

5-9-2014

Acts of Rebellion: The Rhetoric of Rogue Cinema

Adam Breckenridge

University of South Florida, breckenridge@mail.usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd>



Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Breckenridge, Adam, "Acts of Rebellion: The Rhetoric of Rogue Cinema" (2014). *USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.

<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/5191>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Acts of Rebellion: The Rhetoric of Rogue Cinema

by

Adam Breckenridge

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
with a Concentration in Rhetoric and Composition
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Philip Sipiora, Ph.D.
Marc Santos, Ph.D.
Margit Grieb, Ph.D.
Amy Rust, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
May 9, 2014

Keywords: Film Studies, Rogue Cinema, Burke, Zizek

Copyright © 2014, Adam Breckenridge

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Roger Ebert, who was the first person to ever teach me to love the movies.

Acknowledgments

I would first of all like to thank my chair, Dr. Sipiora, for introducing me to the concept of rogue cinema and for guiding me through my own exploration of it. I would also like to thank my readers, Drs. Santos, Grieb and Rust, for their input into this project. I would furthermore like to extend my thanks to Steve Heller, who told me I would have better job prospects if I got a PhD in rhetoric and composition instead of creative writing and I would like to thank Steve Goldsberry, who was the first teacher to ever tell me I was a good writer. And I would like to thank my siblings-in-arms in the PhD program, because it is only a fellow PhD who is capable of understanding the agonies and miseries of the PhD process and whose friendship was often the only thing that made it bearable.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Chapter One: Laying the Groundwork	1
Why Go Rogue?.....	1
A Rogue Film is an Act of Cruelty	2
Identifying Identification	8
Dear Mr. Fantasy	18
Three Legs to Stand On	24
Chapter Two: The Mad Visions of Alejandro Jodorowsky	26
Why Jodorowsky?.....	26
<i>Fando y Lis</i> : A Road Trip to Heaven, a Road Trip From Hell	33
<i>El Topo</i> : Digging Down to Reach the Sun.....	38
Ascending <i>The Holy Mountain</i>	49
Conclusion	66
Chapter Three: Dusan Makavejev: or, How I Learned to Stop Politicizing and Love a Good Orgasm	68
Distinguishing Makavejev from Jodorowsky	68
<i>WR: Mysteries of the Organism</i>	75
<i>Sweet Movie</i> : Anything But	88
Chapter Four: Lars von Trier and the Terministic Screen	104
Framing von Trier	104
On the Count of Ten, You Will be in <i>Europa</i>	110
<i>Dancer in the Dark</i> : Doing it Dogme Style	119
Chapter Five: Werner Herzog's Rogue Life	133
<i>Aguirre: The Wrath of God</i> and the Heart of Darkness	137
<i>Stroszek</i> , or the Chicken Who Does Not Know Why He Must Dance	146
Conclusion: Bringing it All Together	156
Works Cited	158
Appendix: The Dogme 95 Manifesto and the Vow of Chastity	161

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to articulate a definition and understanding of the emerging genre of rogue cinema through the lens of rhetorical theory. To this end, I lay out a theoretical groundwork based principally on the works of Kenneth Burke and Slavoj Zizek to build a definition and to analyze the works of four filmmakers whose work could be considered rogue: Alejandro Jodorowsky, Dusan Makavejev, Lars von Trier and Werner Herzog.

The first chapter is dedicated to articulating the theorists I use and showing how they can be used to examine rogue films. The second chapter is dedicated to the films of Jodorowsky, focusing in particular on his films *Fando y Lis*, *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain*, looking at how these films form a critique of our conventional views of religion and spirituality. Chapter three looks at Makavejev's films *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* and *Sweet Movie* and discusses how they undermine the capitalist/communist dichotomy that has defined most of 20th century politics. Chapter four examines Lars von Trier's films *Europa* and *Dancer in the Dark*, framing them in particular with the Dogme movement and looking at how von Trier rebels against cinematic convention. The last chapter looks at Herzog's films *Aguirre: Wrath of God* and *Stroszek* and discusses how Herzog blends fiction and reality in ways that question our cultural and moral values.

Since little has been written on rogue cinema to date my aim here has been to help develop rogue cinema as a concept and begin the work of building a theoretical basis for the idea of this as a genre. In my conclusion I suggest avenues for future scholars to expand on this idea and discuss what further work needs to be done for rogue cinema to become an accepted idea.

Chapter One: Laying the Groundwork

Why Go Rogue?

Rogue cinema (or alternative cinema as it is sometimes called) is a rather difficult subject matter to take up, partly because of how unfamiliar the term is even to those dedicated to film (a problem that I do hope could be corrected through these pages) but also because to date, little critical attention has been paid to it as a genre, with the literature on such films tending to focus on the works of a particular director (in which the word “iconoclast” gets tossed around a lot, but rarely are they discussed as “rogue”) or a particular film that, while it could be considered rogue, tend to focus on elements other than what constitutes it as rogue. So far, the bulk of the work in discussing rogue cinema as a genre has come from Phillip Sipiora, who originally coined the term and who has principally defined it through the lens of phenomenology¹ (a lens that we will only come to obliquely in this work, primarily through the discussion of identification theory in film). I believe the reason for this dearth of criticism stems from two issues: one is the fact that rogue cinema has only recently come to be seen as a genre in its own right and the other is that, like film noir, another genre that is severely lacking in worthy critical discourse, rogue cinema is nebulous and difficult to define, even more so perhaps than noir as it is very much in the nature of rogue cinema to resist boundaries and easy categorization. By this rationale, rogue cinema could perhaps best be defined by Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart: “I know it when I see it.” (Jacobellis vs. Ohio) While it is tempting to offer up nothing more than this as a definition of

¹ One should look at his essay “The Phenomenological Quest of Stanley Kubrick: Eyes Wide Shut” from the anthology Stanley Kubrick: Essays on his Film and Legacy for an insight into how Sipiora has approached the subject matter to date in his work.

rogue cinema (or, perhaps more apt: you'll know it when you see it), it is a little too ambiguous even for our purposes. However, I quote the line only semi-facetiously, as Stewart in fact made his declaration in reference to a film that could certainly be argued as rogue: Louis Malle's *Les Amants* (1958), a film that was initially banned in the US for being pornographic until the Supreme Court overturned the decision. For our purposes, however, I intend to put forward a much more complex, three-fold definition that draws on three rather disparate thinkers (because I intend to make the boundaries of this work as nebulous as the genre we're exploring here): Antonin Artaud, whose appropriation of the term "cruelty" in his landmark work *The Theater and its Double* holds valuable connotations for a discussion of rogue cinema, Kenneth Burke, whose ideas on the rhetoric of identification allow us to get at the heart of how an audience relates to a rogue film and whose Pentad provides a valuable architecture for discussing the kairic moment of rogue films, and Slavoj Zizek whose investigation into ideological fantasy applies quite well to the aesthetics of rogue cinema (his lesser known writings on sadism are also quite useful here).

A Rogue Film is an Act of Cruelty

Stewart claimed that hardcore pornography was difficult to define, but he knew it when he saw it and, deliberately or not, he draws a connection here between audience and rogue cinema's boundaries as a genre. (Silver) Where other genres can be defined by settings, characters or plot devices, rogue cinema transcends such conventions, functioning more in the style that Antonin Artaud's Theater of Cruelty strived for: a desire to reveal a truth to the audience that they did not want to see. While Theater of Cruelty is not a perfect analogue to rogue cinema, as one of the fundamental components of Theater of Cruelty is in the fact that the

audience shares the same physical space as the actors², it does provide us with one of the cornerstones upon which I would like to build my definition of rogue cinema. The relevant parallel is in the desire to shock and discomfit the audience but it is very important to note how Artaud defines “cruelty.” In a letter to a friend explaining the term “Theater of Cruelty” he wrote:

This Cruelty³ is a matter of neither sadism nor bloodshed, at least not in any exclusive way.

I do not systematically cultivate horror. The word “cruelty” must be taken in a broad sense, and not in the rapacious physical sense that it is customarily given...

It is a mistake to give the word “cruelty” a meaning of merciless bloodshed and disinterested, gratuitous pursuit of physical suffering. The Ethiopian Ras who carts off vanquished princes and makes them his slaves does not do so out of a desperate love of blood. Cruelty is not synonymous with bloodshed, martyred flesh, crucified enemies. This identification of cruelty with tortured victims is a very minor aspect of the question. In the practice of cruelty there is a kind of higher determinism, to which the executioner-tormenter himself is subjected and which he must be *determined* to endure when the time comes. Cruelty is above all lucid, a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity. There is no cruelty without consciousness and without the application of consciousness. It is consciousness that gives to the exercise of every act of life its blood-red color, its

² Phenomenologists who work in film have, however, explored in great depth questions concerning the physical space in which the act of viewing a film takes place, and while some of their work has relevance to questions of identification I want to explore later on, the relationship between phenomenology and rogue cinema would be a different work altogether.

³ I feel it should be noted that the French term Artaud uses, “la cruauté,” is in both connotation and denotation a very close approximation to the English word “cruelty” and as such this rhapsody loses very little in translation.

cruel nuance, since it is understood that life is always someone's death. (101-2, emphasis in original)

Artaud raises here an issue of perception that is also a very common confusion with rogue cinema. When discussing the concept of rogue cinema, a common misconception that occurs in trying to articulate the purpose of the violent, aggressive nature of these films is that people are usually inclined to think of such films as the *Saw* movies or *The Human Centipede* series but despite the extreme violence and grotesque subject matter of these films, I do not think any of them could be considered rogue. I will, however, be looking in these pages at the works of Werner Herzog, whose most aggressive films fall far short of the gore of a typical teen-targeted horror film and yet who has also produced many films that can certainly be seen as rogue. What then is the difference between *Fitzcarraldo* and *The Human Centipede* or, perhaps more difficult to answer, what is the difference between *The Human Centipede* and Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009), a film that is undeniably rogue and whose violence and gore easily matches even the most exploitative of teen horror films?

In some ways, it will be the effort of the entirety of this work to articulate these differences, but some orientation here will serve us well. When Artaud talks about cruelty he talks about something much deeper than the shock of extreme violence or sexuality being paraded before us. There is something in the nature of the best rogue films that forces a re-envisioning of the world and of ourselves. We watch *The Human Centipede* so that we can be grossed out by the spectacle of it and brag to our friends later about how we sat through the whole thing without throwing up. The film offers little else of merit. To this end, I would argue that there is no aesthetic difference between *The Human Centipede* and hardcore porn (though I will be using the term exploitation to label such films). We watch *Antichrist* however because it

is a deeply layered meditation on despair but one that incites despair in the viewer as well, something that is very difficult to achieve (though one could perhaps argue that the very existence and success of *The Human Centipede* is cause for despair).

I have provided here a woefully simplistic overview of the difference between exploitation and rogue but it serves for the point I'm currently looking to emphasize: the denotative definition of cruelty is not unique to rogue cinema (though it is quite rare to find a rogue film that does not practice it) but no rogue film will ever operate outside the Artaudian definition of cruelty (and, I would argue, examples of films that practice Artaudian cruelty that are not rogue are quite rare). There is also of course, some ambiguity here as to where one definition of cruelty ends and the other begins. I have already made clear my declaration that *The Human Centipede* is exploitation while *Antichrist* is rogue but certainly there are films where it becomes very difficult to say whether we are looking at something that is rogue or exploitation.

In my personal experience, perhaps no film has given me more trouble in this respect than Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), a film that was ostensibly intended to be a low-budget gorehouse horror film from the heyday of low-budget Italian horror films. It's appeal lies in its pseudo-documentary style (a novel technique at the time) lending an air of authenticity to the chronicle of four grad students making their way deep into the Amazon to research a remote tribe that still practices cannibalism. The film's violence is extreme almost to the point of irony (though the fact that several real animals are brutally killed on screen makes any ironic enjoyment pretty much impossible) as we watch the grad students torture, kill and subjugate the tribe once they find it only to have the tribe rise up and kill them in revenge. This

extreme violence, coupled with the documentary style⁴, makes *Cannibal Holocaust* ostensibly little more than an exercise in voyeuristic exploitation, with the torturing and murdering of real animals on screen making it a particularly vile one at that. And yet, the theme of violent Western subjugation of indigenous people (especially by a group of grad students whose mission supposedly should have been dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and preservation of the tribe's ways) strikes a nerve that runs far deeper than revulsion to the film's gore. And yet this note is ultimately soured by the trite final scene of the film, when the professor who had directed the students' research (Robert Kerman) walks out into the sunlight after watching the surviving footage of the expedition to declare "I don't know monster who the real is," bringing what could have been a challenging commentary on colonialism down to the level of a Hallmark platitude. And yet even with this conclusion it is difficult to dismiss the film outright, however strongly one may morally and aesthetically object to it.

Of course, this ambiguity can run in another direction altogether, as I've already raised the question of whether a film can practice Artaudian cruelty without being rogue. Artaud talks of truths the audience is unwilling to confront and in this sense one could look at a film like Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County USA* (1976) whose expose of government and corporate crackdowns on unions and collective bargaining is undoubtedly a truth many in this country would prefer to ignore, but I do not believe this is what Artaud was talking about. His idea of cruelty is more metaphysical and again I would call upon von Trier's evocation of despair in *Antichrist* as an example of this. Many films have dealt with despair as a theme. Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Blue* (1993) is one such film and while few would deny that *Blue* is a great film I also doubt you would be willing to find many who would call the film rogue. That the film has

⁴ And there is a rather irresistible anecdote about the film's style, as when Ruggero returned to Italy with it, Italian authorities mistook the film for a real documentary and promptly arrested Ruggero and charged him with the murder of the film's actors, charges that were dropped when Ruggero was able to produce the actors.

almost nothing in the way of violence or sexuality is certainly part of it but it is also in the fact that, while we watch Julie (Juliette Binoche) cope with the loss of her husband and son we certainly feel empathy for her, as we would for a friend who has undergone such a tragedy, Kieslowski keeps us at a certain distance, in part because we see almost nothing of the husband and son (the film's opening scene is the car crash that kills them) and as such cannot identify with them⁵, but it also has a great deal to do with the fact that Kieslowski takes something of an ironic approach to grief and despair. Ostensibly, the theme of *Blue* is freedom (as it is part of his *Three Colors Trilogy*, the other two films being *White* (1993) and *Red* (1994) and the titles of the film are intended to correspond to the colors of the French flag, which symbolize respectively liberty, equality and fraternity) and Kieslowski explores the idea that freedom can be found through the deaths of those who you have an obligation towards. Thus, while despair is a motif of the film, it does not ruthlessly pursue it to the extremes that *Antichrist* does, and therein lies the difference between a rogue film and a high-concept film.

But we still have not answered the question of whether a film that is not rogue can be a showcase for Artaudian cruelty? The best answer I can provide is perhaps among the myriad films that remind us of our mortality (*Synecdoche, New York*) or that remind us of how insignificant we are in the universe (*2001: A Space Odyssey*). A case can perhaps be made for such films but I feel confident in saying that the majority of films that practice Artaudian cruelty will also be rogue.

⁵ Those who have seen *Antichrist* are no doubt thinking right now that the source of the couple's grief in that film, the death of their infant child, also happens in the opening sequence of the film, but I will articulate what von Trier does differently in my chapter on von Trier.

Identifying Identification

Beyond this notion of cruelty, however, it is difficult to find further space for Artaud in a discussion of film, as he makes his contempt for the medium quite clear in *The Theater of Cruelty*: “Movies in their turn, murdering us with second-hand reproductions which, filtered through machines, cannot *unite with* our sensibility, have maintained us for ten years in an ineffectual torpor, in which all our faculties appear to be foundering.” (84, emphasis in original) Artaud thought the cruelty he hoped to see could only be achieved through the theater, because he believed that the physical space was essential to this process. It is peculiar to see him dismiss cinema like this, as there were certainly films of his time capable of cruelty (in other words, rogue cinema) and one could maybe even make a case for Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Joan of Arc* (1927), in which Artaud was a supporting actor, but I believe Artaud misidentified what makes a rogue work an act of cruelty.

This is where rhetoric becomes essential to the question, as rhetoric is ideally suited for allowing us to explore the relationship between rogue cinema and the audience, which I believe is key to understanding what makes a film rogue and how rogue cinema can be classified as a genre. In his *Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke refocused our idea of rhetoric from Aristotle’s definition as the ability to see the available means of persuasion to associate it instead with identification: “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his.” (55, emphasis in original) Burke correlates identification with his notion of consubstantiality, which he articulates in greater depth in *A Grammar of Motives* where he first introduces the idea and defines it as “shared substance” and which he roots in his definition of the word substance, a word that he breaks down into its literality, “sub-stance,” what exists beneath one’s stance. (22) He further

argues that: “the ambiguity of substance affords, as one might expect, a major resource of rhetoric.” (51) This is because substance is essentially unknowable because it remains hidden to us:

At the very best, we admit, each time you scrutinize a concept of substance, it dissolves into thin air. But conversely, the moment you relax your gaze a bit, it reforms again. For things *do* have intrinsic natures, whatever may be the quandaries that crowd upon us as soon as we attempt to decide definitively what these intrinsic natures are. (57, emphasis in original)

In other words, when we identify with someone, we are looking to share something deeply intrinsic with them, but in order for this to happen, there has to be an identification with an other, and for Burke identification is a reflexive process, and in fact this very reflexiveness is an important idea to how I want to look at the rhetoric of rogue cinema, because I believe part of what can come about from the process of identification with a rogue film is seeing things in yourself that you did not know were there or wish you never knew were there.

Furthermore, Burke, in *The Rhetoric of Motives*, talks about the participatory nature of the audience in this process. “Longinus refers to that kind of elation wherein the audience feels as though it were not merely receiving but were itself creatively participating in the poet’s or speaker’s assertion. Could we not say that, in such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?” (57 - 58) He goes on to give a rather basic example of how this works: “(I) imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions (‘we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up, but they look down,’ etc.). Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the

subject matter.” (58) This is also a key point because what Burke is arguing is that identification can often be an involuntary process, which he elaborates on:

But recall a *gradatio* of political import, much in the news during the “Berlin crisis” of 1948: “Who controls Berlin, controls Germany; who controls Germany controls Europe; who controls Europe controls the world.” As a proposition, it may or may not be true. And even if it is true, unless people are thoroughly imperialistic, they may not want to control the world. But regardless of these doubts about it as a proposition, by the time you arrive at the second of its three stages, you feel how it is destined to develop – and on the level of purely formal assent you would collaborate to round out its symmetry by spontaneously willing its completion and perfection as an utterance. (59)

Thus is it possible for us to identify involuntarily and I do not think it is brash to say that this involuntary process can easily operate beyond the scope of a poetic utterance. If we were to consider, for example, an old trope like the downward spiral of a drug addict (featured in so many movies that I will allow the reader to fill in examples), which usually follows the same basic pattern: the first experiment with the drug, the way it slowly consumes their lives, the increasing acts of desperation they undergo to try to get a fix, the inevitable rock bottom, watching friends die, etc. The pattern is quite familiar, but is the very predictability of this pattern not part of why we identify with these characters? Indeed, the predictability is part of the reason we can become so invested in their plight, as we come to dread the inevitable next stage in the process. Consciously or not, I believe it is often the practice of rogue filmmakers to rely on this very involuntary sense of identification to take us places we do not want to go.

Consider a film like Todd Solondz’s *Happiness* (1998), a film with a substantial cast of characters, all of whom are sympathetic at the same time they are often pathetic, perverted,

selfish and twisted people. To focus on the most notorious instance from the film, the character of Bill Maplewood (Dylan Baker) is introduced to us first as a psychiatrist who we then come to see as a family man – loving father and husband, etc. Only gradually is it introduced to us that he is also a pedophile and through the course of the film he drugs and rapes two boys, and yet despite these acts we never get away from our initial identification with him: successful professional and family man. When so many films portray pedophiles as monstrous and inhuman to see one portrayed as such an ordinary person is shocking not just because it is not how films and the media in general have trained us to think about such people but also because it forces us to acknowledge that we share more in common with pedophiles than we care to admit (though not in the sense that we too could be capable of such acts – rather it is in the sense of forcing us to acknowledge that pedophile is not purely defined by his sickness any more than we are defined purely by our sexual cravings). Oliver Hirschbiegel’s *Downfall* (2004) has a similar effect with the humanizing of Hitler, which sparked a great deal of controversy on the film’s release (incidentally, the humanizing of a pedophile in *Happiness* sparked similar outrage). David Denby of the *New Yorker* articulates the concern quite well:

Considered as biography, the achievement (if that’s the right word) of “Downfall” is to insist that the monster was not invariably monstrous—that he was kind to his cook and his young female secretaries, loved his German shepherd, Blondi, and was surrounded by loyal subordinates. We get the point: Hitler was not a supernatural being; he was common clay raised to power by the desire of his followers. But is this observation a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did? (“Back in the Bunker”)

It is indeed a shocking effect to see a figure who we are so used to seeing demonized as the ultimate incarnate of evil brought down to the level of a human once again. Despite Denby’s

own words, I do not think he actually does get the point: the effect of the humanizing of Hitler is to remind us that such evil was not the product of some superhuman power but was as ordinary as any of us. And the effect this film has would not be possible if it were not for the involuntary nature of identification as Burke defines it⁶.

Of course, no member of an audience for *Happiness* or *Downfall* will (hopefully) ever totally identify with Bill Maplewood or Hitler and this is the other component of Burke's theory of identification, which is that identification inevitably comes coupled with division. If consubstantiality were to be thought of as a Venn diagram, identification would be the point where the two circles overlap (our shared substance) while division would be what exists in the individual circles. As Burke articulates in *Rhetoric*: "We found that this wavering line between identification and division was forever bringing rhetoric against the possibility of malice and the lie; for if an identification favorable to the speaker or his cause is made to seem favorable to the audience, there enters the possibility of such 'heightened consciousness' as goes with deliberate cunning." (45) In other words, to run with Burke's example, a politician's attempt to relate to his audience runs the risk of also making the audience aware of the fact that he is trying to manipulate us (for a recent example, one could look to Romney's failed attempts to paint himself as a "man of the people" in the 2012 presidential election). Though I disagree with Denby's assessment of *Downfall*, we may in fact be seeing an example of division at work in regards to a film. For Denby (and I imagine many others) the portrait of Hitler as the mythical ultimate

⁶ Ironically, Burke addressed this very concern in his essay "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" back when the first English translation of *Mein Kampf* was made available in 1940:

Here is the testament of a man who swung a great people into his wake. Let us watch it carefully; and let us watch it, not merely to discover some grounds for prophesying what political move is to follow Munich, and what to follow that move, etc.; let us also try to discover what kind of "medicine" this medicine man has concocted, that we may know, with greater accuracy, exactly what to guard against, if we are to forestall the concocting of similar medicine in America. (149)

The argument could be made that what Burke says here is one of the most important points that *Downfall* tries to make.

embodiment of evil is so powerful that they cannot help but reject any attempt to bring him down to a human level.

I have spoken already of how a rogue film will use identification against an audience but this could perhaps be reframed as a coupling of identification and division. To revisit Bill Maplewood in *Happiness* we could say that it is only possible to identify with Maplewood up to a point: as a professional and a family man we can find consubstantiality with him but as a pedophile we find ourselves separate from him. Burke discusses in *Rhetoric* how this line between identification and division becomes a focal point for rhetoric: “For in considering the wavering line between identification and division we shall always be coming upon manifestations of the logomachy, avowed as in invective, unavowed as in stylistic subterfuges for presenting real divisions in terms that deny division.” (45) It is extremely rare to find a rogue film that does not spark some form of controversy and while this controversy exists separately from the film itself, if we are to consider rogue films rhetorically we must bring a discussion of these controversies into the fold: does Solondz in *Happiness* apologize for pedophiles or complicate our simplified view of them? Or (to look at a question that crops up again and again and again in discussions of the film) is a film like *Antichrist* a work of art or a work of pornography? Is my distaste for *The Human Centipede* merely a failure to find consubstantiality with it? And if I hated the first one so much, why did I watch the sequel?

These are difficult spaces to negotiate with any film (and my last question is certainly an awkward one for me to answer) but I believe rogue cinema forces us to negotiate these spaces more so than other films. However, as with Artaudian cruelty, I would be reluctant to argue that this practice of using identification against the audience is unique to rogue cinema (in fact, while I would certainly consider *Happiness* a rogue film, I would be reluctant to call *Downfall* one) but

at the same time you are also unlikely to ever find a rogue film that does not, by some means, use identification against the audience. Characters in rogue films are rarely ever normal, well adjusted people (a point I hope will be abundantly clear through the in depth analyses in the forthcoming chapters) but, moreover, it is rarely ever in the nature of rogue films to Other their characters. In a mainstream film, the pedophile is the Bad Guy who the Good Guy must stop. In a rogue film, the pedophile is an ordinary man in every way except for the fact that he has an uncontrollable urge to have sex with children. The first route does not allow for consubstantiality, the second does (and, a film that compels us to identify with such a person is also forcing us to confront truths we do not want to face, as Artaud desires). The films of Alejandro Jodorowsky may be an interesting exception here, because it is so much in the nature of his films to create characters who function as symbols or archetypes and as such, lack much human depth. I will discuss identification in Jodorowsky's films extensively in my chapter on him, but for now I merely observe, once again, that there is a great deal of ambiguity in defining the boundaries of what is and is not rogue cinema.

One other lens Burke provides for us in his writings is his famous pentad, as outlined in his *Grammar of Motives*. *Grammar* is his most important work, but for our purposes it must be secondary to his work on identification in *Rhetoric*. Since this is contrary to how scholarship on Burke usually goes, some justification is needed. A large part of it is simply the fact that identification is part of my definition of what makes a rogue film a rogue film. The pentad allows us to explore particular questions in relation to the rhetorical effect of a rogue film, but a rogue film cannot be defined by the pentad. This is because identification allows us to explore the question of what effect a rogue film has upon its audience or under what circumstances it was made, and I believe these questions are of special significance to rogue cinema, as two of the

most important components of a rogue film are the audience response and the kairic moments under which the film was made. The value of the pentad is in its ability to allow us to explore the motives of others, and there is certainly space for such questions here (why make a rogue film, when rogue films rarely find much commercial success is certainly one such question) but one of the things I am most interested in here is the connection that forms between a viewer and the film, and identification is better suited to answer that question. However, the pentad does still have its place in our inquiry, so onward.

Burke states at the beginning of *Grammar*, “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (xv) It is a deceptively clever statement, as it is so easy to overlook the importance of “when we say.” Burke does not ask what is involved in what people do and why they do it but in what we say, in the words we use when discussing what others are doing and why they are doing it. This is Burke’s way of acknowledging from the beginning that we can never get at one’s sub-stance but it is certainly possible to work out some context by which we can speculate upon the motives of another. “We take it for granted that, insofar as men cannot themselves create the universe, there must remain something essentially enigmatic about the problem of motives, and inconsistencies among the term for motives. Accordingly, what we want is *not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise.*” (xviii, emphasis in original) We can never escape the ambiguity of language and the questions posed by the conflicts that arise from it are the basis for Burke’s theory of Dramatism. David Blakesley’s overview of Burke’s theories, *Elements of Dramatism*, provides a simple definition: “Dramatism analyzes language and thought as modes of action rather than as means of conveying information. Thus, for dramatism, language is a form of symbolic action.” (5) Burke’s pentad provides five terms for us to negotiate this space: act, scene,

agent, agency and purpose. Any human interaction incorporates all five: I, Adam Breckenridge (agent) under the auspices of USF's graduate English program (scene) am writing a dissertation (act) built upon the scholarship I have explored as a PhD student (agency)⁷ so that I may prove myself worthy of the title of "doctor of philosophy" (purpose). Furthermore, any of the two terms could be looked at as a ratio. For example, in the scene-agent ratio I could look at how my dissertation was defined by my position at USF (as I could certainly envision how at a different school, I could have written a very different dissertation).

To apply this to film: Lars von Trier came under a great deal of fire from American critics for his film *Manderlay* (2005), which is harshly critical of America's history of slavery and racism. However, the source of the controversy was not in the subject matter but in the fact that von Trier, a Dane, made a film criticizing America despite the fact that he has never traveled to America (ostensibly because he has a fear of both airplanes and boats). To consider just a brief sampling from mainstream critics, we have James Berardinelli of ReelReviews: "It can become tiresome to watch von Trier bash the United States while realizing that he doesn't have a full understanding of what he's attacking." ("Manderlay") From Dana Stevens at Slate: "If *Dogville* offered up a ham-fisted critique of "America" from a plane-phobic Dane who's never visited the place, *Manderlay* ups the arrogance ante by bonking us on the head with supposedly searing "truths," not only about our country but about its deepest and darkest wound: the institution of slavery and its aftermath." ("Back on the Plantation") And so on. Aesthetic merits of the film aside, it does beg the question: why were so many offended by a foreigner who's never visited America criticizing America? Through the pentad we can at least explore this question.

⁷ A shameless attempt at pomposity on my part. I could also define agency by the fact that I am writing my dissertation on my computer)

Certainly it is at least in part a question of the agent-scene ratio, as one can only wonder how these reviews would have read if von Trier had in fact come to America to make the film (curiously, none of the reviews I read account for the fact that nearly the entire cast was American) but the more difficult question to answer is: if von Trier had made the exact same film but regularly visited America, what would be different? Here we can focus the pentad in a different direction. The agent-scene ratio also functions in the sense that we as an American audience watching this film in America are inevitably going to object to this outside intrusion (even many of the positive American reviews I read still focused on von Trier's lack of first-hand familiarity with our country while the reviews I read from Europe, even if they disliked the film, never did so on the grounds of von Trier being unfamiliar with or unfair to America) and so one could question whether or not we are qualified to critique such a film since we are so incapable of an objective viewing. In other words, the film would not have been different, but our perception would have changed because von Trier's agent-scene ratio would have changed (one can only wonder how an American audience unaware of who von Trier is would react to this film).

And yet a common motif that we see in a review of the reviews of *Manderlay* is a complaint that the film lacks authenticity, that von Trier's punches miss because he does not know his target: that he is saying nothing about America that Americans have not already said. This, however, moves us back into the territory of identification and division (and it also raises questions concerning von Trier's, and perhaps the critics', ethos) but to keep the focus on questions of motives what we see through the agent-purpose ratio is a foreigner attempting to make a film that would anger Americans, and given the critical reception (more annoyance than outrage – a failure of identification) and the fact that von Trier fell into a deep depression after

this film and waited four years before making the most despairing and disturbing film of his career: *Antichrist*, we can guess that his intentions did not play out as he hoped.

This, of course, is only a brief and very partial overview of how the pentad can be applied, but what I hope can be seen here (and will be demonstrated further) is that Burke provides us with a new set of tools by which we can analyze film that has, so far, been underused for film, the least of which is that he provides us with the second leg of my definition of what a rogue film is: a rogue film is a film that uses the impulse for identification against the audience. In forcing us to find common ground with people we want to believe we are wholly separate from, or in showing us through the characters traits of our own that we would prefer to deny, we can see how identification becomes another way in which the audience is forced to confront truths they do not want to face. This leaves only one leg of my definition left: one that is quite complementary to what I have discussed here but does provide a new lens on the question of what makes rogue cinema rogue cinema.

Dear Mr. Fantasy

There are two primary ideas I wish to pull from Slavoj Žižek's diverse interests for my discussion of rogue cinema, both of which are ideas that Žižek uses extensively in his own film analysis: fantasy, which is, of course, one of the overarching themes of Žižek's entire corpus, and sadism, which is a less prevailing motif in his writings, but one that is quite useful to understanding rogue cinema.

