

THE THEOLOGICAL POWER OF FILM

EMBODIMENT, TIME, AND THE WORK OF ANDREI TARKOVSKY

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to the interdisciplinary study of theology and film. It recognises that the prevailing methodologies in this study seldom prioritise questions about the formal properties of cinema as an artistic medium, and so overlook several productive and substantial questions for the theologian: What theology and theological practice does cinematic art give rise to? What are the perceptual and affective potentials of film for theology, and what, if anything, is theological about the cinematic medium itself? In condensing and synthesising these inquiries, I offer this central research question: What is the theological power of film? By prioritising these questions, this thesis engages in theological-cinematic analysis which aims to render a properly theological account of the medium of film. This account constitutes a shift away from the 'textual' analysis of film, towards an 'experiential' analysis of the art form itself. As such, this is not a matter of 'applying' theological concepts to film. Rather, 'the theological power of film' designates the medium's power to express, signify, prime and perform certain conceptual and theological practices. In this way, the film experience is the proper subject of an inquiry into the theological power of film, and so this thesis adopts a phenomenological method, drawing on a major project of recent cinematic theory: film-phenomenology. Foregrounding the body in the film experience through the Merleau-Pontian concept of the body-subject, I argue for an understanding of cinema as a haptic and somatic medium of perception-cum-expression. The embodied nature of the art form also reveals the distinct temporality of film, for our embodied being in the world is indissolubly connected with our being in time. The films and writings of Andrei Tarkovsky emerge as the fulcrum of my response, as his work becomes a singular illustration of the theological power of film.

LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to render a properly theological account of cinematic art. That is to say, it does not try to ‘apply’ theological concepts to film, or to transpose elements of cinematic theory superficially into theological discourse, but instead to engage the theology and theological practices that cinematic art itself gives rise to. I argue that film is a fundamentally embodied art form, a haptic and somatic medium of perception-cum-expression. This, combined with the distinct temporal aesthetic of film invests cinema with profound theological potentials. In this thesis I explore these potentials through theological-cinematic analysis, emphasising the concepts and practices of encounter, attentiveness, contemplation, and participation, as well as three intimately connected doctrines of Christian theology: creation, incarnation, and eschatology.

Interdisciplinary research in theology and film has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. Several dedicated monographs and edited volumes have emerged,¹ as well as a number of journals specifically devoted to the field.² Some major theological journals have even run special issues in the area, a recent example of which is the 2017 issue of *Religions*: ‘Film and Lived Theology’. At the same time, many major theologians and philosophers have engaged film in their writings, most notably Stephen Mulhall, Catherine Pickstock, Gerard Loughlin, and Graham Ward.³

¹ To name only a few: *Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (eds. Anthony Clarke & Paul Fiddes), *Explorations in Theology and Film* (eds. Clive Marsh & Gaye Ortiz), *Reel Spirituality* and *Reframing Theology and Film* (both by Robert K. Johnston). The work of Christopher Deacy (which is treated at various points in this thesis) has also been influential in recent years.

² See, for instance, *The Journal for Religion, Film and Media* (JRFM) and *Journal of Religion and Film*.

³ Mulhall has published extensively on film and philosophy (including his treatment of Ridley Scott’s *Alien* films in *On Film*). Gerard Loughlin’s seminal book *Alien Sex* engages these films as well, but it also offers a profound interpretation of film, desire and embodiment, engaging the art form itself with a genuinely interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis. Meanwhile, theologians like Ward and Pickstock engage with cinematic art at various points in their work, exploring the concepts arising from the art form in order to elucidate their theological projects (for example with Ward’s treatment of *Metropolis* in his book *Cities of God*).

Nonetheless, this particular field of theological inquiry is still a developing field, finding its niche within the interdisciplinary context of theology and the arts, as well as in the wider sphere of modern systematic theology. Above all, genuinely interdisciplinary studies of theology and film remain rare, because few studies engage in truly interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis. That is to say, very few studies treat film and film theory with the same care or expertise that they bring to their theological discourse. Moreover, few studies render a properly theological account of the medium of film itself. The majority of research engages film by ‘applying’ theological concepts to cinematic art, perhaps offering a particular reading of a film or director in light of a specific theological theme or trope. While such interpretations are indeed valuable, this thesis begins by arguing that other productive and substantial questions remain largely unasked: What theology and theological practice does cinematic art give rise to? What are the perceptual and affective potentials of film for theology, and what, if anything, is theological about the cinematic medium itself? In condensing and synthesising these inquiries, I offer this central research question: What is the theological power of film?

By this phrase, and specifically by the word ‘power’, I do not intend to designate any political or socio-political connections, but rather to speak about the expressive, communicative, and experiential properties of film as an artistic medium. In other words, I use the phrase to designate the art form’s power to express, signify, prime and perform certain conceptual and theological practices. In this way, I am not setting out to provide theological readings of certain films and directors (though naturally these play an important part in this thesis, particularly through Tarkovsky). Rather, I will engage in theological-cinematic analysis which is its own conceptual practice.

I argue that such an analysis requires a methodological shift away from the ‘textual’ interpretations of certain films and directors, and towards the ‘experiential’ analysis of cinematic art. This is not to say, by any means, that theologians should abandon textual analysis of films and various directors’ oeuvres; rather, it is a question of priority and a matter of offering a different extension of theological engagement with the art form. This is not completely new territory; Susan Sontag’s essay ‘Spiritual style in the films of Robert Bresson’ constitutes a formal analysis of certain theological practices that the cinema gives rise to. Likewise, Paul Schrader’s *Transcendental Style in Film* represents one of the first major works of film theory to explore the theological potential of cinematic art according to form and style, rather than exclusively according to thematic and narrative content. Yet both Sontag and Schrader approach this issue from the realm of filmic and literary criticism. As such, although the work of both is important for the theologian, each neglects the theological care and expertise necessary for a satisfactory response to the question at hand. Moreover, as long the majority of theologians continue to approach film by prioritising an analysis of narrative and thematic content, properly theological accounts of cinematic art will remain rare.

This thesis is divided into two parts: **Part One** first approaches the question of how theological-cinematic analysis should proceed, before coming to several vital conclusions about the theological power of film; **Part Two** focuses on three intimately connected doctrines of Christian theology (creation, incarnation, and eschatology), in order to explore the theology and theological practices which cinematic art gives rise to.

I begin, in **Chapter I**, with an analysis and critique of Paul Schrader’s *Transcendental*

Style in Film, because it constitutes an attempt to examine the theological potentials of film in the very manner that I have set out above. In other words, although he does not use the phrase, Schrader's theory attempts to articulate something important about the theological power of film. However, although Schrader's project is constructed in a similar methodological vein to that which I advocate, prioritising questions of form and style over narrative and thematic content, *Transcendental Style in Film* makes certain theological mistakes that render it insufficient overall. In particular, Schrader relies on the affective theology of Rudolf Otto, often reproducing Otto's ideas uncritically and without nuance. As a result, Schrader ends up articulating a technical 'disparity' between the everyday reality of human being in the world and disclosure of the divine. This 'disparity' represents a problematic dichotomy of transcendence and immanence, which fails to recognise the theological significance of creation by imposing a 'vertical' hierarchy of transcendence on our experience in the world. Despite these theological inadequacies, the intuitions at the foundation of Schrader's theory remain valuable, and so the chapter concludes by recognising the need to seek a correction to Schrader's theory. I introduce sacramental theology (particularly through the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet) in order to guide this correction and to open up more sophisticated theologies of creation, participation, transcendence and immanence.

Chapter II begins by pursuing this correction further, developing the previous chapter's critique of Schrader and his over-reliance on the affective experience of film in dialogue with phenomenology. First, after introducing the phenomenological method through a comparison of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I raise the question of affective experience of God. In short, can theologians reliably treat the appearance of affective phenomena in the terms of religious experience? Jean-

Yves Lacoste, and especially his monograph *The Appearing of God*, plays a pivotal role in this discussion. Next, drawing extensively on the work of Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and film-phenomenologists like Vivian Sobchack, this chapter takes leave of Schrader's theory in order to foreground the body and the concept of encounter within the film experience. The body becomes the essential category for interpreting filmic perception and expression, for cinematic art communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment. To put it in Merleau-Ponty's own terms, "the body is the vehicle of being in the world,"⁴ and the film experience is, of course, a mode of experience in and of the world. In the end, this chapter progresses this analysis in dialogue with film-phenomenology in order to conceptualise cinematic art as a theologically and phenomenologically significant encounter 'in the flesh'. This entails a radical reinterpretation of subjectivity and objectivity within cinematic art, which I conduct through Vivian Sobchack's understanding of filmic embodiment, captured by her conceptualisation of the film experience as "all viewers viewing."⁵

The centrality of embodiment in the film experience also entails a crucial temporal dimension, and **Chapter III** makes this connection, observing that the nature of human being in the world is also being in time. At this point, the films and writings of Andrei Tarkovsky emerge as the fulcrum of my response. Emphasising Tarkovsky's maxim that "time [...] is the supreme idea of cinema as an art,"⁶ this chapter begins its analysis by examining the various temporal structures and rubrics of the medium of film. Specifically, I discuss the various technical renderings and appropriations of time

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty [trans. Donald A. Landes], *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2012) p. 84.

⁵ Vivian Carol Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 5.

⁶ Ibid.

that are contingent on certain techniques of film editing (or indeed the deliberate lack of editing). In this way, this chapter engages time and film both through the role of the filmmaker(s) and through the role of the viewer in the film experience. The second half of this chapter engages two crucial studies of cinematic time, which were conducted only a year apart from one another and which have both proved extremely influential: Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (1985) and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time* (1986). Following on from this discussion, **Chapter IV** explores a particular valency of the theological power of film which emerges from the distinct temporality of the art form. For time invests cinema with a profound capacity for attentiveness and contemplation, the furthest possible extension of which is prayerfulness. In this chapter, I offer a conceptualisation of the cinematic gaze as "a long, loving look at the real,"⁷ which is drawn from Walter Burghardt's theology of contemplation. Emphasising Tarkovsky's unique renderings of time (particularly in dialogue with Gerard Loughlin's essay 'The Long Take'),⁸ this chapter concludes with an analysis of Tarkovsky's film *Nostalgia* and the prayerful form and style embodied by this picture. In the end, I argue that film not only *primes* the viewer for attentiveness, but in fact *performs* such attentiveness itself.

Part Two reflects on the theological power of film through the intimately connected doctrines of creation, incarnation, and eschatology, which are treated respectively in the final three chapters of this thesis. **Chapter V** begins with an analysis of Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*, which I argue is composed around the twin motifs of the garden and the chaotic, creative ocean, drawn from Genesis. These motifs open up a discussion of Tarkovsky's theological imagination, which I contextualise in light of his Eastern

⁷ Walter Burghardt, "Contemplation: A Long, Loving Look at the Real" in: George W. Traub, *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008)

⁸ Gerard Loughlin, "The Long Take: Messianic Time in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia*," *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 13, no. 3-4 (2009): pp. 365-379.

Orthodox heritage. The rest of this chapter draws reciprocally on Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time* and Jean-Louis Chrétien's essay 'From God the Artist to Man the Creator'⁹ in order to explore cinematic art through the theology of participation. In this regard, Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Rublev* offers an insightful window into Tarkovsky's vision of the artist and the spiritual vocation he discerns within the gift of human creativity.

In **Chapter VI**, I return to the central principle of embodiment, developing the earlier insights of film-phenomenology in dialogue with Laura Marks' theory of haptic viscosity. By exploring the haptic and somatic modes of filmic representation, the concept of mimesis emerges in a central role within the theological-cinematic analysis of this thesis. Theologically, the concept of mimesis opens up a phenomenological understanding of the incarnation, in which the believer discerns a call to represent Christ mimetically in their own life; a call 'to press up against him and take his shape', as it were. As such, the incarnation becomes a pedagogy of embodied being in the world, constituting a call to live and love in the flesh of creation, for Christ "came to what was his own" (John 1:11). Chapter VI concludes by suggesting that a crucial element of the theological power of film rests in the way that cinematic art can discern and respond to this call.

The doctrine of the incarnation is also imbued with the theological hope and anticipation that informs the doctrine of eschatology. **Chapter VII** begins by emphasising the indissoluble connection between these two doctrines, before exploring various manifestations of eschatology in 19th and 20th century theology. What emerges from this discussion is the central category of hope, and the rhythms of

⁹ "From God the Artist to Man the Creator" in: Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003) pp. 94-129.

promise, anticipation, and fulfilment that are integral to eschatology. Next, this chapter explores Tarkovsky's eschatological visions through the notion of the 'apocalyptic' (literally as an 'unveiling'). Although eschatology manifests in each of his seven films, I pay particular attention to *Stalker* and *The Sacrifice* here, because each represents a very different take on the notion of the 'apocalyptic'. In a final section, I return to the eschatological rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, observing that these rhythms are, crucially, not only important within eschatology but also vital to the existential reality of human being in the world. Interpreting these rhythms through their localised and intensified appearance in the film experience, I argue that cinematic art can encapsulate and perform the eschatological movements which characterise our existence. Finally, in my **Conclusions**, I summarise the contributions of this thesis, clarify the various arguments of the preceding seven chapters, and then offer a final evaluation of the question at hand.

Introduction

Cinematic art has inspired insightful and creative responses from theologians for a number of decades now. The study of theology and film, including television and other filmic media as well as cinema, continues to manifest in exciting ways, provoking new and imaginative research which contributes to the niche context of theology and the arts, as well as to the wider sphere of modern systematic theology. However, despite the growing number and diversity of theological responses to cinematic art, genuinely interdisciplinary studies of theology and film remain rare, because few studies engage in truly interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis.¹⁰ That is to say, very few studies treat film and film theory with the same care or expertise that they bring to their theological discourse and, moreover, few studies render a properly theological account of the medium of film itself. The majority of research inevitably ends up engaging film by ‘applying’ theological concepts to cinematic art, perhaps offering a particular reading of a film or director in light of a specific theological theme or trope. While such interpretations are indeed valuable, this thesis begins by arguing that other productive and substantial questions remain largely unasked: What theology and theological practice does cinematic art give rise to? What are the perceptual and affective potentials of film for theology, and what, if anything, is theological about the cinematic medium itself? In condensing and synthesising these inquiries, I offer this central research question: What is the theological power of film? I will unpack this question and its terms now.

¹⁰ Nonetheless, several major theologians and philosophers have engaged film in this way (for example, Stephen Mulhall, Catherine Pickstock, Gerard Loughlin, and Graham Ward). Mulhall has published extensively on film and philosophy (including his treatment of Ridley Scott’s *Alien* films in *On Film*). Gerard Loughlin’s seminal book *Alien Sex* engages these films as well, but it also offers a profound interpretation of film, desire and embodiment, engaging the art form itself with a genuinely interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis. Meanwhile, theologians like Ward and Pickstock engage with cinematic art at various points in their work, exploring the concepts arising from the art form in order to elucidate their theological projects (for example with Ward’s treatment of *Metropolis* in his book *Cities of God*).

The first and most fundamental point to clarify is that I use the word ‘power’ not to designate any political or socio-political connections,¹¹ but rather to speak about the expressive, communicative, and experiential properties of film as an artistic medium. I am not setting out to provide theological readings of certain films and directors (though naturally these play an important part in this thesis, particularly through Tarkovsky). Rather, I will engage in theological-cinematic analysis which is its own conceptual practice. This is not a matter of ‘applying’ theological concepts to film, or of interpreting film only on the grounds of narrative and thematic content, rather it is a matter of exploring the theological concepts and practices which cinematic art itself gives rise to. Thus, to inquire into the theological power of film is to open up an analysis of cinema that renders a properly theological account of the art form.

Already I have intimated that such an account of cinematic art requires a methodological shift away from the ‘textual’ analysis of certain films and directors, towards an ‘experiential’ analysis of the medium itself.¹² My phrase ‘the theological power of film’ designates the art form’s power to express, signify, prime and perform certain conceptual and theological practices. In this way, the film experience is the proper subject of an inquiry into the theological power of film, and this opens up the vital methodological context of this thesis. For the phrase ‘the film experience’ is directly associated with a major project of recent cinematic theory: film-phenomenology. Film-phenomenology, which I will introduce and expound fully in Chapter II, engages cinematic art experientially, through the phenomenological logic

¹¹ This is not say, by any means, that the political potentials of cinema should be neglected. In fact, cinema can play an instrumental role in facilitating theological and political analysis. Antonio D. Sison’s *Screening Schillebeeckx*, for example, engages the political through liberation theology and the genre of Third Cinema.

¹² I am indebted to Siobhán Garrigan for helping to unpack this distinction between the ‘textual’ and ‘experiential’ analysis of an art form.

of intentionality and appearance. In particular, the overwhelming philosophical character of film-phenomenology is Merleau-Pontian, such that Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body-subject takes centre stage within the theory. The body becomes the essential category for interpreting filmic perception and expression, for cinematic art communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment.¹³ To put it in Merleau-Ponty's own terms, "the body is the vehicle of being in the world,"¹⁴ and the film experience is, of course, a mode of experience in and of the world. Film-phenomenologists like Vivian Sobchack, Jennifer M. Barker, and Laura U. Marks (all of whom play crucial roles in this thesis) consistently refer back to Merleau-Ponty, grounding their treatments of cinematic perception and embodiment in his thought. For the theologian, the phenomenological method presents interesting connections with an important trend in continental phenomenology, critically dubbed the 'theological turn' by Dominique Janicaud.¹⁵ Chapter II will introduce these connections and illustrate their significance to the project at hand, focussing especially on the work of Jean-Yves Lacoste, while the work of Jean-Louis Chrétien will be indispensable in Part Two.

The focus on embodiment at the heart of film-phenomenology also opens up another crucial dimension of the theological-cinematic analysis to come: the unique temporality of film. Time is a defining quality of cinematic art, for the essentially embodied nature of the art form is mediated in and through time; the motion picture depends on the time given for that motion. From Warhol's *Screen Tests*, Eisenstein's quintessential montages, and Tarkovsky's inimitable long takes, to name only a few,

¹³ See Chapter II for my initial discussion of cinematic embodiment.

¹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty [trans. Donald A. Landes], *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2012) p. 84.

¹⁵ Janicaud's notion of the 'theological turn' includes philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Michel Henry. Janicaud uses the term to identify a trend in the work of certain contemporary phenomenologists to adopt theological language and concepts in their analysis. See Chapter II.

it is clear that the multivalent properties of cinematic time are integral to the creation and reception of the film image.¹⁶ Within philosophy and cinematic theory, by far the most influential study of film and time is Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, which is part of his dual volume work on the cinema. Time, as a distinct formal property of cinematic art, gives rise to several crucial theological concepts, including the conceptual practice of attentiveness and contemplation.¹⁷ In this way, the unique temporality of the art form invests film with the potential for certain stylistic renderings of time that are theologically profound. Out of this context of cinematic embodiment and the defining properties of filmic time, the films and writings of Andrei Tarkovsky emerge as the fulcrum of my response. For Tarkovsky, time is what separates film from other artistic media, and time is also what opens up the spiritual potentials of cinema.¹⁸ In his own words: "Time, printed in its factual forms and manifestations: such is the supreme idea of cinema as an art,"¹⁹ Alongside Deleuze, Tarkovsky contributes an understanding of time and cinema which opens up the theological-cinematic analysis that this thesis pursues.

Now that I have introduced the methodological context and motivating questions for this project, it will be prudent to make another terminological clarification. This is the diverse and overlapping use of terms like 'film', 'cinema', 'picture', 'cinematic art', and so on. By rule of thumb, I follow the trend among film-phenomenologists of using 'film' (in the singular) in order to designate the filmic medium, which broadly encompasses 'motion pictures', including movies, television, videography, and animated moving images. 'Cinema' is used specifically to designate the locale of

¹⁶ These three examples, and many more, play important roles in the analysis of Chapter III, which is devoted entirely to interpreting time and film.

¹⁷ See Chapter IV.

¹⁸ These ideas will be closely examined in Chapter III, and they will become theologically crucial throughout the final four chapters of this thesis.

¹⁹ Andrei Tarkovsky [trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair], *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (London: Bodley Head, 1986) p. 63.

'movies'; that is to say, the artistic medium whose artefacts we colloquially identify as 'films'. 'Cinema' does not, however, refer exclusively to the experience of film in the buildings that we call cinemas; while the film experience that takes place in the cinematic arena of the theatre remains foundational and quintessential to the art form, I use the term 'cinema' inclusively, for the diversity of film viewing ranges from the home living room, to the laptop screen, to the smart tablet on the morning commute, and beyond. Additionally, I use the terms 'a picture' and 'a film' interchangeably to refer to the individual artefact of 'a movie', which can be viewed and experienced in the various arenas I have just mentioned. Finally, I use 'cinematic art' to designate both the medium of film and the artistic act of filmmaking. In this way, the term functions as a kind of 'lowest common denominator', identifying common ground and overlapping definitions among the complex variety of media, practices, and artefacts associated broadly with the term 'film'.

It will be valuable to devote the rest of this Introduction to an outline of the arguments that will follow, tracing the structure of this thesis and anticipating the various conceptual and theoretical moves I will make in order to respond to the central question guiding this project. This thesis is divided into two Parts: Part One first approaches the question of how theological-cinematic analysis should proceed, before coming to several vital conclusions about the theological power of film; Part Two focuses on three intimately connected doctrines of Christian theology (creation, incarnation, and eschatology), in order to explore the theology and theological practices which cinematic art gives rise to.

I begin, in Chapter I, with an analysis and critique of Paul Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film*, because it constitutes an attempt to examine the theological potentials of

film in the very manner that I have set out above. In other words, although he does not use the phrase, Schrader's theory attempts to articulate something important about the theological power of film. However, although Schrader's project is constructed in a similar methodological vein to that which I advocate, prioritising questions of form and style over narrative and thematic content, *Transcendental Style in Film* makes certain theological mistakes that render it insufficient overall. Despite these theological inadequacies, the intuitions at the foundation of Schrader's theory remain valuable, and so the chapter concludes by recognising the need to seek a correction to Schrader's theory. Chapter II begins by pursuing this correction, developing the previous chapter's critique of Schrader and his over-reliance on the affective experience of film in dialogue with phenomenology. Drawing extensively on the work of Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and film-phenomenologists like Vivian Sobchack, this chapter takes leave of Schrader's theory in order to foreground the body in the film experience, and to conceptualise cinematic art as a theologically and phenomenologically significant encounter 'in the flesh'.

The centrality of embodiment in the film experience also entails a crucial temporal dimension, and Chapter III makes this connection, observing that the nature of human being in the world is also a being in time. Emphasising Tarkovsky's maxim that "time [...] is the supreme idea of cinema as an art,"²⁰ this chapter goes on to explore the various temporal structures and rubrics of the medium of film, in dialogue especially with Deleuze's two volumes on the cinema, and through close analysis of certain films and their formal renderings of time. Following on from this discussion, Chapter IV explores a particular valency of the theological power of film which emerges from the distinct temporality of the art form. For time invests cinema with a profound capacity

²⁰ Ibid.

for attentiveness and contemplation, the furthest possible extension of which is prayerfulness. Emphasising Tarkovsky's unique appropriations of time (particularly through Walter Burghardt's theology of contemplation and Gerard Loughlin's essay 'The Long Take'), this chapter concludes with an analysis of Tarkovsky's film *Nostalgia* and the prayerful form and style embodied by this picture. In the end, I argue that film not only *primes* the viewer for attentiveness, but in fact *performs* such attentiveness itself.

Part Two reflects on the theological power of film through the intimately connected doctrines of creation, incarnation, and eschatology, which are treated respectively in Chapter V, Chapter VI, and Chapter VII. Drawing reciprocally on Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time* and Jean-Louis Chrétien's essay 'From God the Artist to Man the Creator', Chapter V examines Tarkovsky's Eastern Orthodox heritage and then explores the creative act of filmmaking through the theology of participation. In Chapter VI, I return to the central principle of embodiment, developing the earlier insights of film-phenomenology in dialogue with Laura Marks' theory of haptic visuality. By exploring the haptic and somatic modes of filmic representation, the concept of mimesis emerges in a central role within the theological-cinematic analysis of this thesis. In the doctrine of the incarnation the Christian theologian recognises a call to live and love in the flesh of the world, and Chapter VI concludes by suggesting the ways in which cinematic art can discern and respond to this call. In Chapter VII, after examining Tarkovsky's eschatological visions through the notion of the 'apocalyptic' (literally an 'unveiling'), I explore how the eschatological rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment inform human being in the world. Interpreting these rhythms through their localised and intensified appearance in the film experience, I argue that cinematic art can encapsulate and perform the eschatological

movements which characterise our existence. Finally, in my Conclusions, I will summarise the contributions of this thesis and offer a final evaluation of the question at hand.

Part One. Approaching Theological- Cinematic Analysis

Transcendental Style: A Theological Critique

From the earliest moments of Paul Schrader's *First Reformed* (2017) the viewer is held at a distance; the film withdraws, denying action and postponing emotional involvement. Static frames are favoured along with austere camerawork in order to detach the viewer and engender a sense of inertia. The decision to shoot in 4:3 aspect ratio further facilitates this stillness, drawing attention to the vertical lines of every shot so that the full body of each subject is emphasised and the range of movement suggested by conventional 16:9 widescreen is cut off. Schrader's editing is equally pared-down; preferring simple cuts and swift fades to black over visually stimulating transitions such as the dissolve. The exception to this is the very first shot of the film, but even then the dissolve that Schrader utilises is still designed to foster inaction and stasis, for this first shot dissolves over the opening titles decidedly slowly, paired with a glacial forward tracking motion, and taking nearly a full minute to accomplish.²¹ Such techniques serve the singular purpose of distancing the viewer; in spurning action for inertia and emphasising the inexpressive and the banal, the viewer is held at a reflective distance and conditioned not to expect the sudden burst of camera movement and paroxysm of emotion with which the film climaxes. These cinematographic devices are the bare bones of transcendental style as Schrader described it originally, four decades prior to the film's release. They are the techniques which - according to Schrader - create the possibility for a film's spiritual realisation;

²¹ Figure 1.

such is the intention behind transcendental style. In this way, *First Reformed* appears as the substantiation of Schrader's critical theory through a text of his own creation, and the film becomes an apposite introduction to transcendental style itself.

Long before he directed *First Reformed*, however, and even before his days as Martin Scorsese's screenwriter on films like *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Raging Bull* (1980), Schrader described this theory in his seminal 1972 monograph *Transcendental Style in Film*. The central thesis of this short book was that a particular style of filmmaking had emerged in the 1950s and 1960s that grappled with perceptive and affective notions of transcendence, to the point where the experience of such a film invoked something like experience of the divine. Schrader set out to describe this style theoretically, focussing his analysis on three filmmakers from three different traditions: Robert Bresson, the famous French director and Roman Catholic; Carl Theodor Dreyer, who was raised Lutheran in Copenhagen; and Yasujiro Ozu, from a Zen Buddhist tradition in Tokyo. Schrader saw his task to be the demonstration of how transcendental style, as exemplified by these three directors, works "to express the Transcendent in art,"²² and is "the proper method for conveying the Holy on film."²³ Thus Schrader's theory represents an important attempt to articulate the theological power of film, which is the goal of this thesis. As I will illustrate, for Schrader this power lies in film's stylistic capacity to facilitate an experience of 'the Transcendent'. This chapter endeavours to provide an account and theological critique of transcendental style, paying particular attention to Schrader's description of how the style works mechanically to invoke experience of the divine. Rudolf Otto is a necessary dialogue partner in this discussion because of his wide influence on Schrader, while a critical analysis of transcendental

²² Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018) p. 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

style is further developed by bringing other theologians into dialogue with Schrader. Most notably, Louis-Marie Chauvet's sacramental theology helps to challenge the problematic binary of transcendence and immanence that Schrader inherits from Otto.

1. WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTAL STYLE?

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Before describing and examining the main elements of transcendental style, it is necessary to define Schrader's theological terms. What does he mean by 'transcendence', and how does he define terms like 'the Holy' and 'the Transcendent', which are used throughout the text? In the original introduction to *Transcendental Style in Film*, Schrader offers a threefold understanding of his interpretation of the word 'transcendental'. Later in this chapter, I will argue that Schrader's definition of 'transcendental' is theologically insufficient and I will suggest an alternative interpretation. For now, though, it will be helpful to provide an exposition of Schrader's own definition.

The first part of this threefold understanding reveals Schrader's deep indebtedness to the theology of Otto, for he writes that 'transcendental' can mean "the Transcendent: the Holy or Ideal itself, or what Rudolf Otto called the 'Wholly Other'."²⁴ So, transcendental style deals with the concept of the divine; Schrader, it would seem, is interested in film that expresses something of God.²⁵ His direct use of Otto's 'Wholly

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁵ 'God' is a word which Schrader is quite reticent to use, however, probably because of the universalism and pluralism inherent in his approach (moving from Christianity to Zen Buddhism, for example); for Schrader, 'the Transcendent' is to be conceived of much in the same way as 'the absolute', or 'the

Other' firmly situates his theological understanding of the divine within this particular, liberal protestant conceptualisation of God, which emphasises that experience of God occurs within the realm of affect, of feeling.²⁶ Indeed, this is the notion at the heart of Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, in which he first used the language of the 'Wholly Other'. Otto, in seeking to provide a theological account of what he termed 'numinous experience', which is to say experience of the divine power or will,²⁷ located this experience within human feeling. It is not within the scope of this chapter to provide an in depth account of Otto's theology²⁸ but, in the context of Schrader's appropriation of his thought, it is clear that the kind of ineffable, affective experience of the divine that Schrader associates with transcendental style films overlaps directly with Otto's conceptualisation of numinous experience. By placing Otto's theology at the foundation of his theory, Schrader adopts the German theologian's premise that numinous or transcendental experience "cannot be rendered explicit in conceptual terms,"²⁹ but can only be rendered affectively. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of what Schrader means by the term 'the Transcendent', it is important to examine Otto's concept of the 'Wholly Other', on which Schrader so heavily leans.

For this purpose, an important quotation from *The Idea of the Holy* stands out: "It is through this positive feeling-content [*Gefühlsinhaltes*] that the concepts of the

universe' in Schleiermacher's *Speeches* or, indeed, Otto's 'Wholly Other'. This will be discussed further below, as this chapter explores perception of the divine in Schrader's theory alongside Otto's theology.

²⁶ By 'liberal protestant', I mean to suggest the kind of theology that favours an intuitive and affective grammar, often with the aim of inclusivity and pluralism. I am thinking particularly of Otto, as well as Schleiermacher and Jakob Fries before him.

²⁷ From the Latin *numen*, which importantly carries the sense of both 'power' and 'will'. Cicero, for example, uses *numen* in *De Divinatione* (c. 44 BCE) Book 1, LIII:120, and this is usually translated as 'will': "whose divine will all things obey" (*cuius numina parent omnia*). Yet, in the preceding passage, Cicero aligns *numen* with the driving force behind all augury, also introducing the two terms *divina mens* and *vim divinam* to establish these twin ideas of divine will and divine power.

²⁸ For the full account of Otto's conceptualisation of numinous experience, see *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958) pp. 5-11. His understanding of 'numinous experience' is intimately related to his exploration of the *Mysterium Tremendum*, which follows on pp. 12-30 and which is deeply formative in his argument as the archetype of numinous experience.

²⁹ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 30.

‘transcendent’ and ‘supernatural’ become forthwith designations for a unique ‘wholly other’ reality and quality, something of whose special character we can *feel* [*fühlen*], without being able to give it clear conceptual expression.”³⁰ In other words, in Otto’s thought and by extension in Schrader’s, the terms ‘the Transcendent’, ‘the Ideal’, ‘the Holy’, and ‘Wholly Other’ are signs which refer to a specific type of experience that can only be interpreted affectively. Importantly, the word Otto uses for ‘feeling’ here is *Gefühl*, which deliberately follows Schleiermacher’s use of the word. In this way, Otto’s “positive feeling-content” is deliberately aligned with Schleiermacher’s famous articulation of “the feeling of absolute dependence” (*das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*) in *The Christian Faith*. There is one further point to be made about this quotation in order to understand exactly how Schrader defines ‘transcendence’. The German word Otto uses that is translated as ‘transcendent’ is *überweltlich*, which literally means ‘supramundane’ or ‘supraworldly’. In this way, Otto intends to capture the feeling of radical ‘otherness’ inherent in his notion of the ‘Wholly Other’, rather than any codified or systematic notion of ontological transcendence, which can be associated with the English word ‘transcendent’. The same is true of Schrader’s use of the word; in his theory ‘transcendence’ belongs to affective discourse about God, not conceptual discourse within philosophy and theology.

Of his threefold understanding, then, this is the first and foremost way in which Schrader defines transcendence: the mysterious³¹ ‘Wholly Other’ which (or whom) one experiences affectively as divine encounter. The other two ways in which Schrader understands transcendence are anthropological. They are: “human artefacts or acts which express something of the Transcendent,” and “the human religious experience”

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ I use ‘mysterious’ deliberately to refer to Otto’s understanding of the *Mysterium Tremendum*, referred to above in footnote 12. See again, *The Idea of the Holy* pp. 12-30.

as felt internally, psychologically, and spiritually.³² Although Schrader describes these separately, they seem to align, respectively, as the external and internal aspects of an anthropological interpretation of transcendent experience. This is because the former (human artefacts or acts which express the transcendent) seems to be indissolubly connected with the latter (the internal human feeling of transcendent experience). After all, both the creation and reception of such artefacts is entirely dependent on an individual's internalisation of the possibility for perception and expression of the divine; for one person Handel's *Messiah* may be an expression of the transcendent God, yet for another it may simply be a cultural artefact whose value is aesthetic and musicological, and religious only insofar as it relates to the reception history of Christian scripture.³³

It is the focus on human artefacts and acts which express the transcendent that especially interests transcendental style, for cinema is potentially one such artefact. In this regard, Schrader employs the theological anthropology of Mircea Eliade, who argued that religion is made up of experiences he called 'hierophanies'. 'Hierophany' is a term Eliade intended to be related to epiphany and theophany. This is evident from the way that Eliade defines hierophany by comparison to the theophanic Hebrew Bible story of God's appearing to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3.5).³⁴ However, Eliade intended that the term hierophany would be less exclusive, including actual theophany or parousia, but also more general manifestations of the sacred: "from the most elementary hierophany - e.g. manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object,

³² Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 37.

³³ This is not as simple as a 'secular vs. confessional' division, however. If a confessional theologian were to hold (as many do) that we ought to be skeptical of affective experience of the divine, then they too will probably contend that art like Handel's *Messiah* does not have any value as an epiphanic manifestation of divinity beyond its scriptural content. This will be important in the next chapter, which deals specifically with the question of affective experience.

³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* [trans. Willard R. Trask] (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc., 1987) p. 20.

a stone or a tree - to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ)."³⁵ This, of course, includes human artefacts and acts, which become signs of human experience of sacred reality. As Eliade wrote, "when the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany... there is also revelation of an absolute reality."³⁶ Schrader cites Eliade directly as he borrows the term 'hierophany' in his search for a definition of 'transcendence',³⁷ providing another level of understanding in his use of the words 'transcendence' and 'transcendental'.³⁸ Indeed, in a new introduction to the 2018 edition of *Transcendental Style in Film*, Schrader clarified his subject as "hierophanies evoked by style"³⁹ in cinema; that is to say, epiphanic expression of the transcendent in film, received affectively by the viewer.

THE CINEMATIC FEATURES OF TRANSCENDENTAL STYLE

Now that Schrader's working definition of 'transcendence' has been dissected, and his use of terms like 'the Transcendent', 'the Ideal', 'the Holy', and 'Wholly Other' has been discussed, this chapter will address the technical and stylistic content of his theory; specifically, how transcendental style works mechanically to invoke experience of the transcendent, according to Schrader. By this, I mean simply to ask, what are the essential cinematic features of transcendental style? By way of an introduction to Schrader's theory, this chapter began with a brief discussion of *First Reformed*, in which several stylistic techniques of the film were emphasised. Yet the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁷ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 37.

³⁸ Incidentally, Schrader is not the only scholar to talk about film in terms of hierophany, though he was the first. In 1982, ten years after *Transcendental Style in Film*, Michael Bird wrote a chapter called 'Film as Hierophany' in *Religion and Film* (eds. John R. May & Michael Bird) in which he, too, cited Eliade. Bird, however, does not engage with Schrader in detail or develop his thought.

³⁹ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 6.

various techniques employed in the film can only be fully understood within the wider structure of transcendental style as described by Schrader in his monograph. The distancing techniques of his minimalist editing and camerawork, for example, are not an end in themselves, but fit in to a broader stylistic framework. In this respect, Schrader outlines three fundamental elements, or 'steps', as he calls them, within transcendental style, as exemplified by the films of Bresson, Ozu, and Dreyer. These are, in order of progression: i) 'the everyday'; ii) 'disparity'; and iii) 'stasis'. By examining these in some detail now, the cinematic features of Schrader's theory will become apparent, and it will be possible to achieve a more complete understanding of transcendental style.

i) 'The everyday'

The foundational element of transcendental style, according to Schrader, is a focus on the realism of everyday living. As he describes it, "the everyday celebrates the bare threshold of existence."⁴⁰ This first 'step' is all about emphasising the mundane within film; it is about dwelling on the banal action and the dead time between plot movements, which conventional, mainstream cinema usually leaves on the cutting room floor. Ozu's meticulous presentation of family life in his *Shomin-geki*⁴¹ films is a good example of this. In the early scenes of *Late Spring*, for instance, Ozu establishes the routine of day-to-day life through a series of short, simple scenes depicting typical familial activity: morning meditation; professor Somiya's research administration; the train journey before the shopping trip at the beginning of the narrative. These opening

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴¹ *Shomin-geki* is a term used to describe the genre of 'family drama' within Japanese cinema, which is the genre most often associated with Ozu. The term was coined by Western film scholars, but is formed from the Japanese words *Shomin* (庶民), meaning 'common people', and *Geki* (劇), meaning 'drama' or 'play'. The genre is noted for its realism and emphasis on day-to-day life.

moments set the tone for the rest of the film, and there is even a deliberate disinterest towards the various plot points within such scenes; as David Bordwell succinctly observes, Ozu often begins and ends his scenes by showing “where the characters *aren’t*.”⁴² The opening shots of the film are of the train station, for example, but it appears to be early in the morning and no one is there. In fact, there are several short scenes within the family home before Ozu finally cuts to Noriko and Somiya on the train. Simply put, in Ozu the plot is often far less important than a focus on daily life and mundane, everyday places. Schrader argues that this same focus is common among all transcendental directors, although each will employ different techniques in their pursuit of banality.

Cinematographically, several key techniques facilitate this focus on ‘the everyday’. One of the most fundamental of these is the static frame. Simply put, the static frame is the least intrusive, least manipulative ‘screen’ a filmmaker can employ. As Jean-Luc Godard famously quipped during a conversation with Alain Resnais in 1959, “the tracking shot is a matter of morality [*le travelling est affaire de morale*].”⁴³ It influences the viewer; it affects their interpretation and elicits predictable emotions. The same can be said for a crane shot, or zoom (consider Hitchcock’s masterful zoom-in while tracking-out shot in *Vertigo*, and its later reincarnation in Spielberg’s *Jaws*). Long has the manipulative capacity of such techniques been discussed; forewarned against but also celebrated in equal measure, depending on whether or not one believes the distinct potential of cinema is for pure realism or the reconstruction and distortion of reality.⁴⁴ The static frame is unembellished portrayal; it is poetry without adjectives or

⁴² David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1988) p. 309.

⁴³ This famous quip was made by Godard during a round-table discussion about Resnais’ *Hiroshima mon Amor*. Cited by Libby Saxton, “Tracking Shots are a Question of Morality: Ethics, Aesthetics, Documentary” in: Lisa Downing and Libby Saxton, *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010) p. 22.

⁴⁴ This debate is as old as film theory. Consider, for example, Sergei Eisenstein’s critique of cinematic

adverbs, sculpture without over-pronounced geometry. If the aim of a tracking shot, crane shot, or other moving frame is to reconfigure reality in a particular way, or even to distort it, then the aim of the static frame is to present reality *as it is*, or at least as close to that as is possible.

It is austere, unembellished camerawork such as this which is most commonly used to facilitate a focus on 'the everyday'. Furthermore, the static frame is complemented by minimal editing; by using only a few angles to cover a scene⁴⁵ and by resisting visually complex transitions like the dissolve or time-lapse. Minimalism and non-expressiveness are the common cinematographic themes here. In eliminating the distractions of an overly moving camera and prescriptive editing, the bare realism of a scene is rendered in such a way that it becomes the viewer's primary focus. Other techniques are used in the same vein: minimal use of music (indeed, Bresson abandoned all use of music later in his career); heightened diegetic soundtracks to capture the naturalism of a scene; and action and dialogue of the most mundane sort. Even actors are not exempt from such minimalism as 'performance' is actively discouraged; Bresson famously rejected the use of actors, hiring non-professionals for his films and referring to them as 'models' throughout his work.⁴⁶ He directed them explicitly to resist any urge towards melodrama and instead to strive for understatement and the non-dramatic. Here, then, are the rudiments of transcendental style; its basic cinematic workings as Schrader articulates them, where a focus on day-to-day living is foundational and is facilitated by all of the techniques discussed above.

realism and his preference for montage theory. Likewise, consider André Bazin's rebuttal and emphasis on realism during the French New Wave.

⁴⁵ 'Coverage' is the practitioners' term for how a crew can 'cover' a scene; that is, how they can capture the scene with enough angles for the editor to incorporate a variety of perspectives. Coverage typically includes a range of shots from the 'master' shot (which is a shot that captures the entire scene, including all principal characters present), through to medium and extreme close-ups, and supplemented by pick-up shots of the surrounding environment.

⁴⁶ See, in particular: Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer* [trans. Jonathan Griffin] (London: Quartet Encounters, 1986).

In light of this, Schrader's understanding of 'the everyday' as a stylistic category is more easily understood. He describes it as a form of realism, "a celebration of the trivial: small sounds, a door creaking, a bird chirping, a wheel turning, static views, ordinary scenery, blank faces."⁴⁷ In other words, it is an attentiveness to the mundane phenomena of the world.⁴⁸

What is the effect of all this? What does the emphasis on 'the everyday' do for the viewer, for transcendental style as a whole? Ultimately, Schrader argues that it creates a critical distance between the film and the viewer, which engenders reflection. In this regard, Schrader introduces an interesting pair of phrases: first, he describes the focus on the mundane and banal elements of reality as a way of using "boredom as an aesthetic tool."⁴⁹ By this, he means to suggest that transcendental style denies the viewer the action that mainstream cinema has conditioned them to expect from a film. Indeed, most films aim to seize the viewer's attention, confronting them with stimulus after stimulus and carrying them along through the film experience at a pace. Transcendental style films, however, do the opposite; they withdraw. Ostensibly, these films are 'boring', at least insofar as most audiences would consider them. They neglect plot, and they relegate action and drama to secondary interests, if not to complete insignificance. But why is this use of 'boredom' a critical element of a cinematic style? Why should the viewer tolerate it, and not dismiss the film as boring and unworthy of attention, as some films surely are?

The answer lies in Schrader's second phrase: this aesthetic use of 'boredom' is employed in order "to activate the viewer."⁵⁰ In other words, when the viewer is left

⁴⁷ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 89.

⁴⁸ The concept of attentiveness is crucial within this thesis, and will be treated explicitly in Chapter IV.

⁴⁹ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

with the inertia that this focus on 'the everyday' fosters, the film demands more of them, imaginatively and introspectively. As the film withdraws, pulling back where most films would reach out, the viewer is asked to engage on their own terms, without extensive influence or manipulation from the film. The effect is related to the artistic alienation of the audience, and in fact Susan Sontag draws this comparison with Bresson's style in a very similar manner to Schrader: she writes, "reflective art is art which, in effect, imposes a certain discipline on the audience - postponing easy gratification. Even boredom can be a permissible means of such discipline."⁵¹ Later in this chapter's theological critique (and especially in Chapter IV), I will argue that Schrader does not realise the full significance of this distancing and attentiveness to 'the everyday'. For now, though, the above constitutes an exposition of Schrader's account of 'the everyday' as a stylistic category within transcendental style.

ii) 'Disparity'

Schrader defines his second 'step', 'disparity', as "an actual or potential disunity"⁵² between characters and their environments. By this, he simply means a kind of conflict, although not necessarily conflict conveyed exclusively through plot. This can be well illustrated through the example of Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*, in which several forms of 'disparity' interplay and often overlap. The film adapts Georges Bernanos' novel of the same name, which depicts parish life through the journal of the eponymous priest, who is new both to the parish as well as the priesthood, and whose personal struggles with doubt and cancer are the thematic content of the story. Eventually, as conflict with his parishioners climaxes, the priest's illness catches up

⁵¹ Susan Sontag, 'Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson' in: Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2009) p. 180.

⁵² Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 70.

with him, and he dies as the film closes. In Bresson's film, there is the notable 'disparity' in the fraught relationship between the priest and his parishioners. Most prominently, though, there is the priest's struggle with faith, which is arguably the central conflict of the film. Bresson uses a form of doubling here, whereby the priest's spreading cancer becomes a symbol for this struggle; his spiritual ill health is symbolised by his physical ill health. Yet there is more to 'disparity' than this, for Schrader sees it as something that disturbs the everyday setting established in the first 'step'. Indeed, Schrader describes 'disparity' further, as "a growing crack in the dull surface of everyday reality."⁵³ The priest's mystical experience of the Virgin Mary in the film might constitute an example of this. Ultimately, though, the language of 'cracks in everyday reality' is flawed and it is where the theological shortcomings of transcendental style begin to reveal themselves.. However, before getting into a theological critique of this description, it is necessary to give some more examples of what Schrader is describing.

For this purpose, returning to Ozu is helpful. In particular, I would like to take the example of what Noël Burch has called "pillow-shots,"⁵⁴ since I believe these effect something like what Schrader understood as 'disparity' in his theory of transcendental style. Burch defines the term 'pillow-shot' "through a loose analogy with the 'pillow-word' of Japanese poetry."⁵⁵ The 'pillow-word' of Japanese poetry is a word added to a line which modifies or reinterprets the meaning of that line. By extension, the pillow-shot is a single, static frame that intersperses a scene, or disconnects two scenes, in order to modify the meaning of what comes before and after. It is often, as Burch says, a still-life; sometimes of mountains or countryside, but also of public spaces or

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979) p. 160.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

personal bedrooms.⁵⁶ These pillow-shots control the rhythm of Ozu's films and, although they often appear to be completely arbitrary and unrelated to their context, they abstractly express and reinterpret the underlying emotions of a particular moment within a film. This is crucial, because Ozu's style is profoundly detached from emotional expression; in this way, the pillow-shot becomes a subtle way of conferring what Ozu's inexpressive style prohibits him from conveying explicitly. Simply put, his pillow-shots disclose 'cracks' of meaning which would not be apparent otherwise. However, whether this describes 'cracks' in the fabric of everyday reality, as Schrader suggests, remains to be seen.

Central to Schrader's notion of 'disparity' is the idea that it plays off of the distance created by the focus on 'the everyday'. In other words, 'the everyday' conditions the viewer to be unemotional; 'disparity' cracks that conditioning, and the power of the emerging emotion is amplified by the distance that has been created between film and viewer through the focus on the banal. Again, Schrader uses *Late Spring* to demonstrate what he means by this. The film portrays family life through the relationship between a daughter, Noriko, and her father as she approaches marriage. In one very well known scene, the Noriko and her father say goodnight in the room they are sharing for the last time, since Noriko will be leaving for her wedding the next day. As the two go to sleep, a close-up focuses on Noriko's smile while the soundtrack of her father's snoring reinforces the banality of the moment. Then, Ozu cuts to a vase at the end of the room.⁵⁷ When he cuts back to Noriko, her smile has faded and she is suddenly overcome with melancholy.⁵⁸ The emotion of the moment is enhanced by the distance created in the first place by Ozu's focus on the mundane;

⁵⁶ Figure 2.

⁵⁷ For further analysis of this scene, see especially Abé Mark Nornes 'The Riddle of the Vase' in: *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* [eds. Alastair Phillips & Julian Stringer] (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁵⁸ Figure 3.

his cut to the eight-second-long shot of the vase is a distancing technique. This is the 'disparity' that Schrader refers to, where a certain emotional conflict is encountered unexpectedly, as if cracking a facade of calm, banal reality.

iii) 'Stasis'

'Stasis', for Schrader, is the culmination of transcendental style. It is the final of his three 'steps', where 'disparity' is not resolved but transcended, so that, as the film ends, the viewer is left in a state of stasis. He defines this state as "a frozen view of life which does not resolve the disparity but transcends it. Stasis is the end product of transcendental style."⁵⁹ The best way to show what Schrader means by this is through an example, and for that Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* again proves useful. Schrader pinpoints 'stasis' in this film to a single shot; the final image of the shadow of the cross, elongated and sprawled thin across the frame just before the film fades to black and the credits roll.⁶⁰ The various manifestations of 'disparity' in the film, namely the priest's fractious relationships with his parishioners, his struggle with doubt and prayer, and his spreading cancer, are by no means resolved in this ending, but they are, perhaps, transcended in the way that Schrader suggests. The priest's final words are, "All is Grace", and in that moment every instance of disparity suddenly seems to have been rendered insignificant. Confronted by those words and that final image, all of the film's conflicts are radically cast into a new perspective. This is the image that abides with the viewer long after the film has ended and they have departed the cinema; it remains with the viewer as "a still re-view of the external world intended to suggest the oneness of all things,"⁶¹ such is the feeling of stasis that

⁵⁹ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 75.

⁶⁰ Figure 4.

⁶¹ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 108.

Schrader describes as the climax of transcendental style.

According to Schrader, 'stasis' is precipitated by what he describes as "a final moment of disparity, decisive action, which triggers the expression of the Transcendent."⁶² 'Decisive action'; Schrader uses this term as a mechanical description, much in the same way that he uses the terms 'the everyday', 'disparity', and 'stasis'. A recurring example of decisive action in Schrader's writing is the ending of Dreyer's *Ordet*. This is the resurrection miracle, which facilitates the expression of a sacred reality as the film climaxes.⁶³ The film depicts the life of the Borgen family, where the key 'disparity' is Johannes Borgen's conviction that he is in fact Jesus Christ. Throughout the film, his other family members dismiss him as mad, yet his actions are the source of tremendous anxiety. These tensions come to a head at the funeral of Johannes' sister in law, Inger. To the despair of his brothers and his father, Johannes suddenly interrupts the service and approaches the casket, accompanied only by Inger's daughter - the one person who believes him - who holds his hand and asks him to raise her mother. Dreyer holds a static, wide frame of the scene as he approaches; there is no close-up, no attempt at intimacy, for this is a powerfully awkward moment. There is no expectation that anything will occur except for a profound discomfort at Johannes' intrusion, but - miraculously - he raises her from the dead. There is no explanation; and only a kind of stunned stasis, with which the film ends.

In Schrader's eyes, then, the key to decisive action is emotion; it strikes the viewer with a sense of radical otherness, an inexplicable paroxysm of feeling that manifests as "an emotionally irresolvable dilemma."⁶⁴ From his own work, an example of what

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁶³ Figure 5.

⁶⁴ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 110.

Schrader calls decisive action is the climax of *First Reformed*, where the sudden burst of camera movement in a final dizzying shot accompanies the film's emotional apex. In 2017, the same year *First Reformed* was made and forty-five years after *Transcendental Style in Film* was published, Schrader described the poignancy of decisive action in such terms during an interview with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF):

All of a sudden, at the end, whammo! Comes a big blast of emotion. What are you going to do with it now that [the filmmaker] has totally conditioned you not to expect it? Is it going to put you off, or is it going to knock you up a notch? And that's the idea of the decisive action. And once you get that action, then – after that – silence.⁶⁵

So, decisive action is the fulcrum about which transcendental style turns. Specifically, for Schrader, it is the affective instant in which the viewer is transformed from a detached state (accomplished through the distancing techniques of 'the everyday') to a state of 'stasis', in which the ineffable 'Wholly Other' is expressed and experienced. This is the progression of transcendental style as Schrader sets it out through the rubric of these three 'steps'. As has been alluded to throughout this section, though, much of what Schrader describes requires further scrutiny. In particular, Schrader does not fully explore the theological connotations of his terminology, while several key elements of his theory stem from a problematic theology which must be interrogated. This will be the purpose of the next section in this chapter.

⁶⁵ Paul Schrader in interview for *TIFF Originals* (26th April 2017). The interview can be watched on the *TIFF Originals* YouTube channel.

2. THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

EXAMINING THE THEOLOGY OF TRANSCENDENTAL STYLE

When Schrader defines 'transcendental', as was discussed above, he offers a threefold understanding of the word. He begins with an abstract, universalist concept of the divine; the 'Transcendent', the Ideal, the Holy, the Wholly Other. His next two interpretations of the word concern an anthropological understanding of transcendence; Mircea Eliade's human artefacts or acts which express transcendence, and a broader concept of human experience of transcendence. However, in defining 'transcendental', flaws begin to appear in Schrader's theology, for his use of the word seems essentially limited to this threefold understanding (which can itself be reduced to some diffuse notion of 'transcendent experience'). I would argue that 'transcendental' has a more precise theological meaning than Schrader recognises, which is in fact better suited to his project.

The transcendental is the condition for the possibility of encountering God. In other words, the transcendental describes the potentiality of divine disclosure and of the divine presence. The ritual of the Eucharist is transcendental, for instance, as is liturgy, while even acts like pilgrimage and prayer can be described as such. In this context, then, Schrader is right to use the word transcendental to describe works of art in his theory, for his aim is to account for the way in which film art realises the potentiality of divine experience. As the first half of this chapter has illustrated, Schrader understands transcendental style as a certain stylistic method of filmmaking which facilitates expression of and encounter with the divine (which is to say 'the Transcendent' or the 'Wholly Other' in Schrader's terminology). Concisely put, Schrader claims that transcendental style facilitates the conditions for the possibility

of divine encounter in cinematic art. Although Schrader never sets it out precisely in these terms, this is a more rigorous articulation of the theological aim of his theory. In fact, this more focussed understanding of the transcendental is better suited to conveying the meaning of transcendental style as a theological and aesthetic framework.

In light of reconsidering Schrader's foundational definition, this chapter can now analyse transcendental style theologically. I will begin with the focus on 'the everyday'. Schrader's significant contribution, here, is to situate expression of the divine within a focus on the mundane reality of day-to-day living. In other words, the only true starting point for contemplation of the transcendent is contemplation of the immanent. This is an idea at the heart of Robert Bresson's filmmaking, captured aptly by his remark that "the supernatural in film is only the real rendered more precise."⁶⁶ These words are suffused with Bresson's Catholic sensibility; they reflect the notion that God's presence is mediated in and through the everyday phenomena of the corporeal world (for we are embodied creatures). There is also a profound sacramentality to this understanding, which I will address in detail towards the end of this chapter when Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology comes to the fore.

Yet Schrader's conceptualisation of 'the everyday' within transcendental style is also highly reminiscent of the last of Richard Kearney's "three basic elements to atheism,"⁶⁷ which he in fact terms 'sacrament'. Kearney describes this third element as "a sacramental return to the holiness of the everyday,"⁶⁸ which is a phrase that is

⁶⁶ James Blue, "Excerpts from an Interview with Robert Bresson" in: "James Blue Papers" 1905-2014 (Eugene, OR: University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives) box 6, folder 41, June 1965.

⁶⁷ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (Chichester, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011) p. 85.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

deeply consonant with Bresson's theological sensibility. Almost the entirety of the second half of Kearney's *Anatheism* deals with this everyday sacramentalism, including a notable section on the sacramental imagination in literary fiction (through Joyce, Proust, and Woolf). In this regard, Schrader's contention that a focus on the everyday in art can facilitate divine disclosure seems at first to be drawn from a similar sacramental perspective: "the raw material taken from real life is the raw material of the Transcendent."⁶⁹ However, Schrader is inconsistent on this point. As was demonstrated in the above exposition of transcendental style, the filmic focus on the everyday is, for Schrader, less about the sacramentality of worldly and corporeal existence, than it is about the conditioning of the viewer in order to foster emotional detachment. In this respect, he has overlooked the more substantial theological significance of the everyday and, furthermore, he has misread Bresson and his stylistic attention to the mundane.

Critiquing an example of Schrader's own cinematic analysis will clarify this. One of Schrader's favourite instances of cinema depicting this kind of everyday banality is the famous match scene from De Sica's *Umberto D.*⁷⁰ In this scene the character of the maid enters the kitchen, which is captured in a simple, