochineniy v 15 tomah* [Collected works in 15 volumes], vol. 15, Nauka, 1996, pp. 11-13.
- Ebert, Roger. Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax. *Rogerebert.com*, 7 November 2012, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/holy-motors-2012>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Edwards, Gwynne. *A Companion to Luis Buñuel*. Tamesis, 2005.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Cinephilia, or The Uses of Disenchantment." *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by Marijke De Valck, and Malte Hagener, Amsterdam UP, 2005, pp. 27–44.
- Elsaesser, Thomas, and Malte Hagener. *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015.
- Fijalkowski, Krzysztof. "Cubomania: Gherasim Luca and Non-Oedipal Collage." *Dada/surrealism*, no. 20, 2015, DOI: 10.17077/0084-9537.1301.
- Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. University of California, 1994.
- . "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change." *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, Arnold, 2000, pp. 438-52.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by Joyce Crick, Ritchie Robinson, Oxford UP, 1999.
- Ghost Dance*. Directed by Ken McMullen, Channel Four, 1983.
- Goldsmith, Leo. "Chronicle of a Disappearance." Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax, *The Brooklyn Rail*, 4 October, 2012, <https://brooklynrail.org/2012/10/film/chronicle-of-a-disappearance>. Accessed 11 April 2018.

- Goudal, Jean. "Surrealism and Cinema." *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907-1939*, by Richard Abel, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 353-362.
- Hudson, David. "Most Anticipated Films of 2018." *Criterion Collection*, 1 January 2018, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/5240-the-daily-most-anticipated-films-of-2018>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Ibarz, Mercè. "A Serious Experiment: Land Without Bread, 1933." *Luis Buñuel: New Readings*, edited by Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla, British Film Institute, 2004, pp. 27-42.
- Jackson, Kevin. *Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens*. British Film Institute, Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *Postmodernism and Its Discontents*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, Verso, 1988, pp. 13-29.
- Kadri, Raihan, et al. "Objective chance." *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, edited by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, Routledge, 2016, pp. 143-153.
- Kafka, Franz. *Letters to Milena*. Translated by Philip Boehm, Schocken, 1990.
- Kehr, Dave. "A Poet of the Emotions Breaks His Silence." *The New York Times*, 27 June 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/27/movies/film-a-poet-of-the-emotions-breaks-his-silence.html>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Lim, Dennis. "Brand Upon the Brain!: Out of the Past." *Criterion Collection*, 2006.
- . "A Farewell to Celluloid With a Tribute." *The New York Times*, 10 October, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/movies/leos-carax-makes-holy-motors-with-film-historys-help.html>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Lowenstein, Adam. *Dreaming of Cinema: Spectatorship, Surrealism, and the Age of Digital Media*. Columbia UP, 2015.

- Lyotard, Jean-François. *Discourse, Figure*. Translated by Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, University of Minnesota, 2011.
- Maddin, Guy. *Interviews*. Edited by D. K. Holm, UP of Mississippi, 2010.
- Malcolm, Derek. Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax. *Evening Standard*, 23 May 2012, <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/film/holy-motors-cannes-film-festival-review-7781513.html>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Mannoni, Octave. "Je sais bien, mais quand-même..." *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène*. Editions du Seuil, 1969, pp. 9-33.
- Manovich, Lev. "What Is Digital Cinema?" 1995, http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/009-what-is-digital-cinema/07_article_1995.pdf. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- . "From DV Realism to a Universal Recording Machine." 2001, http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/031-reality-media/28_article_2001.pdf. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- . "There Is Only Software." 2011, <http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/066-there-is-only-software/63-article-2011.pdf>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Manovich, Lev, and Andreas Kratky. *Soft Cinema. Navigating the Database*. MIT Press, 2005.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Translated by Celia Britton. Indiana UP, 1982.
- Moine, Raphaëlle. "From Surrealist Cinema to Surrealism in Cinema: Does a Surrealist Genre Exist in Film?" *Surrealism and Its Others*, special issue of *Yale French Studies*, no. 109, 2006, pp. 98-114.
- Moutinho, Anabela and Maria da Graça Lobo. "Conversation with Pedro Costa. The encounter with António Reis." *Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema*, vol. III, no. 6, 2015, pp. 17-22.