Fantasy appears in pretty much everything Žižek has ever written and to trace the usage of it through all of his writings would not only be tedious but redundant, as there is little variation throughout his works on the concept. Instead, I will look at his articulations of the

concept in two of his most important works: *The Sublime Object of Ideology* and *The Plague of Fantasies*, as well as how he uses it in his few works dedicated to film, since they will be quite sufficient for providing the context needed to understand Zizek's use of the idea. *Sublime Object* is the earlier of the two and in it he ties fantasy to ideology, which he defines through Marx as "false consciousness," ie: the inability to recognize social reality (25). But Zizek complicates this connection through Peter Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason*, which undermines the notion of ideology as inherently naive by arguing that people practice ideology despite being aware of its effects. (25) One of Zizek's most important claims in *Sublime Object*, however, is that even this idea is problematic, because it operates off the assumption that ideology lies in knowing, but one of the great declarations that Zizek makes in *Sublime Object* is that ideology does not exist in knowing but in doing: "But such a reading of the Marxist formula leaves out an illusion, an error, a distortion which is already at work in the social reality itself, at the level of what individuals are *doing*, and not only what they *think* or *know* they are doing." (28, emphasis in original)

Zizek is ultimately trying to move us away from what had become a popular idea in philosophy: that we live in a post-ideological world. But, he is also trying to move us towards the idea that fantasy also lies, not in the knowing, but in the doing. In *Sublime Object*, he demonstrates this through the example of money:

When individuals use money, they know very well that there is nothing magical about it - that money, in its materiality, is simply an expression of social relations...The problem is that in their social activity itself, in what they are *doing*, they are *acting* as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such. They are fetishists in practice, not in theory. (28, emphasis in original)

From here he explains that the illusion at work is that we pretend not to be aware of this when in fact we are or, to continue on with the analogy above, we are aware that we only act as if money is the embodiment of wealth but we ignore the fact that we are aware of it. (30) We mask our own awareness.

What exists behind the fantasy is the kernel of the Real, in other words, the truth we do not want to see (I hope by now some parallels between the three theorists I'm drawing upon begin to reveal themselves). Zizek uses the example of money: we never want to acknowledge the fact that money is merely a social construct, though we may be aware of it on a subconscious level, but to explicitly acknowledge this means acknowledging that something that controls our lives so completely is meaningless and so we suppress this (we mask the Real) and continue to pursue wealth (though I hope to convince my student loan companies of the arbitrary nature of money some day). There is an obvious parallel to Burke's sub-stance here but the key difference is that for Zizek (and Lacan) the Real is a source of fear (hence our desire to mask it) while there is nothing inherently terrifying about Burke's sub-stance: it merely is what it is.

This notion of fantasy is an invaluable tool for the discussion of cinema in general, as one could look at any film as working to either reinforce the fantasies that we create (as a more traditional film would) or work to undermine these fantasies, to revisit Artaud: to expose the audience to a truth they do not want to confront. However, despite his tendency for drawing upon film and popular entertainment for the sake of reference, Zizek does not, in *Sublime Object*, draw a connection between fantasy and cinema. Furthermore, a perusal of his writings on cinema produce little usage of fantasy. In *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, his longest work dedicated exclusively to film, he only makes brief mention of it in a couple of passages and even still, he does not discuss the kind of ideological fantasy he presents us with in *Sublime Object*. I find this peculiar

for someone who focuses so much on film in his writings because fantasy (and I mean it in the Lacanian sense) is an indispensable part of cinema.

If someone were to put a gun to my head and force me to define what a mainstream film is, I would blurt out: “a film that masks the kernel of the Real.”⁸ No doubt an extensive survey of mainstream films would turn up exceptions but this connects straight to one of the most fundamental appeals of film. For the lay audience, film is primarily a form of escapism: they allow us to believe that good always triumphs over evil, that all wrongs will be righted by day’s end, that happy endings are in store for all. Examples are so numerous that anyone with even the scantest knowledge of film has no doubt recalled dozens of titles just in the process of reading this. One could, however, scan the entire corpus of rogue cinema and will never find so much as a single film that could be said to mask the kernel of the Real. This, more than perhaps anything, is the purview of rogue cinema, and while there are many ways in which the kernel of the Real can be approached, Zizek does articulate one that is useful to look at because, while not all-encompassing, does highlight a common motif we see in rogue cinema: the sadistic trap, which Zizek bases in Lacan’s theory on sadism, which is slightly different from how we are used to thinking about sadism.

In Zizek’s essay ““In His Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large”” from the collection *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, he defines sadism according to Lacan’s two stage process. The first stage is the “Will-to-Enjoy,” the “fundamental attitude of the ‘sadist’ subject,” and the sadist, “gives body to the Will-to-Enjoy which torments the victim in order to obtain the fullness of being.” (220) But this relationship hides another, latent, relationship, which articulates the sadist’s true position as “an object-instrument of the Other’s enjoyment.” (220) In other words, the sadist’s enjoyment only

⁸ And I would probably be shot.

comes in relation to the victim's shame (Zizek uses the historic example of the Stalinist who believes he acts for the will of the people in his suppression of them: he becomes then, "an instrument by means of which the People...tortures itself."). (221)

The relationship, however, does not end here, as Lacan understood that there is a larger social frame that further defines the role of the sadist. The "actual' site of the subject who dreams the sadistic fantasy: an 'object-victim, at the mercy of the 'sadistic' Will of the Big Other..." (221) Lacan articulated this in the original sadist himself: the Marquis de Sade, who, as a result of his own legendary sadistic behavior, was frequently imprisoned at the behest of his mother-in-law and eventually committed to an insane asylum by Napoleon. Thus did Sade, as a direct result of his playing out of his sadistic fantasies, become a victim of an even greater sadist: society, aka: the Big Other.

For Zizek, this becomes a valuable insight into understanding the relationship between the audience and the director and, through Hitchcock, shows how a director uses this sadistic relationship to his advantage:

First, he sets a trap of sadistic identification for the viewer by way of arousing in him/her the 'sadistic' desire to see the hero crush the bad guy, this suffering 'fullness of being....Once the viewer is filled out with the Will-to-Enjoy, Hitchcock closes the trap by simply realizing the viewer's desire: in having his/her desire fully realized, the viewer obtains more than he/she asked for...and is thus forced to concede that, in the very moment he/she was possessed by the Will to see the bad guy annihilated, he/she was effectively manipulated by the only true sadist, Hitchcock himself. (222-3)

And thus this trap forces us to draw back in shame from the desire we initially felt. (223) We become victims of the director. Zizek limits his focus of this concept to an analysis of Hitchcock,

who was certainly a sadistic director, though not necessarily a rogue one, (I would argue, however, that any rogue director is also a sadistic one).

Hopefully it has not escaped my readers that there is a clean parallel between this idea of the sadistic trap and the involuntary nature of identification that I discussed previously. So much so in fact, that one may initially be inclined to wonder if there is in fact a difference between the two. Both are compulsory in nature and we can easily argue that when we allow ourselves to fall victim to the sadistic trap we are doing so through identification. However, Žižek points out that when the sadistic trap is sprung the guilt we feel stems from an identification with ourselves by making us realize how monstrous our own desire was. For Burke, identification is inseparable from division and the sadistic trap as Žižek articulated it does not have a place for division. This means that the sadistic trap can account for the horror we feel in the famous court of criminals at the end of *M* (1931), when we come to realize how horrific our desire to see the child murderer Hans Beckert (Peter Lorre) brought to justice by the hands of Berlin's gangsters was but is the sadistic trap at work in our identification with/revulsion towards Bill Maplewood in *Happiness*? I would say no, because there is no revulsion at the justice that he is brought to (being arrested for raping two boys, a perfectly reasonable closure, especially when compared to the sham trial Beckert is put through). We are not being punished for our Will-to-Enjoy, if we are being punished for anything in *Happiness*, it is for a failure to see how much substance we share with the perverts and pedophiles of the world. And yet the landscape of rogue cinema is loaded with sadistic traps waiting for our unwitting step, even if not every film is hiding one (and in the course of this work we shall step into many more).

Furthermore, I do not think there is any denying that *Happiness*, sadistic trap or no, still approaches a kernel of the Real for us and it is this idea of a rogue film as a pulling back of the

veil that is key. And while I hope I have articulated why each of these ideas, cruelty, identification and fantasy, present their own approach to looking at rogue cinema, I believe it is this last that, more than any other, accounts for why if you were to show a rogue film to an audience of 100, 99 of them would flee the theater. The fantasies we construct to mask the kernel of the Real are not easily torn down but an effective rogue film will always strive to do so.

Three Legs to Stand On

Thus do I offer the most pretentious, convoluted and preposterous definition of a film genre ever put forth: rogue cinema: a film that practices Artaudian cruelty, uses the compulsory nature of identification against the audience and works to unmask the kernel of the Real. But, like a tripod, the three legs of my definition meet at a middle point, where these three theories by three very different theorists intersect. Each of them, Artaud, Burke and Zizek, are interested, at least in part, in what lies beneath the surface of our normal functions, of getting beyond the sheen of all of our constructs. This is, of course, a nebulous and ambiguous place, but that is also part of the nature of rogue cinema and so I know of no better way to further this exploration than through an exploration of the films themselves.

To this end, I have chosen four directors, all of whom could be considered rogue filmmakers (though not every film all of them have made could be called a rogue film) and each of whom, I hope, represents a sufficient diversity of what can be called rogue cinema that we can draw some sort of map of the rogue film landscape, even if it is one whose borders are not clearly defined. These four are: Alejandro Jodorowsky, Dusan Makavejev, Lars von Trier and Werner Herzog. Each of them varies drastically in subject matter, culture and style. The Chilean born Jodorowsky, whose films have only recently been made available for viewing after

a long period of suppression, tackles religious subject matter and creates films that remain deeply spiritual even as they assault us with some of the most shocking and disturbing imagery ever put on film. Makavejev, a Yugoslavian ex-pat famous for his “juxtaposition” style of filmmaking and who was banned from his native country for his provocative films, ruthlessly skewers the full spectrum of political ideology in favor of the joys of sex (in other words, he eschews oratory for orgasms). The Dane von Trier is more broad reaching in his subject matter and the most experimental in style but at heart his films always deal with the extremes of human suffering and a desire to bring us as close to those extremes as he can (with, admittedly, mixed results). And finally the German Herzog, the least extreme of these four directors, is ironically drawn to the extremes of human behavior and unafraid to push the boundaries of human behavior himself by taking some of the most ostentatious measures any director has every undertaken to get his films made exactly as he wants them done.

These four are not a perfect representation of the range of rogue cinema: they fail to account for the range of time (rogue cinema easily stretches back to the early days of the silent era) nor do they account for the global diversity of rogue cinema (though the phenomenon of rogue cinema is largely relegated to the industrialized world, my selection is admittedly European focused and there are a number of examples of rogue cinema that can be found outside of Europe, North America and east Asia). However, Derrida would remind us that genre is a starting point for a discussion and not an end point, so let us begin our discussion with these four...

Chapter Two: The Mad Visions of Alejandro Jodorowsky

Why Jodorowsky?

Alejandro Jodorowsky is perhaps the least known of the four directors I'm looking at. This relative obscurity, however, should not be conflated with a lack of significance of his work, as Jodorowsky's films have had a profound influence not only on cinema (including the filmmakers Tim Burton, David Lynch and Nicholas Winding Refn) but has also stretched into the realm of music, inspiring artists as diverse as John Lennon, Peter Gabriel and Marilyn Manson, and in literature his works are cited as one of the cornerstones of the underground Bizarro movement and have been hugely influential on the graphic novel because of Jodorowsky's collaborations with the French artist Mobius. Yet, despite this, scholarship on his work is almost nonexistent. To date, there has only been one book written on Jodorowsky: Ben Cobb's *Anarchy and Alchemy: The Films of Alejandro Jodorowsky*. However, this book was intended more for popular consumption and as such contains very little analysis or insight into Jodorowsky's films, consisting instead mostly of plot summaries of his films as well as some interviews and biographical info. Though some of this is useful for understanding Jodorowsky's films (and Cobb's breakdown of the various symbols that appear in the overwhelmingly symbol-heavy *The Holy Mountain* are actually quite useful), it does very little to help us interpret his films.

Outside of this, articles on Jodorowsky are few and far between and the only article dedicated exclusively to Jodorowsky that I've been able to track down in English⁹, Robert Neustadt's "Alejandro Jodorowsky: Reiterating Chaos, Rattling the Cage of Representation," focuses on Jodorowsky's novels and graphic novels, few of which have been translated into English and which exist, of course, separate from his film work¹⁰. Other than this, we find only occasional references to his works in a few scattered articles and reviews from mainstream critics, none of which again really provide any insight or analysis into his films.

This scarcity of literature should not be viewed as a lack of interest in Jodorowsky, nor should it be interpreted as a consensus that Jodorowsky's films are unworthy of serious consideration. Rather, if this scarcity is to be attributed to anything, it should be attributed to the fact that, for decades, it was nearly impossible to view any of Jodorowsky's films. It has only been since 2007 that his three early films, *Fando y Lis* (1967), *El Topo* (1970) and *The Holy Mountain* (1974) have been available for viewing in any capacity while his later work, *Santa Sangre* (1989) was obtainable with some difficulty but not made readily available until 2011 (and his two minor films, *Tusk* (1977) and *The Rainbow Thief* (1991) continue to remain inaccessible and nearly impossible to screen). As such, it has only been in the last five years that it has even been possible to view any of Jodorowsky's films since their original release, and it is worth understanding why this is because, while Jodorowsky has always been a very controversial director, the lack of availability of his films has little to do with their controversial nature, but it does speak to the nature in which rogue cinema often arises, and if we are to understand rogue cinema as a genre rhetorically (and especially if we are to frame it by Burke's Pentad) then we

⁹ There is a more substantial body of literature on his works in Spanish and French but none of it has been translated into English

¹⁰ Jodorowsky is most famous for his films, but he is also an actor, mime, musician and novelist, among other things and as such has produced one of the most eclectic bodies of work of any artist in the twentieth century.

also need to understand the kairotic moment out of which rogue films arise (especially Jodorowsky's). In other words, there is more to this tale than just historical interest.

His first feature film, *Fando y Lis*, garnered so much controversy that it never had a chance to reach much of an audience, because it was shut down in Mexico, where it was filmed, produced and initially screened, so quickly that very few people ever got the chance to see it (ironic, considering it is the least rogue of his major films). His second film, however, *El Topo*, managed to make its way to the United States, where it was shown in underground theaters in New York and LA (and was usually shown at midnight, making *El Topo* the first ever “midnight movie”). At attendance in one of these screenings were John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Lennon declared the film a masterpiece and eventually managed to convince former Beatles' manager Allen Klein to buy the rights to it. It was also Klein, Lennon and Ono who financed Jodorowsky's next film, *The Holy Mountain*. Cobb relates what happened next: Klein bought the rights to Pauline Reage's *The Story of O*, which he planned on making into a box-office sensation after the fashion of the then-recent *Deep Throat* (1972) and he wanted Jodorowsky to direct. Jodorowsky told Cobb: “I weighed up my artistic integrity against fame and wealth. After a tortuous half hour, I reached my decision.” (172) On a day when Jodorowsky was supposed to attend a series of meetings for the production Klein had arranged, he instead boarded a plane to Paris without telling Klein and, in doing so, effectively ended his career.

Klein, who still owned the rights to Jodorowsky's first three films, was so furious that he pulled them from distribution and declared that none of them would ever be screened again for as long as he lived. Klein kept his blackout of Jodorowsky's films up for thirty years until 2006, when he finally relented and allowed them to be released on DVD (and died three years later, at which point the rights reverted back to Jodorowsky anyway). During that time, for reasons

unrelated (but that will be discussed later), Jodorowsky found himself unable to get backing for any of his film projects until 1989 when he was able to make *Santa Sangre* and, two years later, caved in to the allure of a studio production to make *The Rainbow Thief*, the only one of his films he has disowned. It then took another twenty-one years to get his most recent film, *A Dance With Reality*, made as well (which, as of this writing, has not yet been screened outside of a handful of festivals).

While the history I've related here sheds some light on why critical literature on Jodorowsky's films is almost non-existent, there is also a great deal to be culled here on how "scene" in Burke's pentad influences the creation of rogue cinema. In the opening chapter of *Grammar*, Burke tells us that "the scene contains the act," and from this, the scene also contains the agents. (3) In other words, it is the scene that informs how the actors behave and what influences their actions (and it is not a coincidence that Burke begins his book with an analysis of the scene-act and scene-agent ratios). The scene-act ratio can be said to have some influence on just about any genre: musicals saw their golden age during the Great Depression, when escapist fantasies were in high demand (to put this in Pentad lingo: the "scene" of the Great Depression led to the "act" of producing musicals for the "purpose" of sating audience demand¹¹). Similarly, the evolution of computer technology has allowed for a surge of CG animated films in the last twenty years that has breathed new potential into the genre and brought about what is widely regarded as a second golden age in animation. But while these scenes had a profound influence on their respective genres, no one would claim that musicals as a genre are defined by their surge in popularity during the Great Depression or that animation as a genre is

¹¹ To complete the pentad: the filmmakers function both literally and figuratively as "actors," while "agency" could be attributed superficially to the actual act of making one of the musicals in question or, perhaps more profoundly, agency could also be said to have been driven by the very economic forces that compelled a demand for musicals in the first place.

defined by the new Renaissance brought about by CG technology (in both cases it is because examples of both musical and animated films that exist outside of the particular scenes I highlighted are so numerous that these scenes can really be said only to have influenced the genre and not to have defined it). However, can rogue cinema be said to be defined by its scene?

I think we can get at an answer by another consideration of noir as a genre. It is well understood that the only films that are considered noir are films that were made from 1941 to 1958 (*Maltese Falcon* to *Touch of Evil*). This is of course, not the only qualification of a noir, as there are still elements of style and theme that also determine a noir (dark tones, fatalistic outlook, etc.) but the thing about this is that these elements are also embodied in neo-noirs. There is a *je-ne-sais-quoi* to a true noir that could only have come from its time period. Žizek has a rather interesting way of framing this, as he argues that a true noir is viewed with a double consciousness: we see it with the ironic distance of a modern-day audience at the same time that we also see it with the earnestness that we know (or, I would argue, imagine) an audience of the time period would watch it with. This double-consciousness does not occur with a neo-noir because both the audience and the film exist with the same mentality (and even the most earnest of neo-noirs have a certain sense of self-awareness to them). I think Žizek is right, but I also think there is a different way we can frame it with Burke's pentad. We could also argue that classic film noir is a product of its scene-act ratio, the scene being defined by a Hollywood that, in the early 1940's, saw an influx of German and French immigrants who brought a certain cynicism to the cinematic landscape that was pivotal in defining the noir style. And unlike the golden age of musicals in the 1930s or the second golden age of animation in the past twenty years, film noir is defined solely by this scene. There is no golden age of noir because noir had only a single age. In other words, noir is a genre that was only able to come about because of a

particular set of circumstances that led to a particular act by a group of filmmakers (this does genuinely beg the question of what cinematic genres have been denied to the world because the proper set of circumstances never emerged to create the scene for them).

I think a similar argument can be made for rogue cinema. However, unlike noir, rogue cinema is not confined to a particular era (at least not yet, as I hope that it does not prove to be the case that rogue cinema, like noir, ceases to be a genre as soon as it is named as one and that the recent emerging scholarship on rogue cinema does not bring about an era of neo-rogue), but there is a certain type of scene that has to exist for a rogue film to come about and Jodorowsky's films are a great example of that. One thing that makes Jodorowsky typical of rogue filmmakers is that, even at the height of his popularity, his work always existed on the fringe. Mainstream cinema is far from conducive to the act of rogue filmmaking, even in the sense of "serious" mainstream films, and this is one of the things that makes Jodorowsky's resistance to giving in to mainstream cinema interesting (which *The Story of O* would have done). Jodorowsky did eventually give in with *The Rainbow Thief* (he said he wanted a chance to work with major actors for once and *The Rainbow Thief* starred Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif), which, while there are many hallmarks of Jodorowsky's style in it, is by far his most restrained film and the only one he made that really could not be called rogue. Reading up on the background of the film confirms this: he was not allowed to include any kind of on-screen violence and was not allowed to deviate from the script in any way. (Cobb, 248) Watching *The Rainbow Thief*, you get the sense of a film that is straining at the edges of the screen to be something far different than what it is. Jodorowsky once said that where most directors make films with their hearts, he makes films with his testicles. *The Rainbow Thief*, then, is a film that has been castrated.

There is a freedom afforded to a director who works outside of traditional channels to get a film made and this scene, as defined by the fringes of the cinematic world, is the necessary catalyst for the act of making a rogue film. It is not a coincidence that most rogue films are made outside of mainstream cinema: there's no place else they could be made.

With Jodorowsky, however, there is the added dimension of time (I will make a similar case for Makavejev in the next chapter), as it was really only during the time of radical experimentation in the late sixties and early to mid seventies that Jodorowsky was able to get the bulk of his films made. It is for this reason and not his abandonment of Klein that Jodorowsky was not able to get another film made until fifteen years after *The Holy Mountain* and compared to his three films of the sixties and seventies, *Santa Sangre* is positively subdued. Rogue cinema as a genre is not constrained to a particular time or place, but Jodorowsky's films were.

There is something of a paradox at work here with this question of scene and rogue cinema. Obviously any film relies on an audience and forms a relationship (re: consubstantiality) with its audience but the nature of the consubstantiality is one of the things that sets rogue cinema apart from other genres, and yet there is probably no other genre that has more difficult a time finding an audience than a rogue film. Even if Klein had not locked the bulk of Jodorowsky's filmography in a vault for thirty-five years he would still be a director who few would ever find their way to. There is a question here of what kind of person is an audience for a rogue film. After all, rogue films, even if they can be admired intellectually, can often be exceedingly unpleasant to watch (ex: in all the analyses I've read for Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1976) I do not think I've ever encountered a defender of the film, in the popular or academic world, who actually enjoys watching it). This relationship in itself may perhaps be another paradox. On a personal level, when the concept of rogue cinema was introduced to me, I

realized that I had always been drawn to such films but had never thought to group them as a genre. Yet even unaware of the term I had always sought such films out, even if I knew they would be unpleasant to watch.

There is an allure to films that will show us what we have never seen before, not just in terms of imagery, but psychologically as well. We go in willing to approach a kernel of the Real, and I use Zizek here because among my theorists it is Zizek who so often speaks of *jouissance*, ie: perverse pleasure. Whether or not viewing any rogue film could be called an act of *jouissance* is debatable, but it could very well be that rogue cinema is reciprocal, which is to say a rogue film requires a rogue audience. This certainly seems a fitting idea when we read of the drug-fueled midnight screenings that surrounded *El Topo* (Cobb, 112-3) and I think the idea of *jouissance* is particularly fitting for Jodorowsky because, while the imagery in his films is quite shocking, they lack the visceral terror of so many rogue films (though Zizek would remind us here that approaching a kernel of the Real always comes coupled with fear). From here it is perhaps best to continue through the films themselves, to try to get at the particular way in which Jodorowsky gets at the Real and how a sober audience might interact with such works.

Fando y Lis: A Road Trip to Heaven, a Road Trip from Hell

Fando y Lis is the weakest of Jodorowsky's major films, due at least in part to it being his first feature film (there is only one short he directed before this) but this also means that the film lacks the aggression and boldness of his later works and suffers from a lack of clear vision (one gets the sense from watching it that Jodorowsky was making it up as he went along which, when reading about the production of the film, may not be that far from the truth). But the film is worth brief consideration because, while his later films are far more inventive and aggressive,

Fando y Lis still has its sublime moments but also because, while a larger consideration of Jodorowsky's films show that his characters rarely function as little more than symbols and archetypes, the titular Fando and Lis are drawn a bit deeper (and as such, the question of identification is a bit different here). *Fando y Lis* sees the titular couple travelling through a barren wasteland to get to the mythical city of Tar, a place of Jodorowsky's invention, but that we are led to understand is a sort of El Dorado or Shangri-La. Little else in the way of context is provided for the setting, including whether or not we are supposed to view the landscape as post-apocalyptic or allegorical, though there is evidence to support both, and given the motifs that run through Jodorowsky's filmography, it would be hard to believe that he did not want to treat his settings as at least partly symbolic (I doubt there has ever been a more symbol-obsessed director than Jodorowsky). We do at the beginning and in a couple of flashbacks, see evidence of Fando and Lis having once lived a more normal life, as the bedroom where these scenes take place is quite ordinary. There is, however, little suggestion as to why Fando and Lis set out for Tar (other than our assumption that it is a paradise that anyone would want to go to) and so we are left with our two characters travelling through an ambiguous landscape for reasons that are never clearly defined.

I do not intend this as a criticism of *Fando y Lis* but rather as a point of departure. If we are to put *Fando y Lis* in context with a relatively more conventional road trip film, such as *Easy Rider* (when I said relatively conventional, I meant it), the setting and purpose of the trip provide some context by which we interpret the film. With the 1960s counter-culture as a scene, a trip across America to Mardi Gras in New Orleans is an inextricable part of the film's ideology. Road trips in America have long been associated with freedom (the fact that they ride motorcycles and associate with the counter-culture augments this) and Mardi Gras, despite its

religious origins, is often seen as a festival of debauchery, which plays off the film's nature as an act of rebellion against the status quo.

With *Fando y Lis*, when we are stripped of any identifiable landscape or clear motive for travel we are left purely with the act of the trip itself. The fact that the destination is never reached plays into this. However, there is no philosophical waxing on what it means to go on a journey on this film. Their journey resembles *The Odyssey* in that it is highly episodic, each stop bringing them in contact with a host of odd characters from a mob of drag queens to a blind bishop who asks to be allowed to suck the blood from Lis's arm¹² (in this sense, the film could also be seen as a perverted version of *Pilgrim's Progress*). And then there is the means of travel: Lis is paralyzed, but rather than a wheelchair she sits in a cart that Fando pushes her around on. On one level we are dealing with the irony of a journey by foot undertaken by someone who cannot walk but what really defines this journey is the sado-masochistic relationship between the disabled, naïve Lis and Fando, who takes immense pleasure in tormenting her.

One scene that demonstrates this relationship (and that also highlights one of the film's predominating weaknesses) is when, in a mountain pass, they encounter a mass of people writhing about in the mud. No explanation is provided, but there is a certain sexual suggestiveness to their motions (and mud, of course, is a symbol of filth). Fando leans down to taste the mud they writhe in but finds it disgusting. He at first tries to get Lis to eat it but when she refuses he decides to stick her in the mud. He does this by standing her upright in it, which should be impossible given her paralysis, but this is explained away by him saying "I know you can't walk but you can stand up." He delights in Lis crying and pleading but eventually takes

¹² This scene, more than any other, is what prompted the riots that followed the film's release in Mexico. The fact that Jodorowsky filmed this scene by actually having the actor playing the bishop draw blood from Lis's (Diana Mariscal) arm may or may not have been known to the audience, but it definitely does not alleviate the shock of this scene.

her out of the mud and, as they leave, makes promises to her of the grand life he will give her once they reach Tar. Despite the surreal circumstances, this plays out very much like a traditional sado-masochistic relationship, with the scene of debauchery that they encounter functioning primarily for the purpose of giving Fando an opportunity to torment Lis (literally and figuratively sully her purity). The sudden, half-assed explanation for her ability to stand is, however, a detraction to the scene. No explanation is ever provided for Lis's paralysis (the flashback scenes in the bedroom show her laying on the bed, leaving her ability to walk ambiguous) but if she is paralyzed by spinal injury then any use of her legs, including the ability to stand, should be impossible. We could perhaps hash out a convoluted explanation for how her paralysis really functions as an excuse to justify the inability to walk on a journey taken by foot and nothing else or that her paralysis is symbolic rather than physical, but no other reference to her ability to stand is provided before or after this scene, and this sloppiness in consistency often undermines the impact of the film. I am of course aware that there is no genre where quality is a key defining factor, but in a genre that relies as heavily on the psychological impact on the viewer as rogue films do, such inconsistencies can do quite a lot to work against a film.

Fando y Lis is overall an effective film though and the key reason why is that the film's rogue effect lies in our ability to identify with Fando and Lis, and these are two of the most fleshed out characters Jodorowsky has ever produced. Lis's innocence, naivete and disability are of course going to make her a sympathetic character but Fando is defined by more than just his sadism. One of the most compelling scenes in the film is a flashback to Fando as a child, when he is having a conversation with his father, who is inviting him to play a word game:

Father: Let's play. Ok, I'm a famous pianist.

Fando: If you're a famous pianist and I cut off your arm then what will you do?

Father: I'll become a famous painter.

Fando: And if I cut off the other one, what will you do?

Father: I'll become a famous dancer.

Fando: And if I cut off your legs, then what?

Father: Then I'll become a famous singer.

Fando: And if I cut off your head, then what?

Father: Once dead, my skin will become a beautiful drum.

Fando: What if I burn the drum?

Father: I will become a cloud and take on any shape.

Fando: And if the cloud dissolves, what then?

Father: I will become rain and produce a harvest of wars.

Fando: You win. I'm going to miss you when you're gone.

In some ways, the theme of the entire film is contained in this conversation, as we see a clash between the sadistic, pessimistic outlook and the hopeful, optimistic one (with a role reversal in the child representing sadism and pessimism) with a rather ambiguous conclusion that makes it hard to say who has really triumphed. If we remember back to Burke's explanation for identification, he argued that it can often be an involuntary practice when we get swept up in the pattern of the language. Though Fando's conversation with his father is not as predictable in its progression as Burke's example of "Who controls Berlin controls Germany..." we quickly spy the pattern and become caught up in the game until we are caught off guard by the father's cryptic final answer (though the conversation ends with the father telling Fando that some day he should seek out the city of Tar).

There are certainly indications that the film takes place in a post-war setting. Many of the locations are in bombed-out buildings or amongst rubble, we see evidence of food and other necessities in short supply and there is a motif of injury and disability (aside from Lis' paralysis, we also see the blind bishop and many other disabled characters. It should, however, be noted that this is a running motif through all of Jodorowsky's films). We already discussed the fact that the only signs of normality appear in the flashbacks but through the lens of Fando's childhood flashback, we can now see a further dichotomy between pre-war innocence and post-war disillusion. From this, there is a sense that Fando's sadism is more than just sociopathic cruelty but the counterpoint to Lis' innocence. The journey then, is an extension of their relationship, but it is not a stretch to say that their relationship is also a product of their scene (since acts and actors are contained within a scene). With this in mind, what the film reminds us of is that, in a setting defined by cruelty and disillusionment, innocence (as embodied by Lis) cannot survive and indeed the film ends with Fando accidentally killing Lis in a fit of rage after she broke his drum (his one remaining relic of his childhood – no indication as to whether or not it was made from his father's skin). Thus does it eschew the Hollywood ending of Fando and Lis overcoming their differences and making their way to Tar to live happily ever after. Here we are left with death, despair and no sight of the magical city that could have been their salvation.

El Topo: Digging Down to Reach the Sun

El Topo is widely regarded as Jodorowsky's masterpiece and it is the film that brought him international attention. John Lennon is reported to have called it the greatest film ever made, and there is a certain ironic pleasure in bearing this in mind when watching the film's relentless assault of graphic violence, depraved sexuality, sacrilegious imagery and the parade of dwarves,

amputees and other differently abled people who make up much of the film's cast and to think that it was adored by the artist behind "Imagine." And yet it is not so surprising when you get at the heart of the film because, underneath all of it, *El Topo* is a deeply spiritual film, though as we'll see here and in *The Holy Mountain*, Jodorowsky's path to spiritual enlightenment is one that has seen few footprints.

El Topo is more or less a western, or it may be more fitting to say that it borrows heavily from the motifs of the western. It is the only rogue western I know of and there is a certain irony in bringing these two genres together because, while the boundaries of rogue cinema are highly nebulous, there are few genres with less ambiguity to them than the western. Jodorowsky plays the lead as el Topo, who dresses entirely in black¹³ and the film has its requisite deserts, outlaws, six shooters, cowboy hats and other staples of the western genre. But the bizarre imagery Jodorowsky surrounds them with often makes us hyper-aware of these images. For example, for the first third of the film, el Topo rides everywhere with a naked child we understand to be his son and Jodorowsky often uses images designed to call attention to the contrast between them such as shooting them straight on while on horseback, the son sitting in front of the father, his pale skin (peculiarly pale, considering he is going naked in a desert) in contrast to the father's solid black outfit (through most of the film, el Topo also wears long hair and a beard, both dark).

The naked child is in itself another image that is rather typical of Jodorowsky in general and *El Topo* in particular. It is of course easy to be discomfited by the sight of child nudity, even in an artistic context, but one thing that a viewer must always bear in mind with Jodorowsky is that there has probably never been a more symbol-obsessed director in all of cinema. Nudity,

¹³ Cobb informs us that Jodorowsky played the lead in part because he wanted to undertake the character's spiritual transformation for the sake of his own enlightenment but also because he intended to put the lead through torments that he could not legally have asked any other actor to endure and so he had no choice but to take them on himself. (74-75)

especially in relation to children, is also a symbol of purity and innocence and indeed the child is finally clothed (ironically in a monk's cassock) at the moment at which he loses his innocence. It is impossible, however, not to see the image of the naked child with a dual mind: one that is aware of the symbolic lineage of the naked child but also is put off by the taboo nature of such an image in contemporary culture.

In fact, much of the imagery in this film is viewed with the same dual mind that Zizek described in the act of watching a classic noir, especially in the film's ample use of dwarves, amputees and other differently abled people. In our politically correct times, it's impossible not to think of the act of Othering as it applies to differently abled people; a problem that has long plagued the cinema. It is hard to deny that the differently abled people in this film are in here in part for the strangeness of their look (and, in many cases again, for their symbolism) and yet they are not strictly used for this purpose. One of the most iconic images in the film comes in the long middle sequence, when el Topo is traveling through the desert to seek out four master gunslingers he wishes to defeat in battle. The first gunslinger he encounters has as an assistant a man with no arms who has a man with no legs strapped to his back. Such images are what drew the stoners and acid-heads of New York to the film's midnight screenings to gawk in a drug-induced stupor, and yet these characters have more to them than the mere shock value of their appearance: in their few minutes of screen time they are fleshed out as disciples of their master (a blind zen master who, yes, is also a gunslinger), who, together, work as one who follow in their master's footsteps on their own path to enlightenment. Even if it is only marginally so, they are humanized enough that we feel some sense of connection with them at the same time we are unsettled by the sheer strangeness of their appearance.

It is the traditional wisdom amongst *El Topo*'s mainstream critics to split the film into two sections and correlate them to the Old and New Testament. No review I've read attempts to justify this interpretation and there is nothing in the film to suggest it, other than four intertitles that divide the film into sections and all of which could be said to have Biblical references: "Genesis," "Prophets," "Psalms" and "Apocalypse." Two of them are, of course, chapters of the Bible, while Apocalypse clearly invokes the book of Revelations and prophets, of course, can be found in abundance in the Bible. And yet beyond this there is no basis for the claim and even the habit of splitting the film into two sections makes less sense when you consider that these four intertitles clearly correspond to four shifts in the spiritual progression of el Topo. First a voice over narration explains the title and sets the context for el Topo's spiritual journey. El Topo in Spanish is "The Mole" and we are told in the voice over that the mole spends its entire life digging to find the sun only to be blinded by the light when it reaches the surface. There is an idea here of the path to enlightenment as one that leads to self-destruction, which is essentially what happens to el Topo, (this idea of destruction through enlightenment is, I will also argue, just as much a contributing factor to what makes *El Topo* a rogue film as the bizarre imagery is).

In the first sequence, "Genesis," we see el Topo riding into a town with his son. There has recently been a massacre that has left nearly everyone in the village dead. He finds out from the last dying resident that a group of outlaws are responsible for the massacre (we also see the outlaws in a cross sequence indulging bizarre fetishes, including one who makes the outline of a naked woman out of baked beans and proceeds to make love to it). He confronts and kills them but finds out before killing the last one that they were working for a colonel. El Topo finds the colonel in a monastery where other outlaws are forcing the monks to act as whores for them (one of them even uses his blood to smear on their lips as lipstick). This kind of perversion of

Christian piety is a common motif in Jodorowsky's films, though it is worth noting that, unlike many Christian figures in many of his films (recall the blind bishop who sucks blood in *Fando y Lis*), these monks lack the corruption of most of Jodorowsky's Christian figures.

There is also a woman at the monastery who the colonel subjugates which is probably why, while el Topo kills all the outlaws who do not surrender to him, he chooses instead to castrate the colonel. Castration comes up alarmingly often in Jodorowsky's films and here and in one other film (*Santa Sangre*) the castratee reacts by killing himself. Zizek, in his essay "In his Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large" talks about wrongful imprisonment as "the 'empirical' fragment of reality which served as its experiential support" for all of Hitchcock's films, which is to say that wrongful imprisonment was a deep rooted fear that Hitchcock constantly found himself returning to in his films¹⁴. (217) One wonders if castration serves as a similar anxiety for Jodorowsky, as not only is there quite an abundance of literal castrations in his films, I could exhaust the rest of this chapter by discussing all of the figurative castrations we see as well, though some will reveal themselves to the intuitive reader as we work our way through the plot.

We see in the monastery sequence el Topo as a figure with a strong sense of righteousness (he clearly feels a duty to avenge the massacre he encounters) but still for him his solution is to right wrongs through violence. If this sequence were to comprise the entirety of *El Topo* it would be quite the conventional film: a great injustice is committed and the hero sets out to punish those responsible, killing the bad guy and riding off into the sunset with the girl. For *El Topo* though, this is only the first step in the spiritual journey and while he does ride off into the sunset with the girl (the one the colonel subjugated), he chooses her over his son, giving in to

¹⁴ This fear stemmed from an early childhood experience where his father sent him to the local jail with a note which he handed to a police officer who, upon reading it, threw the young Alfred in one of the cells for several hours. It turns out the note had instructed the officer to do this, as it had been the hope of Hitchcock's father that this would deter him from any temptation to commit crimes when in reality the experience scarred Hitchcock for life.

the weakness of the flesh and abandoning him to the care of the monks, telling his son as he rides away to hate him and someday kill him for what he did to him.

The second part of the film, “Prophets,” sees el Topo travelling through the desert with the woman from the monastery. She feeds into his vanity and tells him that he could become truly great if he can defeat the four gunslingers who live in the desert. This sets up the long middle passage of the film, as el Topo faces the four gunslingers one at a time, all of whom are superior to him in skill because they have also achieved a higher realm of enlightenment than he, and each of them acts as both mentor and nemesis to him (hence the title of this section). This is one of the reasons any attempt to correlate the structure of this film to *the Bible* is so problematic. For one thing, while there is some Christian symbolism that pops up throughout this section of the film, this section largely borrows from Eastern spiritualism and there really is no clear equivalent to the Bible here (one thing that becomes clear both here and in *The Holy Mountain* is that Jodorowsky does not believe that any particular religion serves as any kind of path to spirituality).

El Topo defeats each of the gunmen through trickery until he reaches the fourth one, an old man who has abandoned his gun for a butterfly net (that he can catch el Topo’s bullets with) and has sworn off all worldly possessions. He tells el Topo:

Fourth Master: How could you possibly have won? I don’t fight. I have nothing. Even if you’d tricked me, you couldn’t have taken anything from me.

El Topo: Yes. I could have taken your life.

Fourth Master: My life? It means nothing to me. I’ll show you.

The fourth master then takes el Topo’s gun and shoots himself with it then, dying in el Topo’s arms, whispers to him, “you lose.”

There is perhaps one Biblical parallel that can be drawn and that would be to the Tower of Babel. Considered figuratively, the Tower of Babel warns against seeking God in the external world (ie: finding a path to heaven by literally building one to it) and the confusion of languages serves as a reminder that God must be found internally, since there is no way to communicate outwardly, there is no other direction for them to turn their thoughts. Similarly, el Topo believes he can achieve enlightenment by killing each of the masters, regardless of how he does so and ignores the wisdom they try to pass on to them, except to the extent that he is able take something from each of them as a way of tricking the next gunslinger. When his trickery proves useless against the fourth master and he is unable to kill him he is driven to madness by his failure (and his companion abandons him) until he is found by a group of invalids and taken to a cave, where he presumably spends decades in meditation (the timeline is a little unclear).

We then move to the third part of the film, "Psalms," which reflects a major shift in el Topo's enlightenment. In this sequence he has abandoned any sense of vanity: he shaves his beard and hair and trades his black outfit for monk's robes. He learns that the invalids who rescue him are kept trapped in the cave by the residents of the nearby town and el Topo vows to go to the town and find a way to free them. He brings along a dwarf woman (who though she is a major character, is never given a name. I will be going by her credit in the titles, which is Small Woman) from the cave with him and in the town they find a menagerie of decadence: slaves forced to fight to the death with barbed wire boxing gloves, oversexed old women who throw themselves on young men then accuse them of molesting them, and so on. Small Woman (Jacqueline Luis) and el Topo degrade themselves by putting on cheesy street performances to raise money for the excavation, and thus we are treated to the irony of the mole who seeks a path to the sun by digging into the earth.

It is here that I should perhaps stop to ask a question that is as relevant here as anywhere else: is it actually possible to identify with el Topo? I ask the question here because it is at this point in the film that, ostensibly at least, el Topo begins to become a sympathetic character. He has abandoned his violent tendencies and shrugged off his vanity but is it actually possible for us to care? Up until this point in the film I would say no. There is a sense through the first half of the film that el Topo is functioning largely as an archetypal figure: that his character is motivated more by the necessities of the path to enlightenment he must follow than by any human desire: he seeks vengeance for the slaughtered town because he has to right the wrong, he abandons his son for the woman because it is necessary for him to give in to temptation, and so on. We could say that this is a case of the character serving the plot but for *El Topo* I do not think that's quite right. It may seem a pedantic formality but I do think there is a key distinction between claiming that el Topo's character serves the purposes of the script and saying that his character serves the purposes of the path to enlightenment he must follow. If I may be so bold as to treat the script as the scene in a scene-actor ratio, then el Topo's motivations are little more than puppet strings pulled by Jodorowsky¹⁵ but if we are to consider el Topo's actions in regards to the desire to achieve enlightenment (an actor-purpose ratio, since trying to look at "the path to enlightenment" as a scene in a scene-actor ratio seems a bit much) then we could make the case that his character is motivated by what he feels it is necessary to do, ie: if he wants to be enlightened then he must avenge the massacred town, he must defeat the four gunslingers (abandoning his child for the woman admittedly does not quite fit but it could still simply be seen as a weakness of character).

Lacan discusses the idea of the letter that always arrives at its destination (or the answer of the Real), which is a somewhat tricky concept to apply to *El Topo* but can provide some

¹⁵ And I am aware of the reflexive, even contradictory, nature of my analogy.

understanding of what drives el Topo's character. The source of the trickiness is in the fact that, like in *Fando y Lis*, el Topo is never given a motive for why he seeks enlightenment (we are to perhaps presume that the desire to achieve enlightenment is a motive in and of itself, but this is something of a non-answer) and for the letter to arrive at its destination we need a subject who is in search of a signifier. For example, consider the Roman emperor Constantine, who sought a sign from God and found it in the form of light reflected in the shape of a cross. To any other observer, this reflection of light would have been a mere peculiarity but to Constantine it was the arrival of the symbol he sought: the letter arriving at its destination (and it is pivotal to note that, from the perspective of the subject, the arrival of the letter is indistinguishable from destiny). In *El Topo*, it is unclear what kind of sign, if any, el Topo is seeking but we can deduce that, when he comes to the massacred town, the actions that follow are him going through the motions of what he believes is expected of him, perhaps we could say it is his attempt to force the delivery of the letter. When he encounters the invalids in the cave though, we sense that his motives are not so mechanical: he acts not because he believes he has found the signifier he is looking for and is acting as he believes is expected of him but rather acts out of a genuine desire to do good.

Zizek, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, talks about action as a repetition, because the first time an act occurs its purpose is misrecognized but leads to the repetition, when the intention of the first act is understood and carried out. Zizek uses the example of Julius Caesar: Caesar consolidated his power, recognizing that it was necessary to save Rome by changing the rule of the country from a republic to a monarchy, but the conspirators of his murder misrecognized the purpose of his power grab but, in murdering the real Caesar, led the way to Augustus (the first symbolic Caesar) who fulfilled the necessity of what Julius Caesar tried to accomplish. (63-4) We can see a similar pattern at work here with el Topo's motives: the first

village he tries to save (ironically, one in which everyone is already dead), leads to his downfall, but the second one leads to his betterment. He misrecognizes the first village he encounters as his chance for enlightenment but this allows him to correctly identify what he must do to save the second village (or rather, those outcast from the village). It is also through his second act that he appears more human to us. If in the first part of the film he acts because he believes it is what he is supposed to do then in the second part he acts because he feels he must right the wrong. In other words, because his drive is more impassioned, we are also inclined to see him as more human and, therefore, identify with him more strongly.

El Topo, however, breaks with Zizek's notion that the repetition of the act is when it is successfully carried out (it would not be a rogue film if it kept to the idea). The fourth part of the film, "Apocalypse" (which should give some indication of how happy the film's ending is) begins with the arrival of el Topo's son, who took his father's last words before he abandoned him to be raised by the monks to heart and intends to kill his father (el Topo's son is, of course, a monk himself). However, when he confronts his father (who has also since married Little Woman) and sees the work he is doing to try to free the invalids he agrees to help and, in another repetition, dons the solid black outfit his father used to wear. But when el Topo frees the invalids from the cave and they try to make their way into the town, the townspeople come out with their weapons and shoot all of them down. El Topo, enraged, takes a gun and kills everyone in the town¹⁶ then, in an unmistakable parallel to the self-immolation of the Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc, sets himself on fire in the middle of the street while el Topo's son and Little Woman walk away from the town.

¹⁶ In what is perhaps the most ludicrously one-sided gun fight in film history

If the repetition of the act is supposed to realize the fulfillment of the original act, then we have here a repetition that runs contrary to that. Unless, that is, what we are supposed to take away from *el Topo*'s dual failure is that any possibility of enlightenment is impossible; that the act of enlightenment, no matter how many times it is repeated, will always end in failure. Rhetorically, then, is the film an argument against enlightenment? Jodorowsky's successor to this film, *The Holy Mountain*, is quite clear in its condemnation of contemporary, popularized means of achieving various states of spiritual awareness, but *El Topo* is more ambiguous. Except for Thich Quang Duc, there are no clear references to any contemporary issues in the film, and even the purpose of the reference to Duc is quite ambiguous (in part because it is hard to say how familiar Jodorowsky might have been with the actual purpose of Duc's self-immolation – an act that is widely misunderstood in the West). And from a rhetorical perspective, the question becomes even more complicated when we factor in that Jodorowsky's purpose for making the film was, in part, for the sake of his own spiritual journey. He wanted to make *El Topo* and, more importantly, play the role of *el Topo* himself, so he could tread the path the character follows himself, and so we are then faced with the further challenge of understanding why Jodorowsky would want his own attempt at enlightenment to fail.

The answer I would be most inclined to give would be to return to the question of fantasy, especially in the context of the film's time period, even though it does not explicitly reference the cultural mindset of the late 1960's. This was a time when new forms of spirituality were being actively explored by the counter-culture, with idealistic delusions that it would lead to new states-of-mind/revelations/etc. *El Topo* then, could be seen as working to break this fantasy by de-glorifying the whole concept of a spiritual journey, making it into something dark, something that is destructive to those who would undertake one. Where most films that deal in spiritual

journeys end with the revelation of some bumper-sticker platitude, *El Topo* only leaves us with failure and death, but that in itself is the wisdom of the film: it calls into question the very notions of spirituality and enlightenment, challenges the very merits of such belief systems. We could perhaps also see why Jodorowsky would want to travel the same journey the film takes us on (if he wanted us to experience that sense of failure, perhaps he needed to do it himself) but it's really quite difficult to speculate much on the director's motivation beyond this.

This is still only scratching the surface of *El Topo*, but it would need an entire book to delve into the catalogue of religious symbolism and motifs that run through this film (a book that desperately needs to be written). For now, the broad strokes will have to do. *El Topo*'s deconstruction of the spiritual journey, combined with the film's relentless violence, sexual deviance and perverse imagery, make this a prime example of a rogue film. It should come as no surprise then that it took Jodorowsky himself to one up it.

Ascending The Holy Mountain

In comparison to *The Holy Mountain*, *El Topo* seems a tame film. This was the first (and only) film Jodorowsky made with the support of Allan Klein and as such it is Jodorowsky being given the freedom to do whatever he wanted with a budget far beyond what he had ever been allotted before.¹⁷ Indeed, part of the difficulty of watching *The Holy Mountain* is that the film is such a relentless assault on the senses that it can require several viewings to even begin to wrap your head around what it is that's even unfolding on screen. With careful consideration though, *The Holy Mountain* can be seen as another example of Jodorowsky embarking on a spiritual

¹⁷ Which still only amounted to \$750,000.

journey, though one that is far removed from the desert travels of *El Topo*, and one that is also less focused and refined than its predecessor.

It is in the nature of rogue films that they often embody multiple genres. I've already shown how *El Topo* is simultaneously a western and a rogue film, *Fando y Lis* is a rogue road trip film while *Santa Sangre* is a rogue horror film. *The Holy Mountain*, however, aside from being a rogue film, is extremely difficult to classify because it is such a singular work. However, Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of menippean satire can point us to a framework through which we can look at this film. In his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin lays out a fourteen point definition of Menippean Satire and it would be tedious to work through all fourteen points, not the least because not all of his criteria necessarily applies to *The Holy Mountain* (or is necessarily significant to an understanding of the film) so I will only take the time to highlight some key concepts:

Bakhtin states:

The most important characteristic of the menippea as a genre is the fact that its bold and unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure is internally motivated, justified by and devoted to a purely ideational and philosophical end: the creation of *extraordinary situations* for the provoking and testing of a philosophic idea, a discourse, a *truth*, embodied in the image of a wise man, the seeker of this truth. (114, emphasis in original)

We can see some echo of *El Topo* in here but we will also see that this is a near perfect embodiment of *The Holy Mountain's* motive and structure. We can also see some notion of the rogue ideology at work in this definition, since one of the defining features of the menippea is to challenge accepted ideas and social norms.

Another key point in his definition: “A very important characteristic of the menippea is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even a mythical-religious element with an extreme and (from our point of view) crude *slum naturalism*.” (115, emphasis in original) I have spoken already of both the spirituality of Jodorowsky as well as his obsession with symbols and we have furthermore already seen something of this “slum naturalism” at work in *Fando y Lis* and *El Topo* and we will see it again in *The Holy Mountain*. This contrasting of the spiritual with filth could be seen as a key component to Jodorowsky’s own view towards religion.

There are two other points of Bakhtin’s definition that I wish to look at in tandem here, as it not only helps demonstrate how *The Holy Mountain* connects to the manippean tradition but also suggests that manippean satire (dating back to ancient Greece as it does) may in fact be the earliest iteration of rogue narrative: “In the manippea there appears for the first time what may be called moral-psychological experimentation: a representation of the unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states of man...” (116) which I would like to couple with this: “Very characteristic of the manippea are scandal scenes, eccentric behavior, inappropriate speeches and performances, that is, all sorts of violations of the generally accepted and customary course of events and the established norms of behavior and etiquette, including manners of speech.” (117) We have again already seen some of these elements in the two prior films but in *The Holy Mountain* they are even more prevalent and indeed are key to the structure and themes of the film. Furthermore, this subversion that is so key to the manippea is also a vital component of rogue cinema and so, while it is the intention of this work to focus solely on the art of cinema, Bakhtin’s definition suggests that should we want to trace the history of rogue narrative to its roots that we would need to begin as far back as *The Golden Ass* and *the Satyricon* (the latter of which was of course

adapted into a rogue film by Fellini). It is perhaps fitting then that *The Holy Mountain* is the most difficult film I look at in this work to couch in a genre tradition other than rogue cinema because we could argue that, with this film, we are getting deeper at the root of what rogue aesthetics are than with any other we could look at.

This still however presents some challenges to understanding this film because unless you have seen it, it is very difficult to appreciate what the experience of watching it is like and so it is my wish to provide some further context here:

First: *The Holy Mountain* has no conventional narrative arc. In fact, for the first half hour, the film appears to have no kind of plot whatsoever, as we follow around a thief (Horatio Salinas) who travels with a limbless companion (character name and actor are both uncredited) through a city so rife with corruption and decadence it makes the town in *El Topo* appear saintly. It is not until the thief encounters the Alchemist (Alejandro Jodorowsky, this time playing a truly enlightened spiritual guide), who takes him under his wing and brings him in on a plan to recruit eight of the most corrupt and ruthless businessmen, industrialists and politicians in the world to lead them on a path of spiritual cleansing so they may ascend Lotus Mountain and overthrow the gods who secretly rule the universe. But even this summary runs the risk of making the film seem more focused than it really is, as the plot that is woven in and out of long diversions into surreal set pieces and exercises in spiritual cleansing that do not always necessarily have anything to do with advancing the story. Indeed the plot I described comprises maybe a third of the film's run time.

Second: the film is a relentless assault of surreal and shocking imagery. To give an example: early on in the film we are introduced to the decadent city that provides the backdrop for much of the first half of the film: not only are there soldiers ruthlessly mowing down student

protesters in the streets (no doubt an intentional parallel to the brutal crackdown of student protests in Mexico in the late 1960's, events to which Jodorowsky was a witness), but birds fly from their bullet wounds as buses full of American tourists disembark to get their photos taken with the executioners and corpses (one particularly memorable moment has one of the soldiers deciding to have sex with one of the American women, who gladly consents and smiles for the camera as the husband takes pictures of the two of them going at it) while a deranged military cult marches through the streets with skinned rabbits nailed to crucifixes: and that's just one three minute sequence. The entire film is paced this way (and it's 110 minutes long) and for even the most jaded viewers it becomes overwhelming to try to take in the endless parade of violence, nudity, sex, sacrilege and differently abled people¹⁸. No one watching *The Holy Mountain* is going to overlook the shocking imagery, but there is one other key component to understanding the experience of the film (and, by extension in undertaking an analysis of it) that is much more often overlooked:

Third: the film is also a relentless barrage of symbols, and I do not mean symbols in the sense of objects and actions in need of interpretation but actual icons and images that carry a specific meaning. I mentioned previously that Jodorowsky is perhaps the most symbol-obsessed filmmaker in the history of the medium and here he carries his obsession to an extreme, borrowing heavily from Western, Eastern and New Age imagery, often mixing them together in the same scene and often using symbols so esoteric that he cannot possibly expect his audience to actually know all of them. Indeed, one of the most exasperating components of *The Holy Mountain* is the constant stream of symbols and icons that you know are significant but that have no reference for what they mean, especially since they're often quite relevant to understanding

¹⁸ And unfortunately, unlike *El Topo*, where at least some effort was made to humanize the differently abled characters, *The Holy Mountain* largely relies on them for the strangeness of their bodies.

the purpose of the scene. Consider the first scene after the opening credits when we see the thief lying passed out in a ditch urinating himself and with flies covering his face. That he lays in a Christ-like position – arms splayed out and legs crossed at the ankles – is unmistakable (though there is nothing Christ-like about him), but then we see the limbless man approach him with a tarot card strapped to his back, along with a group of naked children (and let us recall el Topo's naked son and the dual function of innocence/shock value) one of whom plucks a white rose growing out of the palm of the thief's left hand. They then carry him to a cross, suspend him from it, then throw rocks at him until he wakes up. Again we see an unmistakable reference to Jesus and while the rose plucked from the hand has a vague connotation of stigmata to it, Cobb informs us that a white rose is an alchemical symbol for "purity, innocence and unconditional love," as well as symbolizing the initiation of new members into the alchemical world. (130) It is also through Cobb that we learn that the tarot card on the back of the limbless man "identifies him as an agent of some grand mechanism." (130)

The references to Christ are instantly recognizable to anyone but it is quite a stretch for Jodorowsky to expect his audience to recognize the alchemical interpretation of a white rose, especially in the context of the more overt Christian symbols that dominate the scene (though the alchemical interpretation of purity, love and innocence is not far removed from the traditional Western interpretation of a white rose, the association with initiation into alchemical rituals is quite far removed), and even in the height of 1970's counter-culture there would be very few who would recognize the meaning of the tarot card¹⁹ (which is only briefly seen on screen) and fewer still who would be familiar with both the symbols of tarot and alchemy.

¹⁹ It is perhaps worth noting that, when he is not creating films, novels or graphic novels, Jodorowsky's major contribution to the world has been his creation of a new branch of "psychology" he calls Tarot Therapy, which is supposed to provide psychological healing through the use of tarot cards. Additionally, rather infuriatingly to the

This would be dizzying enough if Jodorowsky limited himself just to the symbol systems of these three ideologies, but he borrows heavily from the full range of Judeo-Christian-Islamic symbols as well as from the world's other major religions and a viewer could quickly go mad should they decide to try to parse out all the symbols used and how they relate to the film's story and themes, which is a far greater challenge than merely figuring out what the symbols are. The narrative and shock imagery are quite unconventional but it is this panoply of symbols that perhaps contributes the most to making the film such an overwhelming experience to take in. However, the viewer willing to be patient with the film and look past the veneer of symbols and shock imagery will parse out a method to *The Holy Mountain's* insanity.

The film's prologue provides the thematic context of the entire film. With a Buddhist monk's chant on the soundtrack we see the Alchemist in a room with two women – identical twins – who are regaled in fancy dresses, makeup, salon hair, etc. Slowly and methodically, the Alchemist removes all of their accouterments – he wipes off their makeup, removes their press on nails, shaves their heads and removes their dresses, until they are left naked but purified. If we could impose any kind of conventional narrative arc on this film it would be this process of purification.

The film's long first act, which focuses on the thief's wanderings through the unnamed city where much of the film is set, can often seem disjointed, but it also presents us with a wide range of debauchery and decadence. In addition to the aforementioned public executions, we also see a range of blasphemous acts, including an animalistic bishop who speaks only in grunts sleeping in bed with a statue of Christ and a group of mostly naked women praying at an altar to the Virgin Mary (one of whom falls in love with the thief and has a companion chimpanzee for

aspiring Jodorowsky scholar uninterested in New Age mysticism, his book on the subject is the only one of his books to be published in English.

reasons that are never elaborated on except a vague suggestion that the chimpanzee is a similar companion to her that the limbless man is to the thief). The women, who dress only in short shorts and netted shirts with nothing underneath, are also one of the many sexually charged images we see in this act (the American tourist having sex with the soldier is another). In short, Jodorowsky is careful to ensure that all seven of the deadly sins are covered as well as all the venial sins and quite a few others that are beyond classification. The second act begins when the thief encounters a tower with a single window at the top, from which he sees a hook lowered down to the open market below upon which is a bag of gold, which a man takes and replaces with a plate of food. The thief, driven by greed, abandons his limbless companion and grabs onto the hook and is raised to the window. The symbolism of him rising above the decadence of the city is precisely as obvious as it appears because inside is the Alchemist who, after a brief exchange, takes on the thief as a pupil.

The scenes that follow are among the most obfuscating in the film, as they are predominantly a series of lessons the Alchemist takes the thief through that do not appear to be drawn from any major religion and for which even Cobb provides no explanation for (as he does for many of the more esoteric symbols that appear in the film), leading us to the conclusion that they are purely of Jodorowsky's invention (though we do see some tarot cards and a scene where the Alchemist turns the thief's excrement into gold). For example, one such lesson has the Alchemist present the thief with a stone pillar and give him an axe, instructing him to break the stone. When the thief fails to do so after striking it repeatedly, the Alchemist takes the axe, strikes it on the top of the pillar, and it shatters, revealing a glass sphere, which the Alchemist takes and tells the thief, "This stone has a soul formed by the work of millions of years."

To try to analyze the symbolism at work here and in the many other scenes that accompany it in this act would quickly prove tedious and probably even futile, but there is a legitimate case to be made for focusing not on what they mean but on why we are witnessing them. The scenes become more tolerable to watch when we consider them simply as actions, which is to say when we consider the significance of the simple fact that we are witnessing the motions of these rituals. Nearly every major religion features complex and often meaningless rituals in them whose purpose is not in understanding why but simply in the doing (Buddhism is a perfect example: Buddhist chants have no signified: “om” is not a word, it is a meaningless sound whose repetition works to help clear the mind: its significance is in the act of chanting it). In presenting us with nonexistent religious rituals, Jodorowsky makes us aware of the actions (we would not think twice if he showed us nuns in prayer) at the same time that this is also one of the more subtle rejections of conventional religion in the film, since the invented rituals tie in with an ongoing theme we see in the film of rejecting conventional religion as a path to enlightenment.

However, Jodorowsky blasphemes nearly every major religion in the world with this film at the same time we often see him pay reverence to them. His rituals borrow heavily from New Age practices but are still rooted in more traditional religious rituals. In essence, Jodorowsky walks every path of spirituality but at the same time treads none of them (or perhaps it's more fitting to say he treads his own). Through this theme it is also possible that we could see *The Holy Mountain* as a counterpoint to *El Topo*: where the latter shows us a path to enlightenment that ends in failure, *The Holy Mountain* gives us one that succeeds only because the characters shrug off all traditional notions of achieving enlightenment. It is in this manner that *The Holy*

Mountain pries away at the fantasies we hold about spirituality and also, in another departure from *El Topo*, more directly satirizes the culture the film comes out of.

Perhaps the most celebrated sequence of the film comes after the Alchemist has taught the Thief much of what he needs to know. He explains that they will have a number of companions on their journey, “thieves like you, but on another level. They are the most powerful people on the planet, industrialists and politicians.” What follows is a series of vignettes as we are introduced to all eight of them one at a time. Each of them is connected to one of the planets (Venus through Pluto with none representing Earth²⁰) and Jodorowsky weaves quite an intricate connection between the eight thieves and the god each of their planets corresponds with. At first the connections are obvious: Fon (Juan Ferrara) represents Venus and he heads a massive beauty and fashion empire while Isla (Adriana Page) represents Mars and is an arms manufacturer (hopefully the reversal of the traditional gender roles has not escaped the reader) but as we move further out in the solar system the connections become more esoteric. Understanding Klen’s (Burt Kleiner) connection to Jupiter requires the viewer to recall that Jupiter, in Roman mythology, was often associated with merrymaking (Cobb, 146, 147) and Klen is a manufacturer of art and sex toys, while the children’s toymaker Sel (Valerie Jodorowsky) represents Saturn, who was the father of the Gods. Berg (Nicky Nichola) is a financial advisor to the President (which president is not made clear but there are obvious connotations of a generic Latin American dictator), but Cobb suggests his celestial connection is not through his work (as it is with the others) but through his relationship to his mother (which is

²⁰ In addition to the eight thieves, there are three others who travel with them on the journey that makes up the last act of the film: the Alchemist, the thief and a companion of the Alchemist billed as The Written Woman (Ramona Saunders), who is heavily tattooed (in esoteric religious/new age symbols of course) and rarely does more than stand around and be almost completely naked. It is unclear which celestial bodies these three are supposed to correspond with. Presumably the Alchemist, as the central figure and guiding light, would be the Sun but if the Written Woman and the thief are supposed to correspond with Mercury and Earth (or possibly the Moon), it is never made clear who corresponds with which celestial body and what their connection to it might be.

the focus of his vignette), as Uranus was the son of Gaia. (151) Axon (Richard Rutowsky) is Neptune and chief of police (as well as the instigator of the suppression of the student rebellion we witness early in the film) until Cobb informs us that modern astrologers associate Neptune with illusion and deception, which can be seen as representative of a man who ostensibly upholds justice but in reality is a ruthless suppressor of it. (153) Lut (Luis Loveli) is a Real Estate mogul and representative of Pluto, which is perhaps not quite as esoteric as some of the other thieves, as there is a certain twisted logic in having a man who designs apartments for the working class (the focus of his vignette) represented by the god of the underworld. In his narrative he is creating a “revolutionary” set of apartments for the working class man, which are quite literally nothing but coffins suspended in towers that would be built in huge blocks.

In addition to the rather novel vignette structure, this sequence is notable for its heavy satire, which is somewhat atypical of Jodorowsky and is one of the reasons why it is more fitting to frame *The Holy Mountain* in the tradition of the *menippea* than it is with his other films. We do see some elements of satire elsewhere in *The Holy Mountain* (such as the previously described scene where American tourists witness the execution of student protestors) but through the whole of Jodorowsky’s work satire is something he is rarely inclined to engage in. But this sequence not only satirizes the full spectrum of the political/industrial/capitalist complex, it is also somewhat atypical of Jodorowsky in that it plays into the audience’s Will-to-Enjoy (which, if you’ll recall, is the first step in arousing an audience’s sadistic desire) but not to later trap us with the Real of our desire: the sequence is pure *jouissance*.

To consider a couple of examples, the first thief we are introduced to, Fon (Venus) is in charge of a beauty empire run by his father, who is deaf, blind and mute and makes executive decisions by sticking his finger into the vagina of his wife’s mummified corpse, giving a yes if it

is wet and a no if it is dry (one imagines his father must be a rather negative person). They sell prosthetic faces and muscles that allow the wearer to look however they want and have pioneered animatronic technology that allows people to present themselves as they wish in death, a process Fon demonstrates by having a dead priest give a blessing and a dead stripper perform an erotic dance. Aside from the undeniably original presentation, it is a fairly standard critique of fashion: emphasizing vanity and superficiality and run by a man who is literally blind, deaf and out of touch with the world.

The satire generally runs on this level but some set pieces are a little more creative in their satire. In Klen's (Jupiter) sequence, after taking us on a tour of the factory where he manufactures avant-garde art (which he mass produces by having workers dip their butts in paint and rub them on canvases) he introduces us to his newest invention: a giant cubic box with a vaguely vaginal opening on the front that is designed to test how good a lover someone is (which he never names but we can actually learn from the song list for the film's soundtrack is called the Fuck Box). Klen explains: "We created a love machine. To make it live the spectator has to work with it, guide it, receive it, give himself in the act of love." Klen first has his chauffeur demonstrate how it works by handing him what can only be adequately described as a giant electro-magnetic dildo:

Klen: with this electronic rod, he will rub its mechanical vagina. The skill of the spectator will determine the machine's ability to reach a climax.

The chauffeur tries to force the rod into the machine, which causes it to vibrate slightly but little else. Klen hands the rod over to his mistress:

Klen: My chauffeur is a bad lover. He didn't know how to satisfy it. But this woman, I know her techniques very well, will produce the electronic orgasm.

The woman approaches the box more gently and as she does so, it begins to unfold and expand to fill the room, emitting a series of electronic beeps that grow louder and more intense until a baby robot drops from between its legs, which the mother robot begins to cradle in its arms while singing a digital lullaby.

Beneath the spectacle of this scene is a critique of man's relationship with technology, but one with a more original approach to it. Rather than a tiresome condemnation that boils down to "technology = bad," Jodorowsky skewers our "love affair" with technology by portraying it in a literal light, with an implication that it is a cyclical process (perhaps the baby Fuck Box will prove to be a more streamlined design with better features). However, what cannot be separated from either of the examples given (or the myriad others in this sequence) is the manner in which they are presented. While Jodorowsky's critique of the superficiality of fashion may be a clichéd criticism, his presentation of it is anything but. And the presentation is not mere window dressing: given how tiresome it is to critique fashion as superficial, presenting the idea in an entirely new manner has a way of refreshing the message for us: forcing us to reconsider an argument we would otherwise have become deaf to. We could look at this in terms of Žižek's fantasy, as we could argue that the repetition of the idea ad nauseum inoculates us to it but there is something of Marshall McLuhan "the medium is the message" here as well. It is true that many films have criticized fashion as superficial, but this is a critique of fashion by way of rogue cinema, where it is in the very nature of such a film to force a reconsideration of such a tired message. And thus, while the message may not be original, the originality of the medium reawakens us to it.

There is also the further issue of identification here, as we are introduced to a group of men and women that we cannot possibly sympathize with. These seven are not simply evil,

they're caricatures of all the villains that dominate our nightly news – corrupt businessmen and politicians, oppressive police forces, instigators of war and gender stereotypes – and they have no characterization outside of this. Where this becomes problematic is in the sequence that follows when we watch them undergo their spiritual transformation: Jodorowsky gives them no further characterization beyond the satirical stereotypes he's already presented to us. There is no reason for us to care that they are undergoing this transformation. Even to the end there is nothing to identify with: no consubstantiality to be had with these characters. This is somewhat alleviated by the presence of the thief, who is more relatable (though hardly a deep character) and the Alchemist, while certainly not evil, has a distance to him that we often associate with powerful religious figures. He is almost otherworldly. Where then does identification take place in this film?

This is actually a case where it is perhaps best to say that identification in this film is reflexive. This is usually antithetical to Burkean identification, which usually requires an other (who else would you share substance with?) however, the very distance of this character may well be what allows for this reflexiveness, and given that both this film and *El Topo* function as challenges to our traditional notions of spirituality and enlightenment, we can conclude that Jodorowsky wants us to see ourselves travelling to the Holy Mountain. He wants this to be our journey, for us to achieve some sort of enlightenment from it.

There is a further twist to our line of questioning though which is, given this reflexive identification taking place, why would Jodorowsky choose such despicable people as our avatars? This would seem the kind of place for an Everyman but the closest thing we have to one here is the thief who, while more likeable than the other characters, is still deeply flawed. The answer most befitting a consideration of rogue cinema is that Jodorowsky does not want us

identifying with someone who is not deeply flawed. If we are to see ourselves on screen then we are to see ourselves through the lens of people who have committed great evil. He is not going to allow us the possibility that we may view ourselves as more pure than the people on screen. His purpose, however, could have benefitted from creating characters as evil as the ones he depicts but with whom we could also share substance, because the film as it stands runs the risk of creating contempt in the audience, a sense that we are better than the people on screen and therefore do not need the purification they embark on after the vignettes end. This then could be seen as one place where, rhetorically at least, the film fails.

The end of the vignettes presenting the seven thieves also signals a slowing down of the pace of the film, as it is from here on that the Alchemist takes them (as well as the thief and the Written Woman) through a spiritual cleansing so that they can ascend Lotus Mountain²¹ and overthrow the gods who rule the universe from it so they can claim immortality for themselves. Like with the Alchemist and the thief, this act is rife with symbolism, much of it either entirely of Jodorowsky's invention (to give one brief example: the Alchemist has the nine pilgrims look at their reflection in a bucket of water so they can look at the tenth member of the group who has died; they then hold a funeral and burial for the bucket of water), loosely based on existing religious practices or so generic they could apply to almost any form of spirituality (meditation).²² These rituals, however, serve much the same function as the ones we witnessed the Alchemist taking the Thief through: stripped of any association with a particular religion, we

²¹ A place of Jodorowsky's invention but he compares it in a speech to several other "holy mountains" including Mount Ko-tso Shan of the Taoist tradition, the Karakorum of the Himalayas and the Rosicrucian Mountain. However, a Google search reveals that every single one of these is also a trick of Jodorowsky's: they either do not exist at all (the Rosicrucian Mountain) or are only loosely based on real places (the Karakoram, which is a mountain range in Tibet that forms part of the Himalayas and are no more sacred than any other mountain).

²² With this in mind, it is actually a point of some significance that in the deleted scenes on the DVD we learn there was to be an additional scene in this act where the Alchemist was to have them practice Sufi Whirling. He cites technical reasons for cutting the scene but this would have made it the only ritual they undertook that was directly culled from a major religion.

are supposed to see the acts in themselves at the same time that they also act in defiance of conventional religion.

In this light, it is also worth noting that, where el Topo's relatively more conventional approach to enlightenment ended in his downfall, here the pilgrims are successful in ascending Lotus Mountain and achieving their goal. Since one of the most important components of what makes *El Topo* a rogue film was this very downfall (and it is worth noting in general that it is extremely rare to find a rogue film that has a happy ending), how then does *The Holy Mountain* have a happy ending while keeping its roguishness about it?

It is one of the greatest ironies about *The Holy Mountain* that, with all of its shock imagery, possibly the most controversial scene in the film is the finale. The Alchemist leaves the pilgrims near the summit to find the rest of the way on their own. When they reach the summit they find a stone table with hooded figures seated around it. The pilgrims pounce on the figures but discover all of them are dummies except for one, who is revealed to be the Alchemist who, upon his unmasking, sticks his tongue out and thumbs his nose at them while they all laugh together. He bids them sit:

The Alchemist: Sit down. I promised you the great secret and I will not disappoint you.

Is this the end of our adventure? Nothing has an end. We came in search of the secret of immortality, to be like gods and here we are; mortals, more human than ever. If we have not obtained immortality, at least we have obtained reality. We began in a fairytale and we came to life but...Is this life reality? No! It is a film! Zoom back camera!

The camera then pulls back to reveal the film crew.

The Alchemist: We are images, dreams, photographs. We must not stay here. Prisoners! We shall break the illusion! This is maya²³! Goodbye to the Holy Mountain. Real life awaits us.

After flipping over the table, the group stands up and leaves the set and the film fades to white. This ending has been condemned by many critics. Jeff Vice complains “that the whole thing is topped off with a final, nose-thumbing, fourth-wall breaking sequence is just infuriating.” (*Holy Mountain Review*) while James Kendrick is quite dismissive of it as well: “it doesn’t help that the film ends with what is essentially a meta-joke on the audience that only someone from the 19th century would find in any way daring or revelatory.” (*Holy Mountain Review*) And yet this ending is precisely how Jodorowsky approaches the kernel of the Real for us.

We are of course aware that we are watching a film and there are no end of movies that break the fourth wall, to the extent that, while we generally expect them only in certain circumstances (usually comedies and stage adaptations as well as a number of more experimental works – the last of which can certainly accommodate *The Holy Mountain*) they hardly ever come as much of a surprise to us or are much likely to be seen as revelatory. That Jodorowsky makes such a dramatic presentation of his breaching can seem like an insult to the audience’s intelligence: nobody is going to be shocked to find out that they had actually been watching a movie the entire time, which is the reaction that his ending seems to suggest we are supposed to have. But Jodorowsky (who, at this point, has arguably become inextricable from the Alchemist) makes it clear that for any kind of enlightenment to take place that all illusion must be dispelled, including the illusion that he created for us (there is a notably cryptic double meaning in his last line: “Goodbye to the Holy Mountain. Real life awaits us,” as “the Holy Mountain” could be

²³ Cobb informs us that maya “is the Hindu philosophy of illusion, specifically in reference to the unreality of the material world.” (170)

interpreted as referring to both the mountain they stand upon and the film we have just finished watching). We cannot even trust the journey that he took us on. The film then becomes not only a critique of organized religion but a critique of some of the more disorganized ones as well, the actors dispersing in different directions seeming to imply that we are on our own to find our way in the world. Coming out of a culture in which even a subversion of the major religions usually comes in the form of adherence to smaller ones, this is quite a radical statement and while Jodorowsky's breaking of the fourth wall at the end may seem cheap and pedantic, some reflection upon the why of it brings us to something much deeper.

Conclusion

By all rights, I should have had forty years of Jodorowsky scholarship to build this chapter on but Allan Klein, in his pettiness and greed, has denied us decades of research in understanding Jodorowsky's work and influence. Even for the specific subject matter I take on here, what I have put forward is only a beginning of this topic (I have not even been able to address his last major film, *Santa Sangre*) but I hope it has been enough to glimpse the originality of Jodorowsky's vision and approach to his subject matter. Religion and spirituality are topics that few directors are ever willing to criticize in any serious capacity but Jodorowsky has been fearless in taking them on, in forcing us to question fundamental illusions we hold about faith, religion, spirituality and enlightenment and doing so with a distinctly original sense of aesthetics. Jodorowsky had a unique kairic moment in 1967 to 1973 to tackle these issues in the manner he did (which could perhaps in part explain why religion only plays a relatively small role in *Santa Sangre*) and, now that his films have been brought back from the brink it is time for

them to find a new space in our culture and to also make him an essential addition to the canon of rogue cinema that will inevitably come about from the continued exploration of this genre.

Chapter Three: Dusan Makavejev: or, How I Learned to Stop Politicizing and Love a Good Orgasm

Distinguishing Makavejev from Jodorowsky

One may be inclined to take a glance at Makavejev and Jodorowsky and wonder why I'm housing both of them under the same work. Both are directors who became notorious in the late sixties and early seventies for graphic, boundary and genre-pushing films with highly surreal imagery that became just as famous for their shock value as for their artistic merit. The rise and fall of their careers falls nearly on the same timeline (Makavejev made his first mark on the film world in 1965 with *Man is Not a Bird*, gained major international recognition in 1971 with *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* and in 1974 made a film, *Sweet Movie*, that so horrified audiences it effectively ended his career and he was forced to get by on flaccid, watered down versions of the kinds of films that made him famous, such as 1985's *The Coca-Cola Kid*) and both have suffered from a dearth of scholarship due to the unavailability of their films (though Makavejev's films did not become completely unobtainable, just merely difficult to acquire and as such, scholarship on Makavejev is not quite so abysmal).

But where the great focus of Jodorowsky's works was religion and spirituality, for Makavejev it is politics, ideology and sex (though there is only one of the three that he considers important). Makavejev is also credited with inventing a style of filmmaking called Juxtaposition, in which two or more radically different genres are spliced together to reflect off of each other (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is primarily a documentary on Freud's disciple Wilhelm Reich

and a Yugoslavian sex comedy but with several other smaller threads woven in as well). This is in its way fitting for his subject matter, as Makavejev's two major films (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism* and *Sweet Movie*) play capitalist and communist ideologies off of each other. This makes Burkean identification key to interpreting Makavejev's films in addition to Zizek's writings on ideology (and if there has ever been a filmmaker who embodies Zizek's sexual/scatological approach to ideology, it is Makavejev).

This will be the basis of my theoretical approach to Makavejev because, like with Jodorowsky, a similar long-time unavailability of many of his films (with the exception of his most important work: *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*) has led to sparse critical consideration, especially of his (mostly) English-language films *Sweet Movie*, *Montenegro* and the *Coca-Cola Kid*. Unlike with Jodorowsky however, there is no sinister reason for the unavailability of his films: just mere distribution issues. Overall though, writings on Makavejev are somewhat more substantial than of Jodorowsky. Makavejev has been given one book-length scholarly treatment (and, unlike *Anarchy and Alchemy*, it is a proper work of scholarship): Lorraine Mortimer's *Terror and Joy: The Films of Dusan Makavejev*. However, while she acknowledges the radicalism of his work, her interest is more anthropological: looking at the cultural environment that gave rise to Makavejev's work. In fact, relatively little of the book focuses on his films (and she does not cover all of them) but she does provide some useful insight into the controversy surrounding *Sweet Movie* as well as some of the history of the film (of particular use is the survey she provides of the ire directed towards the film even by critics who had admired his earlier films) which, from a rhetorical perspective, allows us to contextualize the director's motives as well as consider how the audience identified with the film.

There also exists a number of articles on Makavejev's films, the majority of which focus on *WR*, though Nina Powers' "Blood and Sugar: The Films of Dusan Makavejev" focuses on his body of work from 1965 - 1974, including *Sweet Movie*, the film of Makavejev's that I will be most interested in focusing on. Like anyone who watches the film, Powers bases her analysis in the overwhelming "combination of cultural nausea and sickness of a more visceral, immediate kind," referring here to what she calls "the true stars of the film...the myriad substances that seep from the lens in hyperreal color: blood, shit, breast milk, food, chocolate." (50)

But while she touches on the "repulsion and bafflement" (51) that the film was initially met with, she does not otherwise expand on the film's relationship to its audience, leaving room for my own exploration, as Makavejev is a visceral director, at least in his 1970s films, as his early works are not rogue but they are undeniably subversive.

However, it is not simply because of the non-rogue-ness of his early films that I have less interest in focusing on them but it is also the fact that they are films made for Yugoslavians by a Yugoslavian. Where Makavejev's work is at its most compelling is when he began to focus on larger global issues, especially the relationship between capitalism and communism, an exploration that began with *WR* and continued with *Sweet Movie* and, to a lesser extent, in *Montenegro* (1981). Because of this, the Pentad becomes particularly useful for contextualizing Makavejev, especially in locating Makavejev kairologically. It may not be too much of a stretch to say that the defining ideological clash of the twentieth century was that of capitalist and communist ideology. However, it is very rare to see a film that bridges this divide in any real capacity. American films typically uphold capitalist ideals, or if they challenge them, it is not from a Marxist standpoint but merely from "within the system" if you will, with films that tell us to value happiness and family over greedy ambitions of wealth (which, of course, many Marxist

critics would argue still works to uphold the capitalist status quo). Even films deeper in the underground, that had more freedom to openly critique our culture, films like *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1969), cannot really be called Marxist even as they more aggressively challenge the status quo (even Jodorowsky's Lennon and Ono financed *The Holy Mountain* is never pro-Marxist even as it ruthlessly skewers capitalist ideology).

Conversely, it is predominantly in Europe that we see Marxist cinema, not just behind the Iron Curtain but in much of Western Europe as well, where Marxist ideology took hold among scholars and artists in a way that it never quite did in the US. The most prominent example in cinema is probably Jean-Luc Godard, whose films throughout the 1960s became increasingly radicalized, from the apolitical *Breathless* (1960) to the more satirical and subversive *Made in USA* (1966) and *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (1967) to the militant communist polemics *Le Gai Savoir* (1969) and *Tout Va Bien* (1972).

Thus does the defining political dichotomy of the twentieth century manifest itself in film but Makavejev is rare, if not unique, among twentieth century political filmmakers in that he inhabits both worlds both physically and figuratively (he lived behind the Iron Curtain until the success of *WR* gave him a way out, at which point he settled in the US, where he still lives) and his films exist within both ideological camps and outside both of them at the same time. They exist in the "beyond," a term I borrow from Homi Bhabha in his discussion of third space theory and which I think can be adequately appropriated here. Bhabha defines the beyond in relation to a discussion of Chicano performance poets, but, like the term, his words can be re-appropriated here:

Being in the 'beyond', then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell 'in the beyond' is also, as I have shown, to be part of a revisionary time,

a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense, then, the intervening space 'beyond', becomes a space of intervention in the here and now. (*The Location of Culture*, 10)

There is a breath of the framework I constructed for defining rogue cinema in the opening chapter here. I have spoken often of rogue films reaching into depths we do not want to explore (our sub-stance, the kernel of the Real, the truth we do not want to face) but it is not also fitting to say that a rogue film steps outside the space we normally occupy and takes us to a place where we are forced to reconsider our perspective? It is certainly a fitting framework for Makavejev and, to bring us back around to Burke, can perhaps be thought of as the scene in which he operated to make the films that he did. Considering the relative tameness of Makavejev's early films, it is certainly logical that what led to his far more idiosyncratic and original films was Makavejev finding his way to this space. The motivation for doing so, however, is difficult to define beyond this, except to say that if one watches his early works, *Man is Not a Bird* (1965), *Love Affair: Or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) and *Innocence Unprotected* (1968), we can gradually see him testing the boundaries of what he can get away with, beginning with a slightly eccentric but rather mundane love story (*Man is Not a Bird*), then progressing to a much more free-form and offbeat romance/neo-noir (*Love Affair*) to a subversive documentary in which he first practiced the juxtaposition style (*Innocence Unprotected*), it could be that this was his method of finding his way into the space that allowed him to create *WR*.

Makavejev may have transcended the capitalist/communist dichotomy but this question of transcendence becomes more complicated when we bring the question of Makavejev's own

ideology into focus through the lens of Zizek. If we were to try to extract an ideological focus from Makavejev's major films (*WR*, *Sweet Movie*, *Montenegro*) it is that political ideology is something we must move past, that it is something that distracts us from living our lives. We can see this in *WR* from the beginning. The film starts as a documentary about Freud's disciple Wilhelm Reich, who fled to the US ahead of WWII and began to experiment with research into sex therapy and Makavejev focuses a great deal on how ill-received Reich's research was, primarily because it so clashed with the prudish values of America at the time (though he never addresses the fact that Reich's "research" had clearly left the realm of psychology far behind and had moved into wild new age mysticism, since a key component of his theory was that orgasms were connected to a mystical cosmic energy called "orgone" and that it was possible to collect orgone energy into special boxes that would give people more intense orgasms). I will get into a more detailed analysis of this sequence in my subsection on *WR* but for now I merely want to extract the broad sweep of this segment which is the implication that the political and cultural ideology of America has done little more than keep us from having cosmic orgasms. Makavejev, in a sense, wants us to move past our ideologies and focus on carnal pleasures.

While there is a great deal that Zizek and Makavejev have in common (including a very similar biographical connection to capitalist and communist scenes and a similar subversive approach to their ideals) this is one place where they differ because for Zizek, ideology is not something you can escape. His most famous work (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*) is a rejection of the very concept of a "post-ideological world." One of Zizek's favorite examples (and the one I cite because it comes closest to Makavejev's scatological mischievousness) is the way that a culture's ideology manifests itself through its toilets:

In a traditional German lavatory, the hole in which shit disappears after we flush water is way in front, so that the shit is first laid out for us to sniff at and inspect for traces of some illness; in the typical French lavatory, on the contrary, the hole is in the back – that is, the shit is supposed to disappear as soon as possible; finally, the Anglo-Saxon (English and American) lavatory presents a kind of synthesis, a mediation between these two opposed poles – the basin is full of water, so that the shit floats in it – visible but not to be inspected... It is clear that none of these versions can be accounted for in purely utilitarian terms: a certain ideological perception of how the subject should relate to the unpleasant excrement which comes from within our body is clearly discernible – again, for the third time, ‘the truth is out there²⁴.’ (*Plague of Fantasies*, 3)

It is not without reason that Žižek picked these three examples (one wonders how the East Asian “toilet as a hole in the ground” would factor into this, among other examples), as he ties them into Claude Lévi-Strauss’s semiotic triangle (which he filled with raw, baked and boiled food), as this semiotic triangle allows Žižek to connect ideology to “utility”: “one should never forget that in the symbolic universe, ‘utility’ functions as a reflective notion; that is, it always involves the assertion of utility as meaning...” (2) As much as Makavejev wishes to transcend ideology, it manifests itself in his films and, at least for his characters if not so much for us (an argument for how utilitarian ideology manifests itself as film stock would be very difficult to make), this utilitarian ideology is at work with such frequency it is hard not to see Makavejev as perhaps a little naïve in his ideals.

However, whether this was in fact his intention is secondary to the fact that there is another perspective on ideology that can be pulled from Makavejev’s films: namely that what I

²⁴ It may be worth noting here that *Sweet Movie* is a joint French, German Canadian production and the film is also partly set in all three countries and so it is perhaps fitting to say that Makavejev, despite whatever he may feel about our relationship to ideology, found himself knee-deep in the stuff in the making of his film.

believe makes them rogue is the idea that all ideology is something that must be questioned and challenged, that any ideology, when it is allowed to become part of the fabric of our culture, no more questioned than the design of our toilets, becomes a danger to our culture. This idea more than anything else is what I hope can be pulled from an analysis of his films.

WR: Mysteries of the Organism

There is a rather charming anecdote about Makavejev that he was good friends with the man in charge of film funding in the Yugoslavian government (and therefore also in charge of censorship). Makavejev would bring his scripts to him and, after reading them, he would exclaim “Dusan, Dusan Dusan! I know what you are really saying in this screenplay, and you know what you are really saying. Now go home and revise it so only the audience knows.”

(Ebert, *Great Movies III*)

I can hardly think of a more perfect representation of how the Big Other functions for films made under the duress of censorship. In his book *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*, Žižek outlines such an argument for *Casablanca*, focusing specifically on the scene when Rick and Ilsa are in Rick’s office and she is trying to coerce him into handing over the letters of transit. The conversation turns quite passionate and then there is a brief moment where the camera cuts to the airport control tower that is shining a light into the office. The question Žižek poses of this scene is: “did they DO IT or not?” (4) His argument is not that it is ambiguous but rather gives two clear interpretations: we get clear signs that they did DO IT (cutting away as the two embrace, coming back to Rick smoking a cigarette and Ilsa prostrate on the couch) and clear signs they did not DO IT (they appear to be continuing the conversation they were having when they cut away, the bed in the background is unruffled). Žižek’s explanation is that the second interpretation is

the “official one,” made for the Big Other (the Hayes Code) to satisfy society’s sense of decency, while the first is for our perverted enjoyment. (5)

This exact duality is present in Makavejev’s early films but in *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (a title he chose because he could not get away with calling it “Mysteries of the Orgasm”) it takes a rather peculiar form²⁵. Though made under the duress of Soviet censorship (which was far more laxly enforced in the more distant threads of the Iron Curtain) *WR* is about as subversive as any film could possibly be except that Makavejev could not outright condemn communist ideology and so while the film’s skewering of capitalist ideology is quite blatant its critique of communism is far more, well, subversive. As previously mentioned, the opening act is a documentary on Freud’s disciple Wilhelm Reich, whose groundbreaking research into sexuality eventually morphed into a mad belief in the healing power of cosmic orgasm energy. Makavejev, however, does not seem to find anything absurd about this idea, but treats his subject matter with the utmost seriousness, or at the least, goes through the motions of doing so. We hear about how Reich fled to America ahead of the rise of the Nazi party but found himself persecuted in the US for his research, including government sponsored book burnings and the government supervision of the destruction of his Orgone accumulators (Orgone being the previously mentioned cosmic orgasm energy). We also learn that he was accused of being a Marxist (though in his early career he tried to connect Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxist ideology, he later renounced Marxism).

Interviews with psychologists and locals in the Maine town where he settled down are coupled with people who still practice Reich’s orgasm therapy, some using Orgone accumulators and some doing it the old-fashioned way. Many of the people who Makavejev interviews are

²⁵ All of his films after *WR* were made outside of Yugoslavia and were not subjected to any kind of formal censorship.

also seen practicing the therapy and Makavejev seems to rather enjoy cutting from the usual stern chatter we expect from documentaries to footage of those same people having loud and intense orgasms. The first question we are compelled to ask is whether Makavejev is making fun of them. If we were to divorce these scenes from Makavejev's own attitude towards sex then it would be logical to think yes. Whether it is from an inherent absurdity in the scene²⁶ or our own immature perversity, the orgasm therapy comes off as ridiculous: another outpost of New-Age silliness at best and outright comical at worst. But through this whole sequence Makavejev treats the subject matter with as much earnestness as Makavejev ever treats any subject matter (and Makavejev is not a director whose humor is ever ambiguous) and in fact the only thing that is really rogue about this sequence is the footage of the orgasm therapy. And when we further contextualize it with Makavejev's own attitude towards sexual freedom (which encompasses a full, non-ironic embrace of this very therapy), then the conclusion we come to is that as an audience we are supposed to appreciate the merits of this therapy (though it should perhaps be noted that the actual benefits of the therapy are never discussed and the focus instead is on the history of how it developed and the political persecution of Reich and his followers).

What does this do for identification? It is the norm for us in a documentary to identify the speakers as experts and though there are various reasons why a documentarian may want to undermine their credibility, we are generally inclined to respect the ethos of the person who sits in a chair, faces the camera and talks to us. Makavejev subverts that ethos with the footage of the orgasm therapy but it is difficult to claim he undermines it. After all, while we may confer ethos onto the talking heads in such documentaries there is also often something detached and inhuman about them (consider the very term "talking head," with its implication of something

²⁶ And I use "scene" here in the mundane, non-Burkean sense, though the question would still be valid if we were to elevate the definition to the Pentad.

detached from the human form). They are in front of the camera purely in their capacity as an “expert” and little else. For all of its shock value, for all of its absurdity, is it not also unreasonable to claim that watching someone have an orgasm is a legitimate way of humanizing them? It is also fitting with Makavejev’s ideology that, in a scene comprised of two warring ideologies that each in their own way serve to dehumanize the majority of the subjects under them, that Makavejev’s third space would want to resist any form of dehumanization.

In a model example of how juxtaposition works the documentary cuts quite suddenly to modern day Yugoslavia²⁷ where we witness a couple having rather energetic sex while outside their apartment a fiery women’s rights activist named Milena (Milena Dravic) is giving a speech to people gathered in the central courtyard about sex and women’s liberation under communism (we come to understand in the course of her speech that she rooms with the couple inside). She tells us that communism lost its way when it got rid of the orgasm, a sentiment that riles the crowd up to a fervent pitch. Afterwards, however, she is content to retire to the apartment, where she climbs into her own Orgone Chamber (this is one of just two or three threads that connects the two principal narratives of the film).

Milena is the closest thing the film has to a central character because from here forward the film becomes incredibly disjointed: skipping back on occasion to the documentary on Reich that was its original focus but also introducing some new threads: an interview with a transsexual, a demonstration of how a dildo mold is created and, most enigmatically, footage of a mute

²⁷ This is perhaps the time to bring in two notes on political correctness. The first is that it should of course be obvious to anyone with a knowledge of recent European history that the name “Yugoslavia,” while it is defunct now, was correct for the time period of this film. Less well known, however, is the controversy over the name of the language the film was primarily shot in: Serbo-Croatian. The history behind the name of this language and the controversy surrounding the name is immensely complicated and heavily disputed and there are many who would take offence at my use of the term “Serbo-Croatian.” I do so, however, because, much as the film is formally credited as being produced in the now defunct nation of Yugoslavia, it is also formally credited as having been filmed in English and Serbo-Croatian, and I use the term to reflect the film’s official credits and not out of disrespect to those who find the term “Serbo-Croatian” offensive.

“warrior” of sorts: a long-bearded, long-haired man in camo and an army helmet: a model of the kind of counter-culture revolutionaries who would adopt military garb both in protest of the military and as a symbolic gesture of their own status as “soldiers” of sorts. He is seen running through city streets, largely through New York’s financial district, often to the tune of a radical speaker (who is never identified) calling for world peace by killing all the police or claiming that capitalism is slavery, and so on. The soldier’s presence is never explained but perhaps can be guessed at through a single scene: a scene that is perhaps the ideal culmination of Makavejev’s ideology in a single image.

He stands on an overpass, busy traffic below him and high rises in the background: two major symbols of capitalism. He holds an AK-47 and stands sternly facing the camera, his posture not too terribly far removed from Che Guevara’s famous portrait. Then, slowly, he starts to run his hand up and down the barrel of the gun, gradually picking up speed as a smile spreads across his face. As he strokes the barrel more and more quickly his smile grows wider and more (for lack of a better word) perverted until he reaches a “climax” and begins thrusting the gun over his head, giving a war cry in the process. Throughout the film this man is seen as a lone revolutionary in the capitalist world, showing his true colors in the financial powerhouse of America but here we see what Makavejev really thinks of such revolutionaries: people who merely act for their own self-indulgence, though in a film that is not the least bit shy about showing real masturbation on screen, we see the revolutionary indulge himself through a proxy. The AK-47 is of course a powerful symbol for freedom and revolution throughout the world (in addition to being a rather obvious phallic symbol), so to use it as a surrogate for masturbation is essentially Makavejev doubling down on his anti-ideological stance.

And, in another example of how juxtaposition works to play different elements of the film off of each other, it is also fitting that the scene preceding this is a demonstration of how a dildo mold is cast. This is probably the most graphic sequence in the entire movie, as we witness a man disrobing and a woman bringing him to an erection (much of this is shot in close up) at which point she encases his penis in plaster. This is perhaps what Makavejev's friend did not want the Big Other seeing: it is for the audience alone to pick up on his correlation between masturbation and revolutionary grand-standing (and, in a film in which gender identity is a key theme, the fact that through the gun and the dildo he covers both male and female masturbation should not be overlooked).

But to regain our focus, in a film in which various elements are designed to play off each other, it is easy to conclude that the two largest components of the film: the documentary on Wilhelm Reich and Milena's story, are also meant to play off of each other. I have already discussed the rhetorical approach Makavejev takes to Reich, but the key point is that, any winks at the audience through the juxtaposition of talking heads and orgasm therapy aside, it is quite clear that Makavejev sees Reich as someone unfairly persecuted by the American public and justice system. Also easy to conclude, given the precedence that I've established here, is how much this sequence will, for the socialist audience, arouse the Will to Enjoy. Capitalism is the enemy; capitalism keeps us from having good sex; capitalism impedes human progress, etc. There is no sadistic trap in relation to the film's thread on capitalism because Makavejev ridicules it without ever calling our contempt into question: for the Marxist it is pure jouissance. However, whether or not there is a sadistic trap in the Marxist thread is harder to call, because Makavejev's attitude towards Milena is so much more ambiguous.

Milena's story, outside of her pontifications on sex and communism to the denizens of her apartment building, principally focuses on her attending a Russian figure skating performance with her roommate where she meets the beloved Russian figure skater Vladimir Ilyich (Ivica Vidovic) who she begins to have an affair with. It is clear from their conversations that he is idolized as a symbol of the USSR (and, by extension, their communist ideology) and she sees him less as a human and more as that symbol of the revolution, someone whose art inspires the people, though this is of course only the fantasy she projects on him. While it is something of an old trope, this is perhaps best highlighted by the fact that, when Milena watches him perform and falls in love, he appears with black hair, but when she goes back into the dressing room to meet him, she watches him as he removes the embellishments of his costume, ending with him removing the black-haired wig to reveal that he is actually blonde. For a film that is, for the most part, quite original in its vision, it is a bit disappointing to see Makavejev rely on such an old trick, though it is at least effective in conveying the idea Makavejev wants to represent.

On stage, while giving a performance, Vladimir is viewed by Milena as a perfect embodiment of her desire both sexually in that he is quite a handsome man, and ideologically in that he embodies her ideal image of the communist subject (again do we see sex and politics inextricably intertwined in Makavejev). However, upon closer scrutiny in the back room, his perfect image is stripped away to reveal the less than perfect man and, similarly, as she courts him, his adherence to her communist ideal also proves to be less than perfect. Is this not a fitting analogy for one's embrace of a political ideology: as at first we are star-struck by its seeming perfection but, the longer we scrutinize it (should we choose to scrutinize our own ideology at all) the more disenfranchised we become with it?

We essentially see a repetition of the scene in the back room played out towards the end of the film, when Milena and Vladimir go for a walk by a river. Underneath the ruins of a dilapidated boat Vladimir gives his own impassioned speech on communist ideals. The scene functions as a clear parallel to Milena's earlier speech but where Milena spoke on the rather distinct topic of sexual freedom under communism, Vladimir gives a clichéd speech about compromised moral values and where Milena spoke to a large crowd who were so moved by her words they took to marching and singing, Vladimir speaks to only a few disinterested homeless who do not even listen to him. But the key moment in this scene is when Milena puts her hand on his crotch and he slaps her so hard he knocks her down. It is only in this moment she finally sees him for who he really is. Though his phony facade had been revealed to her earlier, she misinterpreted it then as merely undressing but it is only here (the first time in their courtship when she approached him sexually) that it is revealed to her that he is not any kind of symbol of the communist ideal (or rather, her communist ideal) but merely a fraud exploited by the state for the sake of keeping the masses pacified. Beneath his exterior there is nothing (hence his vapid speech) and in this sense Vladimir still functions as a representative of the Communist State: the emptiness of ideological discourse spoken by people who believe only because they are commanded to believe. Zizek likens this to a prayer wheel, which frees the subject from having to pray because the machine does the praying for them; similarly is the subject under communist rule freed from thinking because the state thinks for them (canned laughter on sitcoms is another example – the TV laughs for you and, thereby, enjoys the show for you). (*Sublime Object*, 32)

It is not a coincidence that after the slap Makavejev cuts to stock footage of Stalin giving a similarly generic speech about how workers of the world must unite and honor the memory of Lenin. If the anecdote about Makavejev's friend the censor telling him to write a script that only

the audience would truly understand is true then we may presume that it was only the ideologically blinded Communist Authority who missed what Makavejev was really trying to say in drawing a direct parallel between Vladimir and Stalin. This then is the moment when Milena is confronted with the Real of the communist system, and it must be noted how many layers her response to him operates on:

Milena: You love all mankind, yet you're incapable of loving one individual, one single living creature. What is this love that makes you nearly knock my head off? You said I was as lovely as the revolution. But you couldn't bear the "Revolution" touching you! What's a baby to a male? A matter of a second! Everything else is the woman's job! Meanwhile, you place your body at the service of art! Your magic, flood-lit figure serves the needs of the masses! A bunch of lies is what you're serving the people and the party! A toy balloon is what it is – not a revolution! A petty human lie dressed up as a great historical truth! Are you capable, you rotten louse, of serving the needs of the species by taking the one basic position...like an arrow...or a vigorously hurled spear?

It is at the end of her speech that they begin to have sex, seemingly at odds with her furor and disillusionment and their public act of love-making is perhaps best seen as Makavejev's version of "love conquers all." It is a key component of Žižek's critique of ideology that the subject flees in terror when confronted with the Real, which he bases in Lacan's belief that it is in our dreams that we confront reality, which we flee from by awakening. (Sublime Object, 48)

Similarly does Milena escape the Real of the communist system by fleeing to sex, by indulging in pure pleasure.

This interpretation would seem to clash with Makavejev's own attitude towards sex, as for him sex *is* freedom and not merely an escape from reality. In one sense we could argue that

for Makavejev sex is an ideology in the same sense that capitalism or communism are ideologies for others and that he has simply failed to realize how trapped he is in his own ideological position, but there is another possibility that emerges when we consider the film's finale.

We do not see Vladimir and Milena have sex but instead cut to the same scene at dark with Vladimir standing up in horror, his hands covered with blood. We then cut to a coroner's office where one of them pulls Milena's severed head from a basket. We learn from their examination that "her vagina contained three or four times the usual amount of sperm" and there were no signs of a struggle, meaning "she received the sperm willingly." The murder weapon is revealed to be a pair of ice skates (and I believe we can reasonably treat the skates as a synecdoche for Vladimir's art, which of course symbolizes the Communist State and therefore it is the Communist State that murdered Milena). However, as the two coroners are examining the skates, Milena's severed head begins to speak:

Milena: Cosmic rays streamed through our coupled bodies. We pulsated to the vibrations of the universe. But he couldn't bear it. He had to go one step further. Vladimir is a man of noble impetuosity...a man of great ambition...and immense energy. He's romantic, ascetic, a genuine Red Fascist. Comrades...even now I'm not ashamed of my communist past.

The opening is of course a reference to Reich's Orgone energy but there is also an implication of sublime transcendence, which, in the framework of our interpretation, we could treat as the transcendence of ideology and Vladimir's murder of Milena is his violent rejection of that transcendence: his way of fleeing from the Real. Makavejev is perhaps suggesting to us then that sex can function as a lifting of the veil (a lifting of the iron curtain), as the act that approaches the Real beneath our ideological systems. It is interesting to note that at the end

Milena speaks of her ideological system in the past tense, perhaps because she is dead (or, perhaps more appropriately, an inverse of Freud's dead father), but we could also read it as her breaking through her ideological framework.

The last scene in the movie is Milena's severed head smiling reassuringly at us, which then fades into an image of Wilhelm Reich smiling in the exact same way. Given the manner in which Makavejev presents Reich as something of a martyr to the cause of sexual freedom (even if he does so with a bit of ironic distance) this would suggest we are supposed to see Milena in a similar light: a casualty in the war of the sexes (in the war for sex) but who also seems keen to assure us that everything will be alright, that sexual freedom will win out in the end, which would then perhaps make this Makavejev's rather twisted idea of a happy ending. We could also look at it more bleakly though: of the inevitability that our animalistic, carnal desires will always be beaten by the ideological forces in which we try to act them out (Reich's work was repressed by the Capitalist system, Milena was killed by a synecdoche of the Communist movement), though in this vein the reassuring smile could still serve the same function.

Thus is it the case for Makavejev that the great evil of ideological systems is that they keep us from having good sex. But it should be noted that there is an underlying component of fear in this: it was out of fear of his ideas that the American government destroyed Reich's work and that he faced so much hostility from the local populace, it was fear that drove Vladimir to murder Milena and in each case it's because we can trace a correlation between sex and the shifting balance of power. This, of course, puts us squarely in the territory of Foucault and in fact it was not long after Makavejev made *WR* and *Sweet Movie* that Foucault published the first volume of *A History of Sexuality*, which speaks quite well to the power dynamics operating both within and without the film:

If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom.

(6)

Foucault is quite right, but he does not address the further matter of the fact that there is also a correlation between tolerance and explicitness, at least as far as the arts are concerned (at the very least in the above passage, Foucault is concerned more with discourse in general rather than with any specific means of delivery). Consider the case of Deepa Mehta's *Fire*, released in India in 2004 and promptly banned because it focused on a romantic relationship between two women in a country where homosexuality is not publicly discussed. To the American viewer though, the film is quite innocuous, as there is no depiction of sex or even much physical affection between the two women. Compare this with the recent French film *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013) which also depicts a lesbian relationship and was met with near universal praise in France but with some controversy in the United States where the long, graphic sex scenes angered some critics and audience members and left the film branded with the dreaded NC-17 rating (it got the equivalent of an R in France).²⁸

I bring up this cultural correlation between the repression of sex and the level of rebellion necessary to challenge it because in the case of *WR* we are looking at a single film that challenges the cultural repression of sex in two different cultures. While the film juggles about half a dozen different threads, they can be easily divided into those correlated with America (the

²⁸ It is through this cultural correlation that an argument could be made that what defines a rogue film as rogue could be based on the film's cultural context, in other words, that what is rogue is defined just as much by the Scene in the Pentad as it is by anything else. The quite tame *Fire* after all was a far more daring act of filmmaking than the extremely graphic *Blue is the Warmest Color*, as it is the former that was made in direct opposition to cultural norms.

Wilhelm Reich documentary, interviews with the transvestite, the making of a dildo, the unnamed guerilla radical) and those correlated with Yugoslavia (Milena's story, stock footage of Soviet propaganda films and mental patients). What should be obvious from breaking down the film's threads this way is that most of the shock material was included in those threads associated with America while the Yugoslavian material is much more tame. This fits with the level of tolerance for sexual frankness present in each country and so it would seem Makavejev knew he could push the boundaries further not just in his critique of capitalism but in the frankness of the sexual discourse associated with America.

Of course both of these components exist in the same film and it was made under the Scene of Yugoslavian and Soviet²⁹ censorship and, by the rationale I outlined in the previous paragraphs, it may seem absurd to try to argue that the American components of the film could somehow exist separately from the audience watching it in Yugoslavia, who of course would sit through the entirety of the film just as an audience in India would sit through the entirety of *Fire*. In other words, the shocking debauchery of the film still exists within the framework of the more prudish Soviet culture and therefore the entire film and not just the Yugoslavian portions should be seen as a transgression of the Soviet attitude towards sex. However, we can address this by arguing that the Yugoslavian audience would (at least according to the big Other) not identify with the American portions of the film. There is already a precedent in the history of film and media for pushing the boundaries of what's generally considered acceptable for the sake of scare tactics (the marijuana propaganda films of the 1930s are a good cinematic example) and thus it is not entirely unreasonable to argue that the shock value of *WR* got past the Soviet censors precisely because the most shocking parts of the film serve as a critique of Capitalist decadence

²⁹ And of course it is Soviet, and not Yugoslavian, values that are the overarching Scene at work here.

(which would have also served the dual function of obfuscating his critique of communism that much more) and therefore this film could very well have seemed more shocking in the West than behind the Iron Curtain.

Zizek speaks often of history as a repetition – of the event that occurs twice because we failed to recognize the significance of the first event (in *Sublime Object* he uses the murder of Julius Caesar as an example, arguing that his murder stemmed from the misrecognition on the part of the senators who carried it out for the need for Rome to dissolve the republic – and Caesar’s murder led to the fulfillment of this need through the reign of Augustus, they symbolic “Caesar.”). Makavejev must have felt that, with the international praise and popularity *WR* enjoyed that we must have misrecognized the severity of what he wanted to impress upon us. And so he repeated the act with *Sweet Movie*, a film that covers much the same ideological ground as *WR* but does so in a way far more challenging to the viewer and far more likely to cause the viewer to flee in terror from the Real of their ideological system.

Sweet Movie: Anything But

The international success of *WR* led to two outcomes for Makavejev: him getting banned from his home country and him getting prompt financing from the international community for his next project (as *Sweet Movie* is a joint Canadian/French/Dutch production). At the very least, for ideological purposes it was perhaps for the best that Makavejev no longer had to make films under the restrictions of Soviet censorship as, in the West, his ideology was allowed to breathe free and in *Sweet Movie* we see the subversive commentary on socialism come out fully in the open while his critique of capitalism becomes even more sharpened. And where *WR* was quite a shocking film by any measure, *Sweet Movie* surpasses it so completely that it effectively ended

Makavejev's career. Indeed, of all the rogue films I'm focusing on in this work, *Sweet Movie* may be the most rogue of them. For even the hardiest of cinephiles this film's depravity is so extreme that it is nearly unbearable to watch.

It is perhaps implicitly understood by this point that the act of watching a rogue film is not always a "pleasant" one and with *Sweet Movie* we can really put forward the question of why anyone would voluntarily do so in the first place. In my first chapter I used the notion of fantasy as a means of distinguishing between rogue and non-rogue cinema and used Artaud's appropriation of cruelty as a means of distinguishing between rogue and exploitation films, but for the sake of *Sweet Movie* I want to further explore *jouissance* as a means of framing this distinction. Certainly perverse enjoyment is one of the selling points of an exploitation film and it is a quality that carries itself over into many examples of rogue cinema as well. For all its deeper meanings, let's not forget that that the commercial success of *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain* lay in the perversity of their imagery and *WR*, for all of its critique of ideology, drew audiences in for its absurd graphic sexuality. But with *Sweet Movie* and only a handful of other rogue films there's an undeniable shift that takes place³⁰. If we were to scatter the canon of rogue and exploitation cinema across a *jouissance* spectrum, with the perverse shock value of the shallowest exploitation films at one end and the sobering brutality of the most aggressive rogue films at the other, the films I'm talking about here are the ones that are so far off the spectrum that there ceases to be any enjoyment: the act of watching these films becomes an act of masochism. What is to be gained from a film this extreme or many of the other examples of rogue cinema?

³⁰ There are a handful of examples of other such films out there, including Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salo* (1975) Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), Gyorgy Palfi's *Taxidermia* (2006) and Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009). These films come to constitute something of a genre-within-a-genre – rogue films so extreme that they scrub all sense of *jouissance* - and a discussion of these films as an entity unto themselves would be a worthy research project to be undertaken at some future date.

In trying to get at the ideological heart of the film, I believe this question can also be answered in part because it is a question that can be answered through a critique of ideology. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Zizek articulates a critique of ideology that is based in the Lacanian idea of fantasy that I have already discussed in these pages:

Ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape the insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel...the function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel. (45)

For Zizek, this is how reality becomes a fantasy-construct we use to escape truths we do not want to confront (to cross-pollinate Artaud and Zizek) and his example of anti-Semitism is a particularly good model for a manner in which we often see this manifested in the real world, as one could hardly find a better example of ideology used to mask an unwanted truth than bigotry. Zizek asks us to imagine living under the rule of the Nazi party in Germany in the 1930s, constantly subjected to anti-Semitic propaganda but also having the wherewithal to be able to ask ourselves whether or not the Nazis are judging the Jews fairly. Zizek asks us, "Is it really necessary to add that such an approach would merely confirm our so-called 'unconscious prejudices' with additional rationalizations?" (49) He goes on: "That is why we are also unable to shake the so-called ideological prejudices by taking into account the pre-ideological level of everyday experience. The basis of this argument is that the ideological construction always finds its limits in the field of everyday experience – that it is unable to reduce, contain, to absorb and annihilate this level." (49) In other words, it is impossible to break through our own ideological

prejudices when we exist in a worldview constructed by those prejudices: everything, even our own attempts to out-rationalize it, even our personal experiences that directly contradict our prejudices, wind up supporting those very prejudices. Zizek gives as an example of the latter: a German bombarded with anti-Semitic propaganda but who comes home everyday to his kindly Jewish neighbor. Zizek asks if the daily encounter with the antithesis of the anti-Semitic propaganda he is subjected to “offer(s) an irreducible resistance to the ideological construction,” and “The answer, of course, is no. If everyday experience offers such a resistance, then the anti-Semitic ideology has not yet really grasped us. An ideology is really ‘holding us’ only when we do not feel any opposition between it and reality – that is, when the ideology succeeds in determining the mode of our everyday experience of reality itself.” (49) The daily encounters with a kindly Jew uphold the ideology because they come to see it as proof of how deceptive Jews are, of how easily they can put on the guise of being good, ordinary people. “An ideology really succeeds when even the facts which at first sight contradict it start to function as arguments in its favor.” (50) I suggested in the first chapter that many of our films work in service of ideology (though generally far less nefarious ideologies than Nazism) but is the effect not the same whether we’re dealing with Nazism or the American Dream?

Now imagine taking our thoroughly brainwashed anti-Semite and sitting him down in front of *A Gentleman’s Agreement* or even a film like *Annie Hall* or *A Serious Man*: all films that, if they do not deal in the persecution of Jews, certainly are immersed in Jewish culture. If the ideology has taken hold as thoroughly as Zizek articulates than for the Nazi these films would be intolerable. To reframe in terms of Burke there would be no consubstantiality, no identification whatsoever. However, as prevalent as anti-Semitism may still unfortunately be in the world, Makavejev deals in far more pervasive ideological systems and it is when we make the move to

showing how Žižek's critique of ideology manifests itself in *Sweet Movie* that we will also be on our way to understanding how a film as rogue as this one functions.

To further cross-pollinate our theorists here, we can draw a correlation between Burkean division and this moment in Žižek when we confront the Real in another. I spoke in the first chapter of the revulsion Todd Solondz' *Happiness* creates in us when it forces us to identify with a pedophile. We can treat our attitude towards pedophiles as an ideological fantasy (that they are subhuman monsters) that keeps us from having to acknowledge the reality of the fact that they are just as human as us, only possessing a sexual lust that is totally repulsive to us. Thus do fantasy and identification become one and the same and when *Happiness* shows us a humanized pedophile the revulsion we feel is both a desire to escape back into the fantasy of pedophile-as-monster and to escape the consubstantiality we feel with the character. In a film like *Happiness* though this traumatic kernel of the Real becomes more tolerable because it is diluted. The pedophile Bill Maplewood (Dylan Baker) is only one character in a large and eclectic cast, none of whom are as repulsive as Maplewood (even Philip Seymour Hoffman's tormented pervert Allen proves to be a relatively easy character to sympathize with).

With *Sweet Movie*, however, there is no dilution, the entire film is an act of identifying with what we find repulsive. However, there are a couple of dimensions in which *Sweet Movie* takes this Real/division correlation deeper than a film like *Happiness*, the first being that the film is focused less on character and more on ideological systems (like in Jodorowsky's films, Makavejev's characters tend to function more as symbols and archetypes – though Miss Canada is a notable exception in this film) and while it is one thing to find yourself sharing substance with a character you have been introduced to over the course of a film, it is another thing entirely to make one's ideological system the focus of a film's critique. And since it is Makavejev's

intention to expose the traumatic kernel of not only capitalist and communist ideological systems, but even the kernel of Makavejev's own brand of anarchy, not even Bhabha's third space becomes a place we can escape to. However, since Makavejev debuted his film into a world where the capitalist/communist ideological divide was deeply driven (and still is) one could argue that the film allows for a similar escape from confronting the kernel of the Real in those scenes where he is skewering the other guy's ideology. In other words: for the capitalist, the scenes exposing the evils of capitalism would be intolerable but the scenes similarly skewering communism would arouse the Will-to-Enjoy and vice versa for the communist. However, Makavejev prevents this from happening by filling so much of the movie with shocking, graphic imagery covering the full gamut from violence to sexual perversion to bodily functions (which are rarely ever faked) which ensures that even if our ideology is not being assaulted, our senses are.

It's no wonder then that *Sweet Movie*'s critics tend to be quite vitriolic, Christopher Null called it "a poorly received cautionary tale to filmmakers who get too full of themselves," while Rumsey Taylor said of it, "it may not be pornographic — Makavejev's intent is not to arouse — but it is often too offensive (which I presume is the intent) to watch," while it's defenders are perhaps best represented by David Sterrit, who called it, "an artistically earnest, politically savvy film that uses every means at its disposal—deadly serious one moment, wildly hilarious the next—to jolt viewers out of lazy, hazy mind-sets that stifle freedom, creativity, and bliss." (n. pg.) Sterrit is in fact almost as vitriolic towards the film's critics as those critics are of the film, calling them, "ill-advised pundits," who, "couldn't have looked very closely at what's actually on the screen." (n. pg.)

While they are ostensibly objecting to the film's shock value, what I really want to get at here is the idea that the film's shock value and its critique of ideology are inextricably linked and so our revulsion to the displays of bodily fluids, sexual perversion and violence is also our revulsion towards the Real of our ideology that Makavejev is trying to show us.

Like in *WR*, juxtaposition is a key part of this, though *Sweet Movie*'s juxtaposition is not quite as extreme as *WR*'s, focusing principally on two plot threads with occasional, brief diversions. The first thread focuses on Miss Canada (Carole Laure), the winner of a Miss Virgin beauty pageant whose prize is to be wed to the world's wealthiest bachelor. The second follows a mysterious woman known as Captain Anna Planeta (Anna Prucnal) who pilots a boat through the canals of Amsterdam with a bust of Karl Marx at the head and who lures soldiers and young boys onto the boat with promises of sex and candy so she can murder them.

The ideological context for the film, however, is provided by the brief opening scene in which Anna Planeta sings in a loud, harsh, off-key voice:

On the mountain top
I see something black
Is it cow shit
Or my beloved?

Given this film's attitude towards political ideology we could see this as a metaphor for the kernel of the Real the film looks to approach: that our lover (our political ideology) is indistinguishable from excrement (something that is very prominently featured in this film). In other words, to riff off Žižek, if ideology manifests itself through the disposal of our excrement it is because ideology is also indistinguishable from excrement.

After the introduction we are brought to the Miss World pageant, where we are told that that the purpose is to find the world's most perfect virgin, who will then be married off to the world's wealthiest bachelor, Mr. Kapital (John Vernon), whose name is a peculiar conflation of both Adam Smith and Karl Marx. The pageant is of course a satirical send up of the very concept of a pageant, with the focus of each girl's presentation being an inspection of her hymen by a world-renowned gynecologist who all of these supposedly pure virgins aggressively flirt with. And when Miss Canada opens her legs, a golden light shines on the gynecologist's face.

After a brief wedding scene we see the newlyweds traveling by helicopter over Niagara Falls, which Mr. Kapital says he tried to buy from the Canadians so he could build hydroelectric dams on it but they refused to sell. This character does not just build upon our clichéd notions of an arrogant American billionaire, the clichés are heightened to a ludicrous extreme: the belief that he can buy anything, the concern for industry over the environment, even the fact that he wears a cowboy hat. But what stands out the most is the pipe he smokes, which has the face of Lenin carved into it which Mr. Kapital points to and tells her is Karl Marx, the man who started WWI when he shot a king.

However, to really understand his role in the film, we have to delve into one of the most vulgar scenes in the movie. After a long cleansing ritual, Miss Canada prepares to have her virginity taken by Mr. Kapital, but when he stands before her naked he reveals a gold-plated penis and begins to urinate on her while she screams in terror. Setting aside the repulsive nature of the scene, can this not be treated as a rather perfect metaphor for capitalist excess, especially when we remind ourselves that the term for what Mr. Kapital is doing is a "golden shower?" It is an act of power and domination designed to subjugate and humiliate another (and not just any

“other” but a “pure,” “innocent” virgin) but also one that, in the context of this film, carries the weight of gold in more ways than one.³¹ Thus is ideology and human waste mixed together.

Interestingly, we see urination make its way into Anna Planeta’s narrative as a rather dubious act of love. When we are first introduced to Planeta and her Marx barge she is sailing the canals of Amsterdam playing communist music over loudspeakers. A sailor on a bicycle pursues her through the canals, making gestures asking to come on board that she chooses to ignore. She later sails by him as he is urinating into the canal and seeing her, begins using his hands to try to fling his urine at her,³² though, given the waves and kisses he blows, this is apparently to be understood as some perverse act of love. Unlike *WR*, which drew a few loose threads between its two principal narratives, there is nothing in the plot and next to nothing in the themes to connect the two principal narratives of *Sweet Movie*, except perhaps for this scene. If human waste is indeed ideology than we could see this as him offering himself body and soul to her: “take my body and take my ideology: I am yours.”

When he finally boards her ship (by jumping uninvited onto it) her first question to him is whether he was part of “that failed revolution,” referring to the 1905 battle of Odessa, the one immortalized in *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), arguably the greatest and most famous work of communist propaganda ever created (and the battle itself was a rallying cry in the October Revolution). The ship itself can also be thought of as a metaphor for Marxism. If we think of Marxism as a beacon for the disenfranchised (or, given Makavejev’s choice to represent her as a half-naked temptress, though Siren may be a more appropriate metaphor) that lured them in with

³¹ Though it should be noted that there is more than just capitalist ideology at stake here: we would be remiss to overlook the obvious male/female power dynamics and I’ve no doubt that some Canadians would be inclined to also treat it as a metaphor for American/Canadian political relations.

³² And I include this as a footnote because this is information that very few will want to possess, but most of the scenes of urination and other expulsions of human waste in this film are not faked, including this scene, though it may come as small comfort to some to know that the previously mentioned golden shower scene was faked.

promises of a better life before betraying them with oppression, starvation and death, similarly do we see Anna Planeta, standing proudly half-naked on the deck of her ship, drawing the wayward in with promises of sex and candy only to murder them. It's not a coincidence that Makavejev juxtaposes her story with footage of mass graves being dug up after the Holocaust: a little dose of the Real to remind us of the real-world implications of the kind of ideological extremism he wants to warn us against (and yes, he chose Holocaust footage, an atrocity committed by the Nazis, who are otherwise absent from this film and who the communists fought, but let us not forget that Stalin murdered far more people than Hitler did, which even still belies the larger point that the world has far too many mass graves in it).

The most controversial sequence in Anna Planeta's story is when she brings a group of young boys onto her ship (roughly 10-12 years old) and proceeds to give them candy and seduce them. This sequence tiptoes to the very edge of what could have gotten the film labeled as child pornography: she strips for them but is never fully nude (they boys remain fully clothed), she dances for them, she rubs her foot in their faces: the implications are fully transparent though we never see anything beyond this. The sequence is not merely repulsive to watch, it pushes the act of interpretation to the point of repulsiveness as well, as ostensibly we are supposed to treat this as a metaphor for Marxism's seduction of youth at their own peril, but the real, non-symbolic level of the act looms so large above all else that it is difficult to see little else. We then cut to Planeta wrapping their still fully-clothed corpses in plastic. No means of death is given or even hinted at: we see only that youth has succumbed to the seduction of Marxism and died for it.

Where then does Makavejev leave us if our only choices are to identify with the debauchery and perversion of capitalism, where it is literally the lot of some to be pissed on by the wealthy or the sinister underbelly of Marxism, whose external appeal houses a deep-rooted

evil? This is where we may reappropriate Bhabha's "beyond" because, after all, capitalism versus communism is a false dichotomy. But moving into the film's final third, Makavejev does create a third space for us. Miss Canada, after being taken away by one of Mr. Kapital's servants (who wastes no time trying to molest her), is literally shipped to Paris in a suitcase where she finally gives up her virginity to a Latin crooner. However, they become stuck together in coitus after their lovemaking is witnessed by a group of nuns (it is interesting to note here that Makavejev, who draws such a strong connection between sex and politics, rarely ever draws similar connections between sex and religion and indeed this is one of the few references to such a connection in any of his films) and have to be separated in a restaurant kitchen while dinner is being prepared (using egg yolk as lubricant no less).

While Mr. Kapital is a clear representative of capitalist excess, it is more difficult to read her next two handlers (an offensive term, yes, but fitting given her treatment) allegorically. The servant, a black bodybuilder, could perhaps be tied to the desire of the lower class to possess what the rich have (the *objet petit a*, if we want to use the Lacanian terminology) and while she eventually comes to be charmed by him she also refuses to give up her virginity to him, perhaps seeing too much of her husband in his lust (she even refers to her virginity as her most prized possession). The Latin crooner, however, she gives herself up to voluntarily out of passion, though as an artist he perhaps holds a similar position to Mikhail in *WR*. He is similarly idolized, though not as an ideological symbol like Mikhail was and also unlike *WR*, the Latin singer is never seen diminished from the idealized image created for him. In other words, she does not in this encounter confront the Real of the capitalist system as manifested through sex (akin to what happened when Mikhail slapped Milena in *WR*), that Real was exposed to her through Mr. Kapital's golden shower (one could however argue that Miss Canada clamps the Real of the

Catholic guilt complex rather tightly on the Latin singer). Rather, it may be best to look at these three encounters – with Mr, Kapital, the servant and the singer – as a whole, as her being passed around like a commodity and used like one could in itself be seen as a critique of the capitalist system (which would perhaps also make for the most apt use of the term “commodity fetishism” ever in an analysis).

It is after this, when Miss Canada is smuggled into an anarchist compound in a wheelbarrow full of vegetables (from which she emerges in an unmistakable symbolic rebirth) that Makavejev moves us into the third space. Here is where we both move into the most outrageous and controversial sequence in the film (even more so than the implied child molestation) as well as the moment in which we move into the ideological heart of the film. The anarchist’s buffet, in which we see the members of the compound feeding themselves in utter chaos, not just laughing and throwing food, but also vomiting and urinating on each other’s food while they continue to eat it (one man even tries to drink from another’s urine stream)³³. Miss Canada sits in a shocked daze in the midst of this while the man next to her takes a length of uncooked meat and dangles it out of his crotch onto the table, pretending to yelp in pain as he cuts off pieces of it and tosses it to other banqueters. She breaks the illusion by pulling out his real penis and caressing her cheek against it and gently stroking it while the chaos continues around her. As with other parts of this film, we should attempt to look beyond the vulgarity and instead at the dichotomy between fantasy and the Real that is being played out here. For the man, this is an intrusion of the Real onto his gag but for her it seems to be an escape from reality, her way of fleeing the repulsive bacchanalia around her. In psychoanalysis the phallus is a symbol of power but in this film there is nothing symbolic about the use of phalli as throughout

³³ This is where I reluctantly remind the reader that none of this is faked. The vomit and other bodily fluids are all real, including the man trying to drink from another’s urine stream. I know anecdotally that this scene has caused many viewers to literally vomit in disgust.

we quite literally see men using their penises to subjugate her, first through Mr. Kapital's golden shower then through his servant's attempt to overwhelm her with the size of his penis and finally to the Latin singer, where she becomes trapped by his penis through being unable to separate herself from him. But now we see her literally flee to a penis as a form of escape, clinging to the power structure that has subjugated her and therefore giving in to the phallogocentric ideology that the anarchist commune is a response to. It would seem then that subjugation is for her the preferable alternative to the pure jouissance of the anarchists.

This scene is followed by another that further defies any sort of tasteful description but is necessary to our analysis. After dinner the anarchists gather around to watch two of their members get into a boxing ring and engage in what can only be described as a shit-taking contest, each of them squatting over a chamber pot in their respective corners while a series of pulleys raise the ring to the second floor. Over this scene Makavejev plays a refrain from Anna Planeta's song at the beginning of the film:

Is it cow shit

Or my beloved?

He poses this to us at the climax of what is not just the most shocking and repulsive sequence in the movie but one of the most shocking and repulsive ever put on film. It is not unreasonable to say that here he is being more than rhetorical: he is asking us if we can distinguish our ideological systems from the shit that is on the screen. The fact that the ring they "fight" on is being raised up from the ground would suggest that he is trying to elevate their excrement to the level of ideology (this, after spending the entire film dragging ideology down to the level of excrement).

The film of course has two climaxes, which do not do anything to bring the two narratives together, as was the case in *WR* but rather end the film on two different notes. For Anna Planeta's finale, after a long period of seduction, she finally murders the soldier in a bed of sugar (which is to say a box suspended from the ceiling that is filled with sugar and that they sleep in) by stabbing him with a knife, which allows for the perverse image of his blood seeping through the sugar he's burrowed himself in. Later, with no explanation for how she was caught, we see her taken off the boat in handcuffs; the bodies of the soldier and children being hauled out behind her in plastic bags and laid out beside the canal. Adjudication is rare in a rogue film, as it is not usually in their nature to give us any sort of conventional justice, which has the tendency to undermine the very cruelty they hope to achieve. Makavejev perhaps thought he could get away with giving us some closure for Planeta's narrative because it is not what ends the film, even though the film's last shot brings us back to her murder victims still laid out by the canal. Rather, it is Miss Canada's narrative that closes out the film and provides the sort of finale more suitable to the film's themes.

After enduring the debaucheries of the anarchist commune (which continue on for far longer than what I describe above, but the scenes are of only slight significance to this analysis and are not worth subjecting the reader to further description), Miss Canada agrees to appear in a chocolate commercial, which sees her writhing around naked in a vat of liquid chocolate, completely covered and performing highly sexualized acts from rubbing her breasts to masturbation. Miss Canada has given herself over completely to the capitalist ideology, melding sex with the pursuit of profit and completely abandoning all sense of dignity for the sake of both. As she writhes around moaning, Makavejev slowly deepens the sound of her moans until they come to resemble a demonic howl. We then flash back to the beauty pageant that opened the

film, when Mr. Kapital's mother was explaining that they had to look long and hard to find a suitably pure virgin, thus reminding us of how far she has fallen. This brings something of an ideological closure to the film; by completing Miss Canada's fall from grace he drives home the idea that capitalism as an ideological system can only reduce those who are not in power to the depths of depravity (we would also not be remiss to observe the resemblance between the chocolate she wallows in and excrement). Makavejev could have ended the film here but he has one more shot for us before the credits roll.

After some more stock footage of mass graves being dug up, we return to the bodies of the children lain out by the canal wrapped in plastic. After a few seconds, the corpses begin to stir and slowly sit up and it is in the act of sitting up that Makavejev freeze frames and the film ends, the implication being that the sins of the past will always return to haunt us.

Thus does Makavejev challenge our notions of political ideology, even his own, and if *WR* was misunderstood, he seemed keen to ensure that no such misrecognition would happen in the repetition of the message, even at the cost of his career. This of course begs the question, one of the most fundamental of rogue cinema: what is the point of offering up such a vicious attack when the reaction of so much of the audience will be to reject it outright? It seems a copout to say that one makes such a film in the hopes that a select few will be receptive to the message, though that is at least partly the answer. There will always be some percentage of the audience who is perfectly willing to confront the Real of their ideological systems, though probably not enough to make it worth the risk of making such a taboo-breaking film as *Sweet Movie*.

However, a less naively optimistic viewpoint can be forged if we consider the possibility that, for much of the audience, the anger and revulsion that the film often provokes can be the first step in recognizing the symptom, the problem that the psychoanalytic process hopes to uncover. In this

sense, Makavejev is a psychologist specializing in the mental illness that is political ideology, and so in watching his films we are putting ourselves on his couch or, dare I say it, in his orgone chamber.

Chapter Four: Lars von Trier and the Terministic Screen

Framing von Trier

If the principal focus of Jodorowsky's work is religion and spirituality and Makavejev's is political ideology, Lars von Trier's could perhaps be seen as sociological, in that he is interested in how individuals clash with the culture they are immersed in. However, even this is only fitting for some of his work, and does not even necessarily fit every film I'll be considering in this chapter. Von Trier is perhaps the hardest to pin down of the four filmmakers this work focuses on simply because there is no grand, overarching theme to his films as we see with the other directors here. While Werner Herzog's work is quite wide-ranging as well, there is a motif of "human extremes" that can be traced through nearly all of his work and, as we've already shown, Jodorowsky and Makavejev produced only a small body of work that was narrowly focused on a single issue. But for von Trier any such framework, no matter how we draw it, inevitably leaves a large chunk of his work out of the picture. To this end, there is also the further matter of justifying my selection of films to focus on in this chapter. Von Trier is the first filmmaker we've looked at here with a substantial body of work and my choices: *Europa* (1991) and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) leaves out at the very least *Element of Crime*, *The Kingdom*, *Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*, *Dogville*, *Antichrist* and *Melancholia* (in addition to a number of his lesser works), any of which could have been selected as the focus of this chapter and provided a superb articulation of rogue cinema. My selection, however, is not arbitrary. At this point, von Trier's filmography can reasonably be divided into two major periods: his early,

highly stylized works, which will be represented by *Europa*, and his Dogme era, represented by *Dancer in the Dark*. Von Trier declared Dogme dead in 2005 but since then he has only made three films, *Manderlay* (2005), *Antichrist* (2009) and *Melancholia* (2011) and while these films are a clear departure from the Dogme movement, it is hard to say at this point just what direction his post-Dogme work will go, which is the principle reason why it has been left out of this work (though I'm sure they are the start of a third era in von Trier's career that can be further articulated with more films). But even for the two films I focus on, they are so radically different that there can be no convenient framework for them as there was for Jodorowsky and Makavejev. It is however possible to use this very diversity as something of a framework in itself, as it shows how von Trier is a filmmaker who is not interested in transgression as a means to an end but rather is interested in the very act of transgression itself.

Furthermore, my work with Burke so far has focused mostly on Dramatism and identification, which are, of course, his two major contributions to rhetorical theory, but here I want to introduce a third key concept of his: the terministic screen. My principal reason for this is because von Trier's work is so often discussed in relation to his Dogme 95 movement: a manifesto he published, naturally, in 1995 and which outlined a radical and stringent series of rules he and other participants had to adhere to. While only three of von Trier's films were made under the "vow of chastity" (the term Dogme adherents used to describe the set of rules outlined in the manifesto), *The Idiots* (1997), *Dancer in the Dark* and *Dogville* (2003), the manifesto has, since its announcement, always been something of a looming specter over von Trier's oeuvre to the extent that we can think of his work before 1995 as pre-Dogme and his post-2005 work (when he declared the movement dead) as the post-Dogme era of von Trier's career.³⁴ Burke's

³⁴ It should be noted here that while *Breaking the Waves* was made in 1996 and has the look and style of a Dogme film, it is not officially considered a Dogme film. The first "official" Dogme film was Thomas Vinterberg's *The*

terministic screens are perfectly suited for understanding how such a movement affects our interpretation of a film.

The fundamental concept of a terministic screen is summed up by Burke in a single sentence: “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of *reality*, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a *deflection* of reality.” (*Language as Symbolic Action*, 45, emphasis in original) In other words, when we look at the world through a screen of language, the terminology we use shapes our perception of the world. This can actually be empirically demonstrated. A recent study showed that Russians, who have two different words for the color blue, one that specifies light blue and one that specifies dark blue, are better adept at distinguishing between shades of blue than an English speaker for whom, aside from such rarely used terms as aqua, sapphire or lapis lazuli, have only one word to describe blue. (Khamisi) To put this concept back into Burke’s terminology, the terministic screen of a Russian speaker is shaped in such a way that they are better able to distinguish between shades of blue than an English speaker. However, an English speaker who would so trouble his or herself to make a habit of specifying varying shades of blue by aqua, lapis lazuli or the myriad other terms the fashion industry has impressed upon us, would soon surpass a native Russian’s perception of the blue spectrum.

Furthermore, this concept, which applies so easily to words, can easily be expanded to include facts and beliefs. After all, what is the kind of anti-Semite we discussed in the previous chapter other than someone whose terministic screen does not include the concept that a Jew can

Celebration (1998), which was advertised as Dogme 1, while von Trier’s *The Idiots* was Dogme 2 and Soren Kragh-Jacobsen’s *Mifune* (1999) was Dogme 3, etc. There are officially 35 Dogme films that were made throughout Europe, the United States and East Asia.

be a decent human being?³⁵ And as for how this relates to the current discussion, best to put it this way: one can easily watch any of the Dogme films without being even the least bit aware of the Dogme movement but if you are familiar with Dogme then it becomes part of your terministic screen: an inextricable piece of the framework through which you view the film in question. And it is for this reason that I would now like to bring Dogme 95 into the terministic screen of my readers.

Von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg and a few other Danish directors announced the manifesto in 1995 at a conference on the future of film. They bombarded the audience with flyers that contained a number of ostentatious declarations: “Dogme 95 is an act of salvation!” “In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple that washed ashore and turned to muck.” This last is a clear jab at the French New Wave which, similar to Dogme, sought to resurrect cinema from tired conventions by rewriting the standards. Since the French New Wave is almost universally regarded as one of the most important movements in the history of film, this is an arrogant declaration to say the least. It should be said, however, that the announcement itself was an act worthy of a deep rhetorical analysis, given that they seemed intent to do everything they could to deliberately shock the audience (declaring the failure of the French New Wave at a conference in Paris, for example), however, such an analysis is beyond our current scope.

The manifesto came coupled with a “vow of chastity,” a contract all adherents of the movement were supposed to sign (and which I have included as Appendix A, along with the text

³⁵ By this means we may also draw another philosophic connection between Burke and Zizek, as the fantasy construct is essentially the terministic screen. This is not ideal however, because Burke does not account for the leftover kernel of the Real as Zizek does. For Burke, the failure to see this leftover is merely something left out of the terministic screen, while it is a concept of the most fundamental importance to Zizek.

of the original flyer). Jan Simons, in his essay “Von Trier’s Cinematic Games,” which is in large part an analysis of Dogme 95, puts forward a rather compelling observation of the vow of chastity, especially in relation to the type of critique I have undertaken in this dissertation:

Unlike most manifestos in film history, the Dogme 95 Manifesto does not champion aesthetic or thematic preferences and does not promote political causes or ideologies. The rules of this manifesto are literally only concerned with film production, the making of film: they circumscribe what the filmmaker is and is not allowed to do on the set. (3)

In other words, Dogme is not an ideological movement but a pragmatic one, or at least it is on paper. And indeed the rules as they are written speak exclusively about what can and cannot be done on set. However, I have to respectfully disagree with Simons, who is not a rhetorician, in his claim that there is nothing ideological about the vow of chastity. Certainly there is nothing explicitly ideological about it but a careful consideration of some of the rules makes it wholly possible to parse one out.

Any director who wanted to be part of the Dogme movement had to sign the “vow of chastity” – a series of ten rules that defined the aesthetics of films created under the movement. I will not review all of the rules here (though they are included in Appendix A), but there are a few key ones that are worth focusing on. Rule one states: “Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in.” (Vow of...) The restrictions this would put on a shoot would be considerable but to what end? Werner Herzog often speaks of the “voodoo of location,” (which will be a prominent feature of the next chapter) but Herzog often put this to extremes by, for example, taking his cast and crew out into the middle of the Amazon rainforest. However, the founders of Dogme intended this to mean that a film set in New York City had to be filmed in New York City and not Milwaukee (which is very often used as a cheaper substitute to NYC).

One could make the case for authenticity but we can also see an intent towards “purity,” of scrubbing the film of any sort of disingenuousness³⁶. Rule seven serves a very similar purpose: “Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden (that is to say that the film takes place here and now.)” (“Vow of...”)

This rules out any sort of historical film and a great deal of speculative work (since Dogme would require a film set in Middle Earth to be filmed in Middle Earth). And then we get to rule eight: “Genre movies are not acceptable.” (“Vow of...”)

When coupled with rule six: “The film must not contain superficial action (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur),” we see a clear privileging of realist dramas over any other form of storytelling. If we were to take their manifesto at their word and treat Dogme 95 as “an act of salvation” the implication is that they are trying to save cinema from the rampages of history and speculation, of violence and of the apparent “inferiority” of genre work. (“Vow of...”) Is it even possible to take such a movement seriously?

The answer is no and part of the reason we can say so with such confidence is that not a single member of Dogme ever made a film that adhered to the Vow of Chastity. Some films deviated only slightly from the rules (making slight alterations to the set) while others flagrantly ignored them (*Dancer in the Dark*, as we’ll discuss shortly, was filmed in Denmark but is set in the United States in the 1960’s, is a genre film and has a murder as one of its central plot elements, among other violations). This then leads to the rather difficult question: what is the value of Dogme?

Simons, as an advocate for gamification, argues in “Von Trier’s Cinematic Games” that they function to turn filmmaking into a rule-bound practice: “Like the rules of a game, they deprive players of the possibility to execute tasks in the most usual, conventional, convenient,

³⁶ There is still the further complication that every Dogme film was a work of fiction and as such is inherently a “lie,” though this brings us to the question of the nature of truth in fiction which is not a debate that should be tackled in a footnote.

and often most efficient way, and force them instead to develop skills and strategies that would be cumbersome and quite useless in everyday circumstances.” (3)³⁷ The idea then is that these rules are more for the sake of the filmmaker rather than the audience, though theoretically we would benefit from the creativity Dogme’s restrictions would force upon the directors (and while it’s easy to roll one’s eyes at the pretentiousness of the movement, it’s hard to deny that Dogme produced a number of exceptionally good films). And for the act of interpretation it provides a useful framework, and, for a rhetorical approach, an essential one. From a dramatic standpoint, the influence of Dogme really cannot be overlooked, at the very least because it functions as a dramatic scene but also because it is now part of our terministic screen. Dogme affects our perception of these films, they become part of the lens through which we view them. Even the one pre-Dogme film I’ll be looking at here is not immune since, as we will be able to divine from *Europa*’s look and style, Dogme may have been at least in part a response to von Trier’s own early work.

On the Count of Ten, You Will be in *Europa*

If we are to continue with Dogme as part of our terministic screen in evaluating von Trier, then *Europa* can be thought of as his pre-Dogme era, which ranges from *Element of Crime* (1984) to *Breaking the Waves* (1996), though *Breaking the Waves* is radically different from the other films of this period. Where most of the films of this era are distinguished for being highly stylized and reveling in artificiality, *Breaking the Waves* adheres much more strictly to the obsessive naturalism of Dogme (this in addition to the fact that it is often paired with *Dancer in*

³⁷ Simons’ book length work on von Trier, *Playing the Waves: Lars von Triers’ Game Cinema* is essentially an argument for looking at the entirety of von Trier’s filmography through the lens of gamification and while some of his arguments fall flat, overall he makes a compelling case that at least some of von Trier’s works are influenced by videogames.

the Dark and *Dogville* (2003) as his “women’s trilogy”) and as such it is sort of an oddball film in von Trier’s oeuvre. *Europa* comes in the middle of this era and is arguably the most radically stylized film von Trier has ever made either before or after Dogme. This stylization in itself provides some useful context for the motive of the Dogme movement since the aesthetic and subject matter of this film is almost diametrically opposed to Dogme. However, I also want to consider the film on its own terms. I have already stated that it is highly questionable how seriously we should even take the Dogme movement but even if we were to decide to treat it with the utmost gravitas it is still only a part of the screen that frames von Trier’s work.

Europa itself opens with a rather unusual frame. A camera points down at a moving train track while a voice (Max von Sydow) tries to hypnotize us. “I am going to count to ten. On the count of ten, you will be in Europa.” This statement is quite ambiguous, as we cannot tell if he means Europa the place (Europa being the word for Europe in many European languages, though the goddess Europa is where the English word Europe comes from) or *Europa* the film we are watching. The deliberately artificial look of the film is a possible explanation for the latter, especially given the fact that there are some scenes where cinematic nature of the film is clearly put on screen. Consider the scene where Leopold (Jean-Marc Barr) speaks to his uncle (Ernst-Hugo Jaregard) while in the background a man turns a crank that rotates a back-projected image upon which generic footage of a train station plays. This would suggest the film takes place on a set but it is hard to justify this as a definitive explanation as it is just as easy to argue that everything artificial about the film is suggestive of the hypnotic process that brought us into it.

Either way, this process of hypnosis calls into question the objectivity of anything in the film. We have no choice but to treat the entire experience as subjective and ambiguous. The narrator continues to address us periodically throughout the film, and always with direct address

“you are in a train station,” “you are at a party.” He asks us to recall the details of the events as the film materializes them for us. He speaks of the doubts and confusions of Leopold as though they were our own. Given that the principal function of hypnosis in therapy is to recall suppressed memories this would suggest to us that von Trier is forcing us to dredge up elements of the past that we are afraid to confront, with the “memories” we are supposedly “recalling” being events of the past that are rarely ever discussed. Indeed, narratively, the film is about the beginnings of the reconstruction era in Germany shortly after the end of WWII (the film is set late in 1945), something that is rarely ever discussed in film or literature, which generally prefers to focus on the celebrations of the victors (the despondency of the German people in this time is not a common theme). However, the Werewolves (Nazi insurrectionists), a subject even less often discussed in film and literature, are also a key component of the plot.

How much more could a film do to invite the very kind of psychoanalytic approach that we have relied upon throughout this dissertation? Is this subject matter (as well as the psychotic breakdown of Leopold) not the very picture of the Real, of a truth the audience does not want to confront (the idea that our victory also meant the suffering and humiliation of others, most of whom had nothing to do with the Nazis), and a truth that we are expected to confront through hypnotic therapy? This does, however, beg the question of who the audience for this therapy session is (who is the analysand?).

Von Trier often turns a critical eye towards America (we’ll discuss this in *Dancer in the Dark* as well but it is also the principal focus of *Dogville* and *Manderlay* and I already discussed in the first chapter the rather complex controversy surrounding *Manderlay*’s depiction of race relations in America) and the lead character, Leopold Kessler, an American who has come to Germany shortly after the end of WWII out of a naïve, idealistic desire to help the German

people move forward, is an almost comically trite depiction of a naively optimistic American as seen through the eyes of a cynical European (or, as may be the more apt description, a European who finds far too much *jouissance* in thinking himself a cynical person). However, despite Leopold at times being more caricature than character, this theme of American optimism vs European cynicism is a deep rooted theme in WWII cinema and one that Americans tend to be more oblivious to. Can we reasonably assume then that it is an American audience he wants to “put on the couch” even though this was a film made for a principally European audience?

This question of audience is important because it gives us some path into understanding the motives behind the film and because this is a film that talks to the audience in a way that few films do. The narrator does more than just break the fourth wall, he is our guide to the Real, but given the nature of the truth he is trying to reveal to us, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is for an American audience that he wanted to make this film. For Americans, the hardships Germans (and Europeans in general) faced after WWII is buried under a mountain of John Wayne in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* or Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan*: the suffering that was faced by ordinary citizens during and after the war is not part of our narrative (even the suffering of soldiers tends to be glossed over outside of noble and glorified death scenes) and this divide is a prominent theme that, outside of Leopold’s often cartoonish naivete, is quite thoroughly examined. Leopold comes to Germany with an idealistic notion that he can help the German people move forward after the war (and much is made of the fact that he was not a soldier, with a subtle implication that fighting in the American army would have done more good for the German people) but finds himself unable to confront the hardships the German people have been dealing with but, more to the point, unable to deal with the moral compromises that come with great hardship.

Leopold, through the help of his uncle, gets a job as a conductor aboard one of the few trains still operating in Germany, Zentropa Rail. His uncle is a cold, distant man who never misses an opportunity to scold and berate his nephew and so it is to the uncle's shock when, after Leopold finds himself unwittingly helping the daughter of the owner of the rail line, Katharina Hartmann (Barbara Sukowa), he is invited to dine with the owner's family. It is Leopold's dealings with the Hartmann family that is the catalyst for so much of the moral ambiguity that he encounters. The patriarch of the family, Lawrence (Udo Kier) was a Nazi collaborator who has been implicated by a number of anonymous letters detailing his crimes and one of the crises of faith Leopold encounters comes when he witnesses Lawrence's inquest at the hands of the American army. The presiding judge, Colonel Harris (Eddie Constantine) secretly bribed a Jewish man to claim that Lawrence had sheltered him during the war so that Lawrence would be acquitted of all charges. Harris afterwards explains to Leopold that Lawrence was more useful as the president of Zentropa than as a prisoner to be made an example of (despite my criticism of von Trier's portrayal of Leopold as the naïve American optimist, it is worth noting that after his acquittal Lawrence commits suicide, suggesting that he is the only person besides Leopold who sees his acquittal as a breach of justice). Later Leopold learns that Katharina, who he falls in love with and eventually marries, was once a member of the Werewolves, though she assures him she no longer associates with them.

This sets up the key conflict of the film: the Werewolves later try to get Leopold to set a bomb on the train and, when he refuses, they kidnap Katharina to force him to comply. In a rather absurd comic twist, the bombing of the train coincides with Leopold's conductor examination so that we see him wrestling with his conscience at the same time that he is being relentlessly grilled on the petty minutiae of his duties. He does decide to set the bomb but later

leaves in the middle of his exam to defuse it. However, when Colonel Harris, who is a passenger on the train that evening, reveals to him that Katharina, who he has arrested, was still associated with the Werewolves and was the mastermind behind the bombing, Leopold decides to renege and blow up the train anyway. The exchange he and Katharina have before he makes this decision (and indeed is what leads to the decision) is perhaps the most important in the entire film to understanding the dichotomy between post-WWII Germany and America that von Trier hoped to capture:

Kate: You know they say a Werewolf is only a werewolf during nights. In the daytime it's a human being. I know I can't make you understand what it is that makes a man turn into an animal because you don't accept that it ever happens. During nights I wrote the letters to father. During days I regretted it. I didn't want him to die but it hurt me so much to see him throw himself at the feet of the Americans.

Leopold: So our marriage is just part of a plan to blow up this train?

Kate: No. I really loved you. You know there were times when all I wanted was for us to leave and forget about Germany, but for you it didn't work. I'm sorry Leo I – I did what I had to do. But it's your fault too. The bridge would have been so easy for you.

Leopold: Easy?

Kate: Nothing could have happened to you.

Leopold: And what about all the people on the train?

Kate: What people? Everyone on this train has been through the war just like me. You can't compare yourself to us. Everybody has killed or betrayed, directly or indirectly, hundreds of times, just to survive. Look into their eyes and you will see what I mean.

Leopold: Kate, you're talking about an awful crime.

Kate: The way I see it is that you're the only criminal.

Leopold: I haven't done anything. I'm not working for either side.

Kate: Exactly.

Leopold: I hate to say this, but I've got this rotten feeling that everyone's been screwing me over ever since I got here. And that makes me mad. And now it's my turn to say something –

Leopold, however, is never given the chance to say anything, because it is right as he is about to take a stand that he is called back to the exam and meekly acquiesces. Though the intention of the Werewolves was to undermine the reconstruction of Germany, there is an implication in Katharina's words that the bombing would have been an act of justice and, what's more, Leopold's reaction and later actions seem to suggest that he agrees with her. Either way, it is this moment, being confronted with this supposed "truth" of his criminal actions, that finally breaks down Leopold's naïve-optimist fantasy construct and convinces him, fairly or not, that he is just as guilty as anyone else on the train who has murdered and betrayed hundreds of times just to survive.

Though the conversation with Katharina was clearly a turning point in his character, what sends him over the edge is being confronted once again with the petty minutiae of the job when a passenger complains that a chalk mark was not left on his shoes so that he would know they had been polished. Leopold steals a machine gun from an American soldier and takes the train hostage, forcing it to stop on a bridge until the bomb detonates. The train lands in the river below and Leopold finds himself trapped in a bathroom as the train sinks, unable to open the door. It is here that the narrator returns to tell us "You are on a train in Germany. It is sinking into the river. On the count of ten, you will be dead."

We watch as Leopold struggles to free himself while the narrator slowly counts upward to ten. At ten, Leopold drowns, the door to the bathroom opens, and his body floats out of the train. The narrator tells us:

In the morning the sleeper has found death on the bottom of the river. The force of the stream has opened the door and he's leading you on. Above your body, people are still alive. Follow the river...As days go by...Head for the ocean...That mirrors the sky.

You want to wake up, to free yourself of the image of Europa. But it is not possible. At these last words, the film fades to black. Leopold is a man who found himself trapped by impossible ideological positions: first his framework of naïve-optimism, which could not hold together in war-ravaged Germany, then the dual clash of the militant ideologues of the Werewolves which was crossed with the hyperbolic cynicism of Katharina. In the films we've looked at in the previous chapters, whatever truth (in the Artaudian sense) that the director wanted to force upon us was done so by taking us on the same journey of discovery as the characters. We could arguably see the narrator's beckoning us to follow Leopold on his journey down the river as a parallel to the journeys we have been on in the other films but the difference here is that the characters are never brought to the same revelation we are. This impossibility of any meaningful choice (more classically referred to as "damned if you do damned if you don't") that leads to Leopold's death is the conclusion to the journey: a nightmare that we cannot wake up from, no matter how badly we want to.

This is worth reframing in more direct line with Lacanian terminology that we've introduced previously. Lacan riffed off Freud's account of a man who fell asleep during the wake for his dead son. He had a dream that his son stood before him on fire and said "Father, can't you see that I am burning?" When the father awoke, a candle had fallen over and landed on

the bedsheet, which the father was able to extinguish before the flames engulfed his son. Zizek, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, explains that the conventional, prosaic interpretation of such a dream was to construct a narrative around an external stimuli for the sake of prolonging sleep. (44-45) Lacan, however, sees it differently:

The subject does not awake himself when the external irritation becomes too strong; the logic of his awakening is quite different. First he constructs a dream, a story which enables him to prolong his sleep, to avoid awakening into reality. But the thing that he encounters in the dream, the reality of his desire, the Lacanian Real – in our case, the reality of the child’s reproach to his father, “Can’t you see that I am burning?”, implying the father’s fundamental guilt – is more terrifying than the so-called external reality itself, and that is why he awakens: to escape the Real of his desire, which announces itself in the terrifying dream. (45)

We can see how cleanly this notion fits into *Europa* and the theoretical framework I have constructed for this analysis. The dream world of *Europa*, the hypnotic state that we are brought into at the beginning of the film, is the place where we confront the Lacanian Real, in this case the uselessness of the ideological frameworks through which we view WWII both in reality and in the realm of film (since Leopold’s crumbled so easily while Katharina’s only led to more death and destruction). But unlike in a real dream, where we can awaken to escape the terrifying Real, here there is no awakening and no escape. In this sense, we may make the rather poetic claim that a rogue film is a dream from which there is no escape, as they force us to confront the Real in this world, with no other reality to escape to.

Dancer in the Dark: Doing it Dogme Style

The Idiots (1997) was von Trier's first Dogme film but *Dancer in the Dark* is the most famous and more interesting, if anything because of how flagrantly von Trier defied the conventions of Dogme. I had mentioned previously that not a single Dogme film ever actually adhered to all of the rules of Dogme but where some, like *The Idiots* or *The Celebration*, committed only minor transgressions (bringing in an outside prop, adding a bit of extra lighting), *Dancer in the Dark* openly ignores several of the most significant rules. For one, it was filmed in Denmark in 1999 but is set in Washington State in 1964 (Rule 1: Shooting must be done on location, Rule 7: Temporal and geographic alienation are forbidden), it features a murder as its central plot device (Rule 6: The film must not contain superficial action) and it is a musical (Rule 8: Genre movies are not acceptable, Rule 2: The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa [the lip-syncing required for a musical goes against this]).

We must now revisit the question posed earlier in this chapter: what value is Dogme as a framework for analyzing this film? Wouldn't it be better to just do away with Dogme and interpret the film on its own merits or by some more conventional theoretical framework? A constant consideration of the rules and how faithful a particular film was to them can grow wearisome indeed but for a rhetorical consideration of rogue cinema there is a fascinating movement at work here. Dogme was an act of defiance, a response to the slick, overproduced Blockbusters of Hollywood that have so long been the global industry standard (and though *Europa* will never be mistaken for a Hollywood production, that it is a slick and stylized film is beyond dispute, thus making this a rebellion against von Trier's own early works as well) but *Dancer in the Dark* was a defiance of Dogme: it is von Trier rebelling against his own rebellion. We get a sense here of von Trier as a filmmaker who is not happy unless he's fighting against the

system, and if there isn't a system for him to fight against, he will create the system that he wishes to fight against. To reframe this in the Pentad: if we remember that scene contains the act, then Dogme was an act within the scene of the mid-nineties cinematic zeitgeist but it is an act that became a scene in its own right, a Pentadic evolution (Burke does not quite account for such an evolution, but it is in the nature of the Pentad that the terminologies are constantly in motion so it is only a small leap in logic to allow them to change shape as well). If the purpose of the Pentad is to allow for an analysis of motives, then what we see here is a director motivated to rebel against whatever scene he finds himself in regardless of what that scene is (with rebellion as its own purpose and, to round out the pentad, his films and, to a lesser extent, his manifestos serving as the means of rebellion).

I trace this convoluted path because if we are interested in what a rogue film is then we must also explore the circumstances under which they get made. This was easy with Jodorowsky and Makavejev, whose all-too-brief cinematic careers were both in response to a very particular scene. Von Trier, however, is the first filmmaker we've discussed who has been able to sustain a prolific career over a long period of time and, unlike many directors who have produced rogue films, his work is consistently rogue. Contrast von Trier with a director like William Friedkin, a reliable Hollywood workhorse who, while he has been directing for almost fifty years and has turned out a number of notable films and at least two masterful ones (*The Exorcist* and *The French Connection*), it was not until 2011's *Killer Joe* that he produced anything that could reasonably be called rogue. And, while *Killer Joe* is an edgy and aggressive film and could even be called an act of defiance in some of the sense in which *The Holy Mountain*, *Sweet Movie* and *Dancer in the Dark* are acts of defiance (which is to say, within the scene of modern, mainstream Hollywood filmmaking, releasing a film as gruesome as *Killer Joe* was a bold move), one rogue

film does not a rogue filmmaker make. Friedkin is a mainstream filmmaker who flirted with roguishness. Von Trier, however, is a rogue filmmaker.

The reason this is significant is because from this we can infer that a constant desire to rebel is a fundamental trait of von Trier's films and can also serve as an explanation for his constantly evolving style. One of the few rules in the Vow of Chastity that Dogme filmmakers actually adhered to was the rule about handheld cameras, which, during most of the period for which Dogme lasted, meant commercial digital cameras. This was a radical stylistic decision, as digital cameras at the time were considered inferior and unworthy of use in a film that had the expectation of being taken seriously. However, not only were Dogme films pivotal in pioneering the use of digital cameras in art cinema, but for *Dancer in the Dark*, the use of a digital camera is also a vital component of what makes it a rogue film. The typical complaint against digital cameras is that the quality is too poor compared to traditional film stock (this was a great deal more true in the late nineties than it is now), which is true, but that poor quality is also what gives films shot this way what is typically referred to as a "home movie" feel (*Side by Side*). In terms of how we identify with the movie, this home video feel has a profound effect.

The idea behind high quality film stock is that it is supposed to create the illusion of reality (and since HDTVs are of a high enough resolution now that they can project an image that is indistinguishable from what the human eye normally perceives, this level of quality is increasingly becoming the norm). But the problem with this of course is that, while it can create a very convincing image, it is not actually possible to "transport" us into the film (to use the terminology filmmakers so often like to use) because there is too much of a disparity between the image on screen and our experience of watching the film. We can consider a scene like the one in *Lawrence of Arabia*, where a man looking in the distance in the desert spots a barely

perceptible dot that turns out to be T. E. Lawrence (Peter O'Toole) returning from a perilous desert journey. This shot could not have been possible without the use of 70mm film stock, which, in 1960, was the only way such a subtle image could be captured. However, as powerful as the moment is, an audience is most likely watching the film indoors, possibly in a theater, but more likely at home, where our comfort is disassociated from the extreme discomfort of desert travel (at most, someone who has had the experience of being out in the desert will find some sense of consubstantiality with the scene). This disassociation, which could be easily reframed in Burkean terms as division, always makes us aware that the film is just that, a film.

The use of a crude digital camera, however, actually has the effect of undermining this fundamental division. Because of the home movie aesthetic, we are more easily tricked into believing that these characters are real, though certainly in the case of *Dancer in the Dark* we are capable of recognizing the actors, many of whom are quite famous: Bjork, Catherine Deneuve, Peter Stormare, Stellan Skarsgard and Udo Kier are all perfectly recognizable as themselves, but even still the disassociation is less powerful than when watching a scene in a desert because the human connection is so much stronger than the environmental one. We can easily distinguish between the desert and the comfort of our living rooms but the sympathy we feel for the torments endured by the character of Selma Jezkova are quite powerful even as we are aware that Selma is actually the singer/actress Bjork.

Dancer in the Dark certainly could have been shot on conventional film stock and it still would most likely have been a highly celebrated film, but to watch the film in digital, with the home video aesthetic, essentially has the effect of lowering our defenses, as it lessens the disassociation between the fantasy of the film world and the reality in which we watch it. This trick of making it feel like a home movie is pivotal to the success of the film both as a work of

art and as a rogue film. Since the film's fundamental conceit is to drag us through the journey of a woman who is forced to endure unbearable torment in the pursuit of trying to build a better life for herself and her son, our ability to identify with Selma is indispensable.

The film focuses on Selma (Bjork), a Czech immigrant in love with Hollywood musicals and who suffers from a severe visual impairment that is causing her to slowly go blind. Her son Gene (Vladica Kostic) suffers the same affliction but his vision can be saved with an operation that Selma works overtime to save for in addition to participating in the local theater troupe (who is putting on their own rendition of *The Sound of Music* – whose significance as one of the less cheery Hollywood musicals should not be overlooked). On occasion, she also goes to the movies with her friend and fellow immigrant Kathy (Catherine Deneuve) who has to describe the events of the film to Selma, who can barely see the screen. Selma rents a trailer from her neighbor Bill (David Morse) a police officer who is driving himself into bankruptcy because of how lavishly he spends money on his wife Linda (Cara Seymour). One evening when Bill is visiting Selma he lingers for a moment in the kitchen after bidding her goodnight. Selma, whose vision has by now deteriorated to the point that she is almost completely blind, is unaware that he is still there and unwittingly reveals to him the location of the wad of cash she is saving for her son's operation. Bill, seeing an opportunity to stave off his bankruptcy, later steals the money. When Selma discovers the theft and is shortly after confronted by Linda, who tells her that she's evicting her for coming on to her husband, Selma figures out who stole the money and when she confronts Bill and tries to take back the money he pulls a gun on her. In the ensuing altercation she manages to get the gun away from him and shoot him, after which he begs her to kill him but, because of her poor vision, she keeps missing her shots until finally she crushes his skull in with the metal box he kept the money in.

Lest we become too bogged down in summation, I'll pause here for some observations. I hope it has not escaped the reader how excessively melodramatic the plot of this film is. Under the veneer of the film's aesthetic, the melodrama is less noticeable but to read a summation of the plot it becomes quite clear. The story is not just heavy with melodrama though, the motivations of the characters are contrived to the point of being formulaic. However, this is not necessarily a weakness of the film. Rather, von Trier draws us in with these broad strokes precisely because they are so easily relatable³⁸. Selma's character plays perfectly in to our romanticized notions of the immigrant experience and the American Dream (compared to his embarrassing failure to confront American racism in *Manderlay*, von Trier's manipulation of the American Dream here is really quite masterful) as well as the plight of the single mother. The performances, however, are another key to this because the actors do not play their part as caricatures but rather lend real human weight to them. Selma is naïve but stubborn, resourceful yet desperate and, until her dream of seeing her son's vision saved is threatened, too timid to ever confront the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that befall her. There is nothing shocking about her murder of Bill because, when the moment comes, we understand that she had always been capable of such a crime, we had just failed to see it until that point.

I spoke in a previous chapter of the sadistic trap: how filmmakers will arouse our Will to Enjoy by presenting us with characters we desire to see punished and then in turn punish us by realizing our desire at the same time they make us aware of how horrific our desire was. I outlined Fritz Lang's *M* in the first chapter as a model of how this process works but here call our attention to a different use of the sadistic trap. Von Trier here captures us in his trap not

³⁸ And it may be worth noting here that von Trier has, on many occasions, cited Douglas Sirk as one of his major cinematic inspirations, and nowhere in von Trier's filmography can we see Sirk's influence more than in *Dancer in the Dark*.

through our sadistic lust but through our sympathy and it is in the last third of the film that he springs his trap as we watch Selma face a murder conviction for Bill's death.

The trial is only a brief part of the film but in that short time we see Selma accused not only of Bill's murder but also of being a communist and an anti-American dissident (and she feebly brings up only her love of Hollywood musicals as a defense to these claims). While there is a subtle undercurrent of xenophobia throughout much of the film, the trial is the first time we see von Trier bring it to the fore. In the previous chapter we discussed how ideological fantasy always leaves a stain or a leftover that the ideological construct must explain away for it to appear consistent. This was why Nazis would view even the kindness of a Jew as proof of their deceptiveness and it is in the trial scene that Selma comes to be viewed through the same ideological lens. It is obvious from the beginning that *Dancer in the Dark* is a film about the immigrant experience but here von Trier's interest in it comes starkly into view. To bring Burke back into the fold, von Trier in this scene reframes Selma through the lens of a xenophobe (in a sense, he presents us with the terministic screen through which the xenophobe views the world) and, because we have seen Selma outside of this frame, we are all the more repulsed by the viewpoint. Thus does von Trier condemn xenophobic attitudes without actually presenting a xenophobe as a major antagonist in the film. The effect of this should not be overlooked as what von Trier is doing here is causing us to identify with (or really, divide ourselves from) the xenophobic ideology without attaching it to an actual person: we could imagine von Trier presenting this view through the lens of the immigrant-hating bigot who is also a kind husband, doting father and pillar of the community but without that presence he is essentially presenting the ideology as something inhuman.

Selma is sentenced to death by hanging but she is able to get the money she took back from Bill to Kathy (that this is legally impossible would defeat the poetry of the gesture) with instructions that it is to be paid to the doctor who would perform Gene's eye surgery. Later, Selma receives news that a new defense lawyer was hired for her who was able to get a stay of execution and a retrial, news Selma embraces until she finds out that the amount he was paid is the exact amount she gave to Kathy for the operation. Furious, Selma fires the attorney and demands that Kathy use the money for the operation. They have a heated argument:

Selma: If he (Gene) doesn't have the operation next month it will be too late. And he will never be able to see. This is what it was all about. He can see his grandchildren – it's the only thing that's important to me in my whole life and you don't understand it, Kathy, it's just plain stupid to waste that kind of money on a blind woman who's going to spend the rest of her life in jail.

Kathy: He needs his mother, you know, alive, no matter where.

Selma: You don't understand. He needs his eyes.

Kathy: He needs his mother.

Selma: No!

I spoke earlier of the melodramatic nature of this film that is masked under the veneer of realism but in this exchange the melodrama begins to overwhelm the film's realism. That a mother would choose to die for her son's vision is not just absurd, but borders on sexism, since this is the embodiment of the woman for whom it is her duty to give all to her family and leave nothing for herself, literally in this case (it is also a model of what Zizek describes as the unwillingness to sacrifice the sacrifice, in other words, the unwillingness to give up the nobility of martyrdom for the sake of happiness or a better life). Von Trier clearly wanted to inject her sacrifice with the

sheen of nobility but he goes too far here and diminishes our ability to identify with Selma's motives.

Does von Trier destroy his ambition with this lapse though? It's of course a subjective question but, subjectively speaking, Selma's preposterous unwillingness to sacrifice the sacrifice does little damage to the film's finale. The execution goes forward in a long, drawn out sequence, though it is long and drawn out for a reason, as von Trier forces us to endure every agony of Selma being forced to her death from her refusal to get out of bed when they come for her to her screams of agony when they put a hood over her (because the blind woman does not want her vision obstructed in her last moments). Here the movie becomes not just a condemnation of xenophobia but a condemnation of the death penalty as well, though in this sense simply through the fact that her execution is so unbearable to watch. The agony of this sequence is also why we can inject some objectivity into a declaration that von Trier's lapse into sexism does not ultimately destroy the film. We are witnessing, in Selma's execution, the torment of a human being who is being unjustly forced to her death. Dana Stevens, in her review of *Manderlay*, made a reference to *Breaking the Waves* (which suffers a similar problem of showing a woman as unwilling to sacrifice the sacrifice) and *Dancer in the Dark* in which she summarized this give and take quite well: "Some were offended by these films' implicit vision of female suffering as a redemptive force, but even if you objected to their crudely manipulative final frames, you did so through a haze of tears." (n. pg.) The human connection, the shared substance we experience watching Selma confront her premature death, has a way of transcending ideology. This is the value of rhetoric on display here, and especially of the value of rhetoric as seen through the medium of film, for if we cannot recognize the significance of this ability of rhetoric to break through the veneer of ideological fantasy and see the effect that our

ideological systems have on the world, then we may as well use our books of rhetoric to prop up crooked tables and little else.

There is of course one key component of *Dancer in the Dark* that I have paid scant attention to so far: namely the fact that the film is a musical. There is probably no genre less suited to the rogue treatment than a musical, since there is also no genre more inclined towards escapist fantasies, the exact opposite of what a rogue film tries to do. *Dancer in the Dark*, however, is a musical but one that toys with the very concept of a musical. Musicals as a genre have always been seen as a form of escapism because of the fanciful and unrealistic nature of the films. When the characters break into song, it is understood that this is in a sense happening on another plane of reality, though the films never actually acknowledge that. We as the audience are supposed to accept that they take place in a world where spontaneously breaking into song is merely a part of the fabric of reality. Given how I have discussed *Dancer in the Dark* as a realistic film, this may seem a contradiction except that in this film, music is an escape from life's suffering. When Selma breaks into a song and dance routine, it is not that we have been elevated to a new plane of reality but rather we are witnessing Selma dissociate from reality. The songs are a delusion that function as her means of escaping the Real and when, at the end of each song, she is brought back to the real world, it is always to confront some horrible event that she has refused to acknowledge.

To highlight two key instances, one such number comes after her confrontation with Bill over the money he stole from her. After she has killed him she begins to sing:

Black night is falling

The sun is gone to bed

The innocent are dreaming

As you should sleepyhead

She then touches Bill's forehead and he awakes from the dead and follows her into the bathroom, where he washes away the blood on his face. The symbolism here is all quite obvious and needs no belaboring: a clear desire to undo her actions, to wash away her deeds, etc. The lyrics are far more interesting, as they express not just a transition into darkness (ie: the crime she committed) but also a desire to maintain innocence in the darkness (she is guilty but justified in her actions). However, though the words apply to her situation, it is to Bill's body that she sings them and it is after telling him he should be dreaming that she awakes him from his death. It is quite a singular embodiment of the desire to awake into reality to escape the Real, for here it is the awakening that is an expression of the desire to flee the reality of what she has done.

The song then becomes Selma's attempts to justify what she has done. After washing his face, Bill sings to her "I hurt you much more/so don't you worry." Bill continues to reassure her as she works through her doubts and denial, telling her she should not be afraid, that she did nothing wrong. The song's chorus, which is simply "I just did what I had to do" but repeated quite a lot (as someone who has just recently become a murderer would be wont to do) becomes her attempt to rationalize her way out of it (sometimes the chorus is sung by someone else as "you just did what you had to do," including Gene, who is outside playing on his bike, and Linda, who encounters Selma as Selma is leaving the house), to justify her actions. The song, then, begins as an escape from reality, but then becomes the means by which she rationalizes it, making it a bit of a departure from the norm for the songs in this film, which tend to function purely as dissociation.

This is perhaps best highlighted by the last song, which comes just before Selma's execution. As they are putting the noose around her neck she begins to sing that this is the

second to last song. This is in reference to an earlier conversation with Bill in which she tells him that she always hates it when the last song of a musical begins because then you know that the movie is about to end. For that reason, she explains, she would always leave after the second to last song, that way the movie could go on forever. Selma's song, however, ends when the trap door opens and the noose snaps her neck. On the floor below, where an audience to her execution sits, Selma's body hangs on display for them until a prison guard comes to close the curtains to the room, "putting an end" to the performance as well as the end of the film. If we are to run with the sadistic trap framework for this film than this last moment can be thought of as the final twist in the trap. For forty five minutes leading up to this moment we have endured watching Selma go through an experience as horrible as one that anyone can go through but in this last moment von Trier essentially negates one of Selma's most redeeming qualities: her cheerful and optimistic spirit (best embodied in her love for musicals). Von Trier literally undermines her belief that if you leave during the second to last song, the show can go on forever.

More than the critique of American xenophobia and more than the trials Selma suffers, this may be the cruelest component of the film: the challenge to the belief that optimism is a valid coping mechanism for life. This is different from the other "truths" that we've discussed in these pages because, while there is certainly a measure of subjectivity to them (including whether or not they could even be described as any sort of revelatory truth or even a peeling back of an ideological fantasy), this negation of optimism is easier to view as an act of hyperbolic cynicism, as easy to dismiss as the doomsayers who claim that the world is coming to an end every time they see a teenager sending a text message (a mentality that is, in itself, as blinding an ideology as any other). This conclusion, however, becomes more tolerable if we were to treat

the conclusion itself as subjective, in other words to look at it not in the sense that an optimistic view of life is for the naïve and uneducated (and Selma is both) but rather in the sense that optimism failed to win out in this particular case. In that sense the film serves as a reminder that the world is still a place that allows such injustices to happen. We read so often of wrongful executions and/or imprisonments and a film like *Dancer in the Dark* serves as another reminder of the value of cinema as a rhetorical device because of the way such a film can bring such life to what would otherwise be a distant story in the news.

There is of course a deep irony in the fact that von Trier chose to confront us with the Real with a musical, as there is hardly a less fitting genre for a venture into the rogue than the fantastical escapism of a musical and I would argue that this very framework is a key part of what makes this a rogue film³⁹. By framing his story with this genre he compels us to watch it with all the connotations we bring with us to a musical (escapism, yes, but also, humor, whimsy, love, extravagant set designs, memorable songs – and yes *Dancer in the Dark* lacks this last one because of lyrics that hold pragmatic function in the advancement of the narrative rather than being catchy and because of the often harsh tone of the music, which is quite contrary to Bjork's usual singing style) and plays against our expectations through nearly every component of the film, from the aesthetics of Dogme, which are nearly diametrically opposed to the usually slick production values of a Hollywood musical, to the dark and morbid story. We could essentially make the argument that von Trier is using the terministic screen (in this case, his awareness that the conventions of the musical provide the context for which we would watch the film) as a sadistic trap in itself. He does not just force us to confront the horror of the American immigrant experience and the death penalty, he is also at the same time forcing us to confront the absurdity

³⁹ I also add as a footnote here that, while there are some other rogue films where music is a key component of the story, I can think of no other example of a rogue musical besides *Dancer in the Dark*)

of the idea that we can ever escape our problems through entertainment. In that sense, *Dancer in the Dark* truly is a Dogme film, lashing out not so much against the look and style of Hollywood films, but against their propensity for keeping us locked in a fantasy world where the good guys always win and everyone lives happily ever after. Pedantic adherence to rules aside, it is this act of rebellion that makes Dogme 95 a truly rogue cinema movement.

Chapter Five: Werner Herzog's Rogue Life

Films in the Extreme

There are many ways in which Herzog is a departure from the filmmakers we have looked at so far. The most transparent is the fact that, in terms of content, Herzog's films are the least aggressive ones here. The rogueness of his films has less to do with violence and sexuality and more to do with his explorations of madness and the extremes of human behavior. In this sense, however, his films are perhaps the easiest to define as rogue because the absence of sex and violence removes one of the most obstructing confusions in the explication of what rogue cinema is: namely the difficulty of distinguishing between exploitative voyeurism and Artaudian cruelty. The second key difference is the radical methods Herzog develops to make his films. I touched lightly on technique in the previous chapter, since Dogme 95 is very difficult to ignore in a discussion of von Trier but for Herzog the outlandish techniques and practices he develops for his films are almost as famous as the films themselves. Whether it's his controversial decision to have made a film with a cast comprised entirely of dwarves in *Even Dwarves Started Small* (1970), his experiment in putting the entire cast of the film under hypnosis for *Heart of Glass* (1976) or most famously, retelling the story of a man who moved a river barge over the top of a mountain in the middle of the Amazon rainforest by making a film in which he dragged a 100 ton river barge over the top of a mountain in the middle of the Amazon rainforest for

Fitzcarraldo (1980)⁴⁰. Indeed, it will be my intent here to explore how the method by which Herzog makes his films becomes just as much a factor in what makes them rogue as the content themselves by looking at two of his most famous works, *Aguirre: Wrath of God* (1972) and *Stroszek* (1977).

I did, of course, give great consideration to style in the previous chapter through my discussion of *Dogme 95* and the Vow of Chastity, but there is a key difference at work with Herzog's films. I would accept without argument the claim that one does not need to have any knowledge of *Dogme 95* or the Vow of Chastity to watch a film like *Dancer in the Dark*. However, because these things influenced the look and style of the film, they still alter our perception of the film. My analysis of *Dancer in the Dark* holds true regardless of whether the audience is aware of the film's ideology but with Herzog it is different. *Aguirre* is famous for having been shot in the middle of the Amazon, a thousand miles from the nearest town, but an audience member unaware of this fact would see nothing in the film to indicate that this is the case, and could easily watch it in its entirety assuming that it was shot just beyond the outskirts of a city, where the actors could retire to hotels at the end of the shooting day. Similarly, an audience member watching *Stroszek* may, at the most, wonder a bit how it is that the lead actor could embody the character of a mentally disturbed man recently released from prison so perfectly but still be unaware that it is because Herzog cast the mentally disturbed Bruno S. in the lead shortly after he had in fact been released from a long stay in a mental hospital⁴¹. I can similarly provide no defense for why it should be essential to know these things when viewing

⁴⁰ And the documentary on the making of the film, *Burden of Dreams* (1982) is also essential viewing

⁴¹ It should also be noted, however, that this was the second of two collaborations between Herzog and Bruno S., as it was the year before that Herzog discovered Bruno S. scraping by as a street musician and decided to cast him as the lead in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* where, quite similar to *Stroszek*, Herzog took advantage of Bruno S.'s history of mental illness and long incarceration to tell Hauser's story with a man who was essentially the closest modern day equivalent to Hauser that one could reasonably expect to find.

either film (and I know also that the acolytes of Barthes and Derrida will twist in agony as I do so), so why then, do I make it so central to my analysis if the technique is so invisible to the audience?

It should first be established that, while both films could be considered rogue without this context, part of what makes these films rogue is the method by which they were made. It is not simply that Herzog explores insanity in *Stroszek* (and in *Aguirre* for that matter) it is the fact that he does so with someone who suffered from mental illness, and it is not just that Aguirre shows us a man going mad with power in the quest for El Dorado, it is the fact that Herzog went deep into the Amazon to find this madness, much like how the real Aguirre did. I hope that through these descriptions and some of the other brief references to his films that I've made that the reader has begun to pick up on the fact that the line between what is real and what is fake is very thin in Herzog's films. It is essentially a hidden motif through many of his films: Herzog is constantly blurring the line between fact and fiction.

Consider his documentary *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), about Dieter Dengler, an American POW in Vietnam who was one of only seven soldiers to ever successfully escape a Vietnamese POW camp. Much of what Herzog shows of Dengler's life (such as his habit of checking if the windows and doors are unlocked every time he goes into a room so he can know he has an avenue of escape) was fabricated (and Dengler participated in the fabrication) ostensibly because the myths were supposed to be an insight into the inner workings of a man who had to undergo the kind of horrific experience that Dengler did (the constant fear of never having a way out of your situation, etc.). Later, Herzog told Dengler's story again in the fictional film *Rescue Dawn*, a dramatized account of Dengler's escape that, similar to *Aguirre* and many of Herzog's other films, was shot on location deep in the Vietnamese jungle. Herzog

refers to this as the “voodoo of location:” the idea being that the cast and crew will become more engrossed in the process if the circumstances under which the shoot takes place resembles the reality of the situation as closely as possible (that so many of Herzog’s fictional films – *Aguirre*, *Kasper Hauser*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *Invincible* and *Rescue Dawn*, just to name some key titles – are based on true stories is no coincidence). Theoretically, Christian Bale, in the role of Dengler, should be able to all the more convincingly take on the part of Dengler (it may not be entirely unfitting to say “take on his reality”) by experiencing as closely as possible what Dengler had to experience to make his escape.

And no, an audience does not need to know these things when watching these films but knowledge of Herzog’s methods makes the act of viewing and interpreting his films a far richer experience and the deconstructionists who would insist that the auteur’s method is irrelevant would also rob Herzog’s work of one of its deepest and most compelling dimensions. With that said, how does this knowledge of Herzog’s methods change our analysis of his films? The answer that by now should be so obvious it becomes tedious to repeat it, is that it fits into the pentad, but unlike the other filmmakers we’ve looked at, whose films are a function of the scene-act ratio, Herzog’s method is a function of the scene-agency ratio. Under the scene-act ratio, the film being made is a response to a particular kairic moment (Jodorowsky responding to new age spiritualism of the late 60s, Makavejev responding to the cold war dichotomy, von Trier responding to overproduced Hollywood blockbusters). Herzog, however, has no moment he is responding to, or at the very least, the kairic moment is not a significant factor in his work. Many of the films we’ve looked at could only have been made in a particular time and place, but there is no reason Herzog could not have made *Aguirre* today or a hundred years ago because scene is the means by which he makes the film and not the reason (in that sense, it may also be

fitting to discuss this as an agency-scene ratio since it is so often the case that Herzog is using the scene as a means to an end rather than finding the means to create a film within the scene he has to work in)⁴².

In this sense, Herzog's films are more universal than the others we've looked at here. By not responding to a kairic moment Herzog's films become more of a response to the human condition. In my very title I label a rogue film as an act of rebellion but if Herzog is not rebelling against a time and place than what is it he is rebelling against? The best answer I can provide is that he is rebelling against our conceptions of the ideas he is exploring in his films, whatever those ideas may be (though if one overarching motif can be applied to Herzog's films, it is madness and the extremes of human behavior). In *Aguirre* and *Stroszek* Herzog wants us to rethink our perceptions of madness and the method by which he makes these films that explore madness becomes part of the process.

Aguirre: the Wrath of God and the Heart of Darkness

Let us begin with a consideration of *Aguirre*, which tells the story of one of the many conquistador expeditions into the Amazon in search of El Dorado. Gonzalo Pizarro (the far less famous brother of Francisco) was one of the last conquistadors to lead an expedition in search of El Dorado, but the film does not focus on him. Rather, it tells the story of one of Pizarro's

⁴² And for those needing a refresher course on the difference, I'll remind the reader here that for Burke's pentad, the order in which you put a ratio emphasizes which one is dominant. In a scene-agency ratio, it is the scene that is dominant, in other words we could imagine a scenario where Herzog was forced to shoot a film in the middle of the Amazon and conjured the story of *Aguirre* to fit the scene. In the agency-scene ratio, however, it is the means that comes first (Herzog's decision to shoot a film in the middle of the Amazon, where the scene becomes the means by which he realizes his vision). In the first, it is the scene that determines the method, in the latter it is the scene that makes the method possible.

underlings, Don Lope de Aguirre (Klaus Kinski)⁴³. When their supplies begin to run low, Pizarro arranges a scouting expedition to go down river to see what lies ahead, with the understanding that if they do not return in a week, they will be presumed dead. He puts Don Pedro de Ursua (Ruy Guerra) in charge of the expedition and appoints Aguirre the second in command. However, as the expedition progresses, Aguirre slowly grows mad with power and dreams of riches as well as the immortality of fame. He slowly begins to take control of the expedition but also leads it to ruin in the process until by the end of the film he stands alone on a raft completely overtaken by monkeys, his mind given over completely to delusions of divine power and immortality.

The central symbol here is a familiar one: an expedition away from civilization into the unknown also serving as a metaphor for a descent into madness. Conrad had already long ago explored this territory in *Heart of Darkness* (*Apocalypse Now* was still seven years away when *Aguirre* was made) but this is where Herzog's method becomes relevant. He does not merely treat the correlation between the wilderness and insanity as a metaphor while recreating the depths of the Amazon on a sound stage or settling for some convenient location just outside of Brasilia (or where have you) – he actually takes his story into the very depths of the wild that are supposedly so dangerous to a man's mental well-being. In this sense, the film is not just an exploration of this metaphor, it is also putting it to the test (and the well documented insanity that Kinski displayed during the shoot suggests that there may be some measure of truth to it).

It should be noted here that there is a striking parallel between Herzog's choice of location and the Vow of Chastity because, while *Aguirre* is a historical film, Herzog does as much as he can to remove any sort of geographic alienation from the film. Consider the opening

⁴³ Herzog's troubled relationship with Kinski is at least as famous as his filmmaking methods, but except perhaps for the performances that he extracted from Kinski, their volatile relationship really does not have a great deal of relevance outside of biography and anecdote, at least for the purposes of our analysis.

sequence of *Aguirre*, which is comprised of a series of long shots of the expedition wending its way down a steep mountain pass. Because we know that they are really on that mountain, really in the remotest depths of the jungle, watching one of the natives they enslaved drop a crate of goods and see the camera trace its path as it shatters and tumbles down the face, we can sense the danger they're in. We understand on a dual level how a misstep could send one of them tumbling to their death because we understand the danger not just on the level of the characters but on the level of the actors themselves. Much like how the home video aesthetic of *Dancer in the Dark* lured us into the sadistic trap that von Trier had prepared for us, so too does Herzog draw us into a trap with the conceit of his methodology.

Through here and von Trier's work another quality of many rogue films shows itself: that of immediacy, that of drawing us so closely to the characters that the blood and sweat they spill all but splashes in our faces. There needs to be a visceral level to the process: a rogue film will fail in its endeavor if it keeps the audience at a distance, and while it is not a distinction we have drawn yet, if we wanted to demarcate the difference between rogue and avant garde cinema, which can often be quite brutal in what it portrays, this could be a point of demarcation. Avant garde cinema engages its audience almost purely on an intellectual level: it is nearly impossible to become emotionally invested in an avant garde film. Jodorowsky and Makavejev accomplished this through shocking imagery that also carried a greater symbolic weight to it while von Trier's key was in his style and characterization. Now contrast this with a film like Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad*, a film whose highly artificial dialogue and deliberate overacting create characters who are more bizarre and alien than human. Regardless of the approach, the effect is the same: if the filmmaker wishes to draw us into a trap, then they must

set out bait to snare us with and it is rogue films, more than the avant-garde, that set out the bait for us.

It would be unfair to Herzog to put the burden of this responsibility entirely on his method though, we cannot also discount the central performance of Klaus Kinski, whose descent into madness is almost logical and methodical. We see him first trying to manipulate the decisions of Ursula before outright usurping him and then slowly becoming convinced not only of the untold riches that await him but that he is “the wrath of God,” i.e.: that he is operating through divine power and that his actions are sanctioned by God. This belief is one of the many targets that Herzog aims for with his film: even in this country we do not have to look back very far in our history to recall a president who believed that his actions were sanctioned by God and whose idolaters fiercely defended him with their claims that the President of the United States is chosen not by the voting process but by God Himself (a belief that rather mysteriously vanished from the public consciousness the second an African-American Democrat was elected President). When we consider the film through this framework we can also see that Herzog’s decision to build the central theme of his film around such an old trope as the voyage into the heart of darkness was quite a brilliant one. Rather than addressing a kairic moment, Herzog built a metaphor here that reinvents itself for every new kairic moment that arises.

This may seem like a roundabout way of saying that he attempted to make a timeless film, but there’s more to it than that⁴⁴. I argued in the previous chapter that von Trier, as a truly rogue filmmaker, was forced to create systems for himself to rebel against when none would present themselves to him. We can see a similar mentality at work in Herzog with the difference that, rather than creating systems to fight against, Herzog is interested instead in picking at the

⁴⁴ Though I certainly do not want to imply that the other films we’ve looked at here are dated or doomed to the dustbin of history. The history of film and literature is littered with classics that moved beyond their kairic moment and whose politics have little to no referent in our world.

fabrics of our culture, looking for places where he can unravel our fantasies and delusions (and here we could apply any of the critical frameworks that have been the motif of this dissertation: forcing us to confront truths we do not want to face, approaching the kernel of the Real, etc.) and, while I've made clear that madness and extreme behavior is the overarching motif of Herzog's work, the context in which he explores these motifs varies widely. In other words, Herzog is a filmmaker who is interested in showing us the madness that lies beneath the shining exterior of our culture, wherever that madness may be exposed. Since one of the fundamental questions of this work is what motivates a rogue filmmaker, we can glean yet another insight into that question here: a rogue filmmaker is someone who is driven to do whatever is necessary to shatter our ideological fantasies and if they can do so within an oppressive ideological system (Jodorowsky, Makavejev) they will create the system to rebel against (von Trier) and if they are unwilling or unable to do that, they will go out into the wilderness in search of whatever madness we choose to ignore.

But we have digressed so far and have left behind Aguirre without answering a key question: how does the audience identify with him? Much like in Jodorowsky's films, it is easier to see Aguirre more as a symbol than a character, but there is one way in which we can identify with him and that is, strangely enough, through the sheer predictability of his character arc. Let's recall that in *The Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke, when introducing rhetoric as identification to us, argued first that there is an involuntary element to this identification in the form of pattern recognition: in other words, we identify with a pattern we recognize regardless of whether we agree with the sentiment simply out of an innate desire to see the pattern completed. We can see how this idea can be applied to characterization in the form of archetypes (because what is an archetype but a pattern being traced out again before us). As soon as we catch on to the pattern

of the film (Aguirre's descent into madness) we desire to see the pattern fulfilled. This desire to finish out the pattern can also be thought of as the bait for Herzog's own sadistic trap but before we can understand the trap that awaits us at the end of the destination, we have to explore the journey a bit more first.

Aguirre is not just a film about madness in the heart of darkness, this is also a film about civilization and the demarcation between the "civilized" world of the conquistadors and the "savages" who they seek to rule over. The Spaniards, as white Catholic explorers, are of course incontrovertibly convinced of their own superiority and are utterly shameless in using their sense of superiority to enact every form of barbarism on their non-white subjects that they can muster. This as a concept is nothing new, but it is in the details that Herzog's own take on this dichotomy excels. There is first the underlying absurdity that Herzog exposes in his depiction of the relationship between Westerners and natives. Consider the scene when the conquistadors, as a means of rewarding a native who helped them on their journey, present him with a Bible as a reward. When he expresses his confusion as to what this object is, they explain to him that through it he can hear the voice of God. The native then puts the Bible up to his ear to listen and when he does so, they declare him a blasphemer and execute him on the spot. Then there is the flute-playing slave who accompanies them on the journey downriver who, no matter what catastrophe is befalling the expedition, is always ordered to play music for them. Many of the most high tension scenes: the expedition encountering starvation, the power plays, the zealotry and the madness, are played out to the accompaniment of this flautist playing and dancing in the background.

This kind of post-colonial critique of the barbarism of European explorers and colonists was not all that bold a statement even in 1972. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* had been

published thirteen years prior but even in the world of cinema we had by this time seen films like *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and *Little Big Man* (1970) (which cast a critical eye on treatments of Native Americans) as well as the rise of “3rd world” filmmakers like Ousmane Sembene, Satyajit Ray and Lino Brocka, who had turned a critical eye to influence of Western civilization on their respective cultures. What sets Herzog’s vision apart is this lens of existential absurdity that he frames the Westerner/Native dichotomy with. Given the utmost gravitas with which the subject is usually handled, it is a bit jarring to see post-colonialism handled with such absurdity.

However, this is not something to condemn Herzog for, because in a true Existentialist fashion, the absurdity of the treatment of natives is not a subject he makes light of but rather views as arbitrary suffering, lives taken or destroyed by the whims of a madman who one hapless slave is expected to provide a soundtrack for. In this sense, Existentialism is a philosophy well suited for the rogue mentality, since it is a philosophy that works hard to banish illusion and fantasy (and were it not so incompatible with rhetorical theory, could have formed a fourth leg of my theoretical framework).

However, the natives enslaved by the Conquistadors are only part of the equation. The rest of the natives are an off-screen presence: a constant threat looming in the bush, rarely witnessed except for some fleeting glimpses and brief exchanges. Most of the time the only evidence of their existence is the constant barrage of arrows that they rain down on the expedition. In essence, they are Das Ding (The Thing), the embodiment of our fear of confronting what lies beyond the fabric of our ideological framework (*Sublime Object*, 146)⁴⁵.

While starvation, murder and the dangers of the river kill off much of the expedition, the ultimate threat (and the one that finally wipes out the last few survivors except Aguirre) are the natives

⁴⁵ In his explication of Das Ding, Zizek provides us with a rather useful cinematic reference: “the term Thing is to be taken here with all the connotations it possesses in the domain of horror science fiction: the ‘alien’ from the film of the same name is a pre-symbolic, maternal Thing par excellence.” (146)

who fight back, who are “untamed” by Western suppression and therefore immune to their influence. Aguirre fantasizes of El Dorado (which we should be clear is not just a fantasy in the sense that El Dorado is not real but also a fantasy in the sense that the city of gold that Aguirre wishes to rule over is the embodiment of the colonialist fantasy of the New World as a source of wealth and power) but the natives represent the reality of the expedition: death for forcing their way into territory both real and metaphysical in which they do not belong and for which they are not equipped to survive.

The last scene of the film sees Aguirre alone on the raft, the last of his crew dead from a barrage of arrows, including his beloved daughter who, by the end of the film, is the last person for whom he continued to find any real emotion. The raft has been overtaken by monkeys, who Aguirre treats as though they were his subjects, demanding loyalty from them and declaring: in the film’s final monologue (delivered while grasping one of the monkeys in his fist as it fights to escape):

When we reach the sea, we will build a bigger ship, and sail north to take Trinidad from the Spanish crown. From there we'll sail on and take Mexico from Cortes. What great treachery that will be! Then all of New Spain will be ours, and we'll produce history as others produce plays. I, the Wrath of God, will marry my own daughter and with her I will found the purest dynasty the world has ever seen. Together, we shall rule this entire continent. We shall endure. I am the Wrath of God! Who else is with me?

Perhaps the most interesting component of this scene to note is the fact that Herzog populated the raft with monkeys: ie: an evolutionary regression from mankind. The trip then, is not just a descent into madness but also a descent into the worst savagery mankind is capable of. In one of his late documentaries, *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), which explores the people

and places of Antarctica, Herzog gives a lament, in discussion of the Shackleton expedition: “ is it too much to hope that we could have left one white space on the map?” Both there and here Herzog seems to be drawing a correlation between exploration and the demise of humanity, though in *Encounters at the End of the World* (a title that refers both the geographic extremes of Antarctica as well as a quite frankly misguided belief in the imminent demise of humanity) he draws this connection through the cheapening of exploration into a capitalist commodity but in *Aguirre* the correlation is in this regression, in the loss of humanity that comes about through the obsession with an ideological fantasy (whose central metaphor is in the search for El Dorado). This last monologue is the point in the film at which Aguirre is at his most delusional (his scheme to conquer New Spain as well as his belief that he is the wrath of God) as well as his most savage (incest with his recently deceased daughter, ironically to serve the function of creating a pure, perfect strain of humanity) both of which stem from becoming so lost in the ideological fantasy that any sense of reality becomes lost (and I will remind you here of the tenuous line this film draws between fiction and reality).

To put it in the simplest terms possible, the fundamental argument of the film (and what makes it a rogue film) is in the idea that a refusal to confront the Real comes with a loss of humanity, with the journey into the Amazon serving as the metaphor for this correlation (and on a dual level, of course, since the journey being taken is both real and fictional). Aguirre became lost in delusions of power and propriety and found himself alone on the Amazon river, ruling over a raft of monkeys. By extension then, we in the audience should take heed that similarly delving into the realm of ideological fantasy will lead to our own destruction (and one need only look as far as Nazism for a real world example of this). In this sense then, *Aguirre* may be the one rogue film that has ever argued for its own viewing: since the forced confrontation with the

Real is one of the most fundamental values of rogue cinema. If an unexamined life is not worth living so too is an unexamined ideology not worth constructing a framework for.

Stroszek, or, the Chicken Who Doesn't Know Why He Must Dance

For *Stroszek*, Herzog takes an entirely different approach to an exploration of madness, this time not with the scene but with the agent. Herzog cast the enigmatic Bruno S. (whose last name was kept secret from the public) in two of his films because of some *je ne sais quoi* that Herzog saw in Bruno S.'s own madness. He was the son of a prostitute who was abandoned as a child and who spent much of his youth (under Nazi rule) being shuttled around from one insane asylum to the other until he was dumped on the streets at twenty-three to fend for himself.

Herzog discovered him playing accordion on a street corner and saw a parallel between Bruno's life and that of the infamous Kaspar Hauser, a mysterious man who wandered into Nuremburg in May of 1828 who was only capable of speaking a single sentence ("I want to be a gallant rider like my father was before me"). As he was taken in by the townspeople and educated, he began to describe a life of being kept in a dark room and never let out until one day he was suddenly released without explanation and sent into town. That he was later stabbed to death under highly mysterious circumstances only deepens the mystery around him, and to this day Kaspar Hauser's life, origins and death remain deeply shrouded in mystery.

In *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* Herzog saw an opportunity not to answer any of these questions but to explore the nature of civilization through an outsider who is incapable of understanding it (and indeed one of the overarching motifs of the film is the sheer futility on the part of the scholars and intellectuals to provide any sort of "explanation" for Hauser). Hauser's inability to comprehend the intricacies of polite society and intellectual thought serve to shed

light on their absurdity. The scene that perhaps best emphasizes this is when a visiting professor poses a classic logic riddle to Hauser to determine whether or not Hauser is capable of employing logical thought. The riddle goes that there are two villages, one where the inhabitants always tell the truth and another where they always lie. Standing outside of the crossroads of these two villages, you encounter a resident of one but you are only allowed to ask one question to determine which of the villages the person is from. Hauser is unable to answer, at which point the professor explains that the only logical answer is to ask a question in a double negative, which would force a liar to tell the truth of his location. "I know another question," Hauser says after the explanation, "I should ask the man whether he is a tree frog." Hauser then explains with infallible logic that a man from the truth village would say he is not a tree frog while a man from the lying village would claim that he is. The professor, however, rejects this answer because it was not deduced logically, though of course it is the sly creativity of Hauser that gains the audiences' respect over the narrow-minded analytics of the professor.

The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, however, while it is a fine film, is not a rogue one. Though Herzog's use of Hauser as a foil to the arrogance of his audience (the audience within the film that is, which is to say the townspeople and the bevy of scientists, professors and noblemen who take an interest in him) was clever and creative, the very concept of the film is in itself working in support of an ideological fantasy (the wealthy and privileged as the embodiment of the ignorant and arrogant who think they are the wisest of all people, with Hauser as the embodiment of the uneducated fool whose instincts and common sense overrule the book learning of his observers at every turn). While I have been forthright from the beginning about the nebulous nature of what can and cannot be considered a rogue film, I have already posited

that films that uphold ideological fantasies, even subversive, anti-establishment fantasies, fail to meet one of the most fundamental tenets of rogue cinema.

Stroszek, on the other hand, possesses far more of the qualities of rogue cinema than *Kaspar Hauser*. Where Hauser's naivete pokes fun at upper crust pomposity, Bruno Stroszek's (Bruno S., in an even more autobiographical role than that of Kaspar Hauser) naivete consistently makes him the victim of the worst of society. Though there is no connection between the films other than Herzog's decision to cast Bruno S. in the lead in both films (and therefore inevitably leads to two fairly similar characters) the two films can easily be seen as companion pieces to each other. Bruno Stroszek is essentially a modern Kaspar Hauser, though one who is lacking in the saving grace of Hauser's wit and resourcefulness. Where Hauser learns to manage in the world he is introduced into, at least for awhile, all Stroszek is able to do is survive, and barely so at that. And, like with *Aguirre*, we must explore the question of how the "reality" behind the film becomes a part of the world of the film.

There is of course the autobiographical component of the film (though in all fairness it should be noted that Bruno S.'s resourcefulness was far more akin to Hauser than Stroszek), but, like with *Aguirre*, there is also the additional component of location. The focus of the narrative in *Stroszek* is on Bruno, his lover and a former prostitute Eva (Eva Mattes) and an eccentric, elderly neighbor Scheitz (Clemens Scheitz)⁴⁶ deciding to relocate to America after a violent encounter with Eva's former pimps. Bruno has just been released from prison and is told before he leaves that he must not touch alcohol anymore because it causes him to do bad things ("around and around" Bruno keeps shouting as he is lectured on how he must not get caught in

⁴⁶ We must be careful with the correlations between names and characters in this film. Bruno S. does indeed play the very autobiographical character of Bruno Stroszek but Eva Mattes and Clemens Scheitz were both professional actors who both had a long list of credits before filming *Stroszek*. Therefore, trying to draw correlations between their real names and the names of their characters is dangerous territory, though we may be able to attribute it to a desire for consistency on the part of Herzog.

the cycle of addiction or he will find himself back in prison. This theme of circles will reappear often in the film). Naturally, the first place Stroszek goes after leaving prison is the nearest bar, where he sees Eva being abused by her pimps and takes her home. The pimps, however, find out where he lives and begins to torment not only Eva but Bruno as well, thus prompting their decision to go with Scheitz to America. Herzog keeps everything in this act quite close to the reality of Bruno S.' life. They filmed the apartment scenes in his actual apartment, with a baby grand at the center that Bruno S. bought with the money he made from Kaspar Hauser and which he lovingly fawns over (as it was also in reality his most prized possession). While I have argued already for the layers of meaning that knowing the backstory behind Herzog's films adds to them, even these details may seem a bit pedantic to those in accord with me. I would certainly argue that knowing the real story of Bruno S. is essential to understanding the significance of this film but certainly the film can be appreciated without knowing that that really is his apartment and that really is his piano, and he really is playing it, but they are small details in a larger point that is of value: *Stroszek* is a film that, while absolutely a work of fiction, sticks very close to the life of Bruno S. It is not an autobiography but we can certainly think of it as a film about things that could have happened to Bruno S. had certain events come to happen in his life.

The three of them settle down with the help of Scheitz' nephew in Railroad Flats, Wisconsin, a fictionalized name, but the town where they shot these scenes was Plainview, home of the infamous serial killer Ed Gein (no direct mention of this is made in the film but shortly after their arrival in town Scheitz' nephew tells them that there have been four murders in the town and he believes there may have been a fifth because of a missing farmer), where culture shock, mounting debt and the crumbling relationships between the three cause Bruno to undergo a meltdown. In this sense the film also bears some resemblance to *Dancer in the Dark*, though it

should be noted that unlike von Trier, who has been much criticized for critiquing American culture in his films despite the fact that he has never travelled here, Herzog filmed the American portions of *Stroszek* on location in Plainfield Wisconsin. In contrast to von Trier, Herzog's belief in the "voodoo of location" lends his work the ethos that von Trier's can be said to lack.

Another pivotal element that makes this film work though is Bruno S.' performance, which is arguably unlike anything in the history of cinema (excepting *Kaspar Hauser* of course). Bruno's bizarre mannerisms, his unpredictable movements, the erratic delivery of his lines, all of them are things that stem from a lifetime of psychological abuse. He is essentially not acting in this film but rather behaving as himself. Consider a scene that comes well into their time in Wisconsin, after the disappointment and disillusion with America has set in. Bruno sits at the table with Eva, in front of them an artist's dummy whose arms and legs Bruno has contorted into a circle. He explains to Eva:

Bruno: Here you see a schematic model I have made of how it looks inside Bruno.

They're closing all the doors on him, and oh, so, politely. Now we're in America and I thought everything would be better and we'd reach our goal. But no. Bruno's getting pushed aside as if he didn't exist. You act as if you don't know me anymore.

Eva: Nobody kicks you here.

Bruno: No, not physically. Here they do it spiritually.

Eva: What do you mean?

Bruno: In the reformatory it was just like here. If someone wet his bed, this was under the Nazis, instead of hanging the sheet on the clothesline, they used to make the person who did it, stand holding it up like this all day (Bruno stands and outstretches his arms) and the teacher would stand behind him with a stick. And boy, if his arms started getting

tired from standing so long he got a beating...They hurt you physically then. Today they do it differently. They don't go like this (imitates swinging a club) or like this (imitates it again). They do it ever so politely, and with a smile. It's much worse...

There is an autobiographical component to this narrative in the fact that Bruno S. was committed to a psychiatric ward as a child during the Nazi regime and he is in fact recalling his experiences from those days in this scene. This brings an authenticity to his anguish which, coupled with the complete inconsistency in tone with which he delivers it (sometimes he shouts, sometimes he whispers, and there is no rationale for why he does one or the other) would lend a surreal effect to the performance except that we, knowing the nature of Bruno S., are aware of its authenticity. This is especially true when we add the bizarre explanation of the artist's dummy (formed into a circle, it should be noted) on top of it, which cannot necessarily be attributed to the script because this particular speech was largely improvised. No classically trained actor could have given this performance and no scriptwriter, no matter how rogue, could have conjured up this dialogue quite how Bruno delivers it. Bruno S.' authenticity is essential to the meaning of the film because of the dual reality it creates (akin to the dual reality created by the journey down the Amazon in *Aguirre*). We watch the behavior and decisions of Stroszek aware of how close to the bone the performance is, aware of how easily a similar situation could unfold (an immigrant moving to America only to see his life fall apart) were someone like Bruno S. to actually make his way to America. But it is also because this is how we most strongly identify with the film. His disillusionment and the painful memories it dredges up for him addresses us on a personal level (since many can share in this feeling) and on an ideological level, since his disillusionment also stems from the false promise of the immigrant experience.

The above exchange comes after a man from the bank tells them that they are in danger of losing their trailer home because they are behind on the payments. Eva, already working as a waitress (and the only one who speaks English), begins prostituting herself again to make ends meet for them, but when she leaves Bruno to travel to Canada with one of the truckers, Bruno and Scheitz are left alone with no way to pay the bills and with no way to understand the banker when he comes to explain to them that their home is going to be repossessed. Left destitute, Bruno, with Scheitz as his accomplice, finally lashes out in one of the most bizarre finales ever put on film. Bruno and Scheitz drive to a barbershop with a shotgun and rob the place and then run across the street to the grocery store to go shopping, where Scheitz is apprehended but Bruno, who was in a different aisle, is not. Bruno then makes his way to the repair shop Scheitz' nephew owns and steals the tow truck and drives off down the highway.

After a long, quiet montage of Bruno driving the truck overheats outside of a Native-American owned restaurant and gift shop. He takes a seat at a table with a stranger and the scene cuts to the stranger responding to a speech from Bruno that we do not hear: "so, your car is kaput, your girlfriend's gone and your house is sold, (then in German) I wouldn't worry about it." Bruno agrees, the two toast and Bruno leaves, goes back to the truck, starts it back up and drives it in a circle, then jumps out to leave it running, driverless, in a continuous circle. He then goes across the street to a ski lift (which is not in operation because there is no snow on the ground). Inside are a number of performing animals in cages (dancing chicken, piano playing chicken, etc.). Bruno turns on the electricity to their cages, which allows them to begin performing their routines. He then turns on the ski lift and rides it around endlessly (and, ironically, the seat he sits in has a sign on the back that says "is this really me?"). Eventually the truck bursts into flames and the police and fire arrive. We hear one of the officers report back to

dispatch: “We have a 10-80 out here, a truck on fire, we have a man on the lift. We are unable to find the switch to turn the lift off, can't stop the dancing chickens. Send an electrician, we're standing by. Over.” We then cut to a montage of the dancing chicken repeatedly performing his dance and then going over to the side of the cage that has the string he pulls to start the music he dances to over so that he can begin his routine again. We cut briefly to some of the other animals performing their routines (a duck that plays drums, a rabbit who operates a fire truck siren) before cutting back to the dancing chicken and fading to black.

What are we to make of an ending like this? I have spoken, in many of the films we've looked at here, of the sadistic trap and how the director will punish us by realizing our desires. While it is not a universal truism of rogue cinema, rogue films that do not employ the sadistic trap are few and far between. Does Herzog spring a sadistic trap on us with this finale? To answer that question we have to ask what desire, what will-to-enjoy, that Herzog may have aroused in us. There is first the tricky matter of the antagonist, which is the most common way for a director to arouse the will-to-enjoy through our desire to see them punished for their transgressions. However, the only antagonists in any traditional sense in this film are the two pimps, who disappear after the first act. There is no kind of retribution brought upon them other than in the simple fact of the three of them escaping their reach by fleeing to America. In America, we could potentially see the banker as an antagonist, but he is doing nothing wrong in coming to them to discuss catching up on payments or in repossessing their home, the latter of which is difficult to even argue as legally right ethically wrong since they were in fact behind on their payments and had no intention to catch up. We could more reasonably make the argument that it is our culture and society that is at fault in this film, since these are what failed Bruno and Scheitz, but this film is not the scathing condemnation of American culture that *Dancer in the*

Dark is (a perfect film to compare *Stroszek* to). The next step then is to say that Bruno, Eva and Scheitz brought their situation on to themselves (though Eva compounded the sufferings of Bruno and Scheitz by abandoning them) and yet Bruno is a deeply sympathetic character and by the end we pity him.

There is then no will-to-enjoy and yet the ending is a sort of trap sprung at the end in that the movie frustrates any desire for a resolution. We as the audience do feel for Bruno and we want him to be happy but we are denied any possibility of happiness, yet neither does Herzog confront us with the kind of despair von Trier gives us at the end of *Dancer in the Dark*. Instead we are left with circles, a truck that circles until it explodes, a ski lift that circles and cannot be turned off, animals that perform the same circular routine over and over again regardless of whether they have an audience. The animals do not know why they must dance, they only know there is a routine they are supposed to go through (“around and around” Bruno told us at the beginning, “around and around.”) From this conclusion it is quite easy to extract the larger motif: the dancing chicken is a stand in for Bruno, trapped in an endless cycle he cannot escape from because he is incapable of knowing that it is escapable in the first place.

We come then to a similar conclusion as the one we were brought to in *Aguirre*: Herzog is confronting us with a terrible Real (the plight of the mentally ill, crossed with the disillusion of the American Dream) but the great shock he provides us is not in confronting us with the terror of the Real but in confronting us with its absurdity. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Real is a source of fear and anxiety, which is why we are afraid to confront it, which is why rogue films tend to prompt such violent reactions from their audiences. Perhaps one of the things that Herzog’s films suggest is that we are afraid to confront the real, not because there is anything great and terrible we are masking with our ideological systems, but rather that behind them there

is only absurdity. There is an anecdote worth noting here that Herzog's crew was so disgusted by the dancing chicken that they refused to even be in the same room as it and Herzog was forced to shoot the footage of the dancing chicken himself. We must now ask: why were they so repulsed by the sight of the dancing chicken? The easy answer is animal abuse, which is also the easiest answer for any disgust the audience might feel at the sight of the dancing chicken. But if we mine a bit deeper into our disgust, can we not also detect a sense of fear that we see something of ourselves in the chicken? Is it unreasonable to say that we can identify with the chicken, share substance with it? Are we all just dancing chickens? I know; it is an utterly absurd question.

Conclusion: Bringing it All Together

This is only scratching the surface of rogue cinema; we have barely charted the already nebulous boundaries of the genre, but it is my hope that this work has done something to articulate the scope, range and effect of rogue cinema. And though the four filmmakers I focus on are quite diverse in their aesthetics and subject matter, I hope it has become clear that the one (probably the only) common ground that can be found among them is this question of transcendence that I have explored through all their work, the idea that each of them was trying to reach deeper than the shock value that rests on the surface. Whatever frame we use to try to define this transcendence, this for me will always remain the key to what makes a rogue film a rogue film and the key to understanding it as a genre regardless of whatever critical lens is used as the basis of discussion.

Two areas where I feel that my scope is inadequate is in exploring the history of rogue cinema and the full scope of its geographic range. History was simply not a factor in this analysis, though, as I stated before, the history of rogue cinema goes back well into the silent era. To my knowledge though, no attempt has ever been made to find the first rogue film. However, unlike in many genres, this may not actually be an exercise of much value, since rogue cinema is not beholden to a particular time and place, which makes tracing trends and patterns rather difficult.

The question of geography is of somewhat more value, as culture is a major component of defining a rogue film. Rogue cinema as I have discussed it here is predominantly found in

Europe, the US and East Asia, because cultural taboos in the rest of the world make pursuing these kinds of projects difficult if not impossible, but there are certainly exceptions (one of whom, Alejandro Jodorowsky, was part of the focus of this work), which makes the question of culture and rogue cinema an important one to explore. In that vein, I also briefly suggested earlier in this work that the rogueness of a film could be tied to the conservatism of the culture (as discussed with the films *Fire* and *Blue is the Warmest Color*), another factor that could potentially further complicate what is and is not a rogue film.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, a further development of rogue cinema needs to broaden its scope to beyond the rather narrow lens of my theoretical framework and the limited selection of filmmakers. Though I tried to provide as much diversity as I could in my selected filmmakers, the immense aesthetic and cultural variety of rogue filmmakers inevitably makes the process of narrowing it down to four excessively limited. And, since many rogue filmmakers exist on the fringes of the cinematic world, it is a valuable exercise just for the sake of shining a light on many overlooked and underappreciated filmmakers. This was part of my motive in including Jodorowsky and Makavejev in this work, but there are many other overlooked filmmakers who deserve more critical consideration than what they receive. But even more famous rogue filmmakers will still benefit from the new lens this can cast on their work.

If a discussion of genre functions as a point of departure for discussing the larger ideas of a film, then hopefully this work will provide a similar point of departure for a discussion of rogue cinema as a genre and how it can continue to shape our perception of the art of cinema. There is much work still to be done.

Works Cited

- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. 2nd. Ed. Trans. George A. Kennedy. Oxford University Press: New York, 2007. Print.
- Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and Its Double*. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. Grove Press: New York, 1958. Print.
- Bachmann, Gideon. "The Man on the Volcano: A Portrait of Werner Herzog." *Film Quarterly*, 31.1 (1977). 2-10. Web. 5 January 2012.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Trans. Caryl Emerson. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984. Web. 30 April 2014.
- Berardinelli, James. *Manderlay* (Review). *Reelreviews.com*. Web. 2 July 2013.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge: New York, 1994. Web. 16 August 2013.
- Blakesley, David. *The Elements of Dramatism*. AB Longman: New York, 2002. Print.
- Blakesley, David (Ed.). *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*. Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, 2003. Print.
- Blank, Les. *Burden of Dreams*. Criterion, 1982.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays*. Ed. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, 2006. Web. 07 June 2013.
- . *A Grammar of Motives*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1969. Print.
- . *Language as Symbolic Action*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1966. Print.
- . *A Rhetoric of Motives*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1969. Print.
- . *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1973. Print.
- Cobb, Ben. *Anarchy and Alchemy: The Films of Alejandro Jodorowsky*. Creation Books: New York, 2007. Print.
- Denby, David. "Back in the Bunker." *New Yorker* 14 February 2005. Web. 07 June 2013.

- Ebert, Roger. *Great Movies III*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 2010. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *A History of Sexuality Volume 1*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vintage Books: New York, 1990.
- Foucault, Michel. *A History of Sexuality Volume 2*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vintage: New York, 1990.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1971. Print.
- Jacobellis v. Ohio (No. 11) 173 Ohio St. 22, 179 N.E.2d 777, reversed. law.cornell.edu. Web. 7 January 2013.
- Kendrick, James. "Holy Mountain" (Review). Qnetwork.com, Web. 22 July 2013
- . "Sweet Movie" (Review). QNetwork.com. Web. 06 August 2013.
- Kenneally, Christopher. *Side by Side*. Company Films, 2012. Film.
- Khamsi, Roxanne. "Russian Speakers Get the Blues." New Scientist. Reed Business Information, n. d. Web. 10 January 2014.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press, Boston: 1994. Print.
- Mortimer, Lorraine. *Terror and Joy: The Films of Dusan Makavejev*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2009. Web. 7 November 2012.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Oxford University Press: New York, 1999. 833-44. Web. 7 January 2012.
- Nelson, Victoria. "The New Expressionism: Why the Bells Ring in Breaking the Waves." *Salmagundi*. 116/117 (1997) 228-237. Web. 17 November 2012.
- Neustadt, Robert. "Alejandro Jodorowsky: Reiterating Chaos, Rattling the Cage of Representation." *Chasqui: Revista de Literatura Latinoamericana*. 26.1 (1997). 56-74. Web. 4 November 2012.
- Null, Christopher. "Sweet Movie" (Review). AMC Film Critic: 22 December 2000. Web. 06 August 2013.
- Powers, Nina. "Blood and Sugar: The Films of Dusan Makavejev." *Film Quarterly* 63.3 (2010). 42-51. Web. 4 November 2012.
- Silver, Judith. "Movie Day at the Supreme Court or 'I Know It When I See It': A History of the Definition of Obscenity." Findlaw.com. n.d. Web. 7 January 2013.

- Simons, Jan. *Playing the Waves: Lars von Trier's Game Cinema*. Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2007. Web. 17 November 2012.
- Simons, Jan. "Von Trier's Cinematic Games." *Journal of Film and Video* 60.1 (2008). 3-13. Web. 17 November 2012.
- Sipiora, Philip. "The Phenomenological Quest of Stanley Kubrick: *Eyes Wide Shut*." *Stanley Kubrick: Essays on his Film and Legacy*. Rhodes, Gary (ed.) McFarland: Jefferson, 2010. Print.
- Sterritt, David. "Sweet Movie: Wake Up!" *The Criterion Collection*: 18 June 2007. Web. 06 August 2013. <http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/487-sweet-movie-wake-up>
- Stevens, Dana. "Back on the Plantation." *Slate.com* 27 January 2006. Web. 19 June 2013.
- Taylor, Rumsey. "Sweet Movie" (Review). *Not Coming to a Theater Near You*: 11 July 2004. Web. 06 August 2011. <http://www.notcoming.com/reviews/sweetmovie/>
- Thomsen, Bovil Marie Stavning. "Antichrist - Chaos Reigns: the event of violence and the haptic image in Lars von Trier's film." *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*. Vol. 1 (2009). 1-10. Web. 18 November 2012.
- Vice, Jeff. "Film Review: Holy Mountain Thumbs Nose at Staid Audience." *Deseretnews.com*. Web. 22 July 2013.
- Walters, Tim. "Reconsidering The Idiots: Dogme95, Lars von Trier, and the Cinema of Subversion?" *Velvet Light Trap*. 53.1 (2004). Web. 18 November 2012.
- Young, Vernon. "Much Madness: Werner Herzog and the New German Cinema." *The Hudson Review* 30.3 (1977). 409-414. Web. 5 January 2012
- Zizek, Slavoj. *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*. Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, Seattle: 2000. Print.
- . *Enjoy Your Symptom!*. Routledge Classics, New York: 2008. Print.
- . "In His Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large." *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. Verso, Brooklyn: 2010. Print.
- . *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. MIT Press, Boston: 1998. Print.
- . *The Plague of Fantasies*. Verso, Brooklyn: 2008. Print.
- . *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso, Brooklyn: 2008. Print.

Appendix: The Dogme 95 Manifesto and the Vow of Chastity

The DOGMA 95 Manifesto

DOGMA 95 is a collection of film directors founded in Copenhagen in spring 1995.

DOGMA 95 has the expressed goal of countering "certain tendencies" in the cinema today.

DOGMA 95 is a rescue action!

In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple that washed ashore and turned to muck.

Slogans of individualism and freedom created works for a while, but no changes. The wave was up for grabs, like the directors themselves. The wave was never stronger than the men behind it. The anti-bourgeois cinema itself became bourgeois, because the foundations upon which its theories were based was the bourgeois perception of art. The auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby... false!

To DOGMA 95 cinema is not individual!

Today a technological storm is raging, the result of which will be the ultimate democratization of the cinema. For the first time, anyone can make movies. But the more accessible the medium becomes, the more important the avant-garde. It is no accident that the phrase "avant-garde" has military connotations. Discipline is the answer... we must put our films into uniform, because the individual film will be decadent by definition!

DOGMA 95 counters the individual film by the principle of presenting an indisputable set of rules known as The Vow of Chastity.

In 1960 enough was enough! The movie had been cosmeticized to death, they said; yet since then the use of cosmetics has exploded.

The "supreme" task of the decadent film-makers is to fool the audience. Is that what we are so proud of? Is that what the "100 years" have brought us? Illusions via which emotions can be communicated?... By the individual artist's free choice of trickery?

Predictability (dramaturgy) has become the golden calf around which we dance. Having the characters' inner lives justify the plot is too complicated, and not "high art". As never before, the superficial action and the superficial movie are receiving all the praise.

The result is barren. An illusion of pathos and an illusion of love.

To DOGMA 95 the movie is not illusion!

Today a technological storm is raging of which the result is the elevation of cosmetics to God. By using new technology anyone at any time can wash the last grains of truth away in the deadly embrace of sensation. The illusions are everything the movie can hide behind.

DOGMA 95 counters the film of illusion by the presentation of an indisputable set of rules know as THE VOW OF CHASTITY

THE VOW OF CHASTITY

I swear to submit to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by DOGMA 95:

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)
3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted.
4. The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera.)
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
10. The director must not be credited.

Furthermore I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a "work", as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations.

Thus I make my VOW OF CHASTITY.

Copenhagen, Monday 13 March 1995

On behalf of DOGMA 95

Lars von Trier Thomas Vinterberg