- Myers, Emma. "Sundance Interview: Guy Maddin." *Film Comment*, 4 February 2015, <http://www.filmcomment.com/blog/sundance-interview-guy-maddin>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Neyrat, Cyril. "Pedro Costa's Fontainhas Trilogy: Rooms for the Living and the Dead." *The Criterion Collection*, translated by Nicholas Elliott, 30 March 2010, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1425-pedro-costa-s-fontainhas-trilogy-rooms-for-the-living-and-the-dead>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Nichols, Bill. *Speaking Truths with Film*. University of California, 2016.
- O'Neill, Shaleph. *Interactive Media: The Semiotics of Embodied Interaction*. Springer, 2008.
- Paz, Octavio. "Luis Buñuel: Three Perspectives." *On Poets and Others* by Paz, translated by Michael Smidt, Arcade Publishing, 1986.
- Peranson, Mark. "L'avventura: Pedro Costa on Horse Money." *Cinema Scope*, no. 60, 2014, <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/tiff-2014-horse-money-pedro-costa-portugal-wavelengths>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- . "Lost in the Funhouse: A Conversation with Guy Maddin and Evan Johnson on The Forbidden Room and Other Stories." *Cinema Scope*, no. 62, 2015, <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/lost-funhouse-conversation-guy-maddin-evan-johnson-forbidden-room-stories>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Perschetz, Evan. "Holy Motors, the Spectatorial Gaze, and Cinematic Interpellation." *Film Matters*, vol. 5, no. 3, September 2014, pp. 49-52, DOI: 10.1386/fm.5.3.49_1.
- Rancière, Jacques. "The Ghost Road." *Sight and Sound*, vol. 25, no. 10, October 2015, pp. 48-52.
- Rège, Philippe. *Encyclopedia of French Film Directors*. Vol. 1, The Scarecrow Press, 2010.
- Richardson, Michael. *Surrealism and Cinema*. Berg, 2006.

- Richardson, Michael, and Krzysztof Fijalkowski. "The supreme point." *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, edited by Fijalkowski and Richardson, Routledge, 2016, pp. 248-254.
- Rosenbaum, Jonathan. *Jacques Rivette: Texts and Interviews*. British Film Institute, 1977.
- Sachs, Ben. Review of *Holy Motors*, directed by Leos Carax. *Chicago Reader*, 2012, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/holy-motors/Film?oid=7475430>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Shawhan, Jason. "Guy Maddin talks about his crazily ambitious *The Forbidden Room*, a fake rescue of the century's missing movies." *Nashville Scene*, October 29 2015, <http://www.nashvillescene.com/arts-culture/film/article/13061852/guy-maddin-talks-about-his-crazily-ambitious-the-forbidden-room-a-fake-rescue-of-the-centurys-missing-movies>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Translator's Preface. *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida, translated by Spivak, John Hopkins UP, 1997, pp. ix-xxxviii.
- Stam, Robert. *Keywords in Subversive Film/Media Aesthetics*. Wiley, 2015.
- Vivarelli, Nick. "Report: Almost 90 Percent Of The Planet's Movie Screens Are Now Digital." *Variety*, February 6, 2015, <http://variety.com/2015/film/global/report-almost-90-percent-of-the-planets-movie-screens-are-now-digital-exclusive-1201426239>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Weisman, Jon. "Foreign-language film: Leos Carax explains it all." *Variety*, 14 January 2013, <http://variety.com/2013/film/awards/leos-34000>. Accessed 11 April 2018.
- Wershler, Darren. *Guy Maddin's My Winnipeg*. University of Toronto, 2010.
- White, Kenneth. "Forget Your Desire: The Cinema of Guy Maddin." *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 45/46, Fall 2006, pp. 133-139.
- Williams, Linda. *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film*. University of Illinois, 1981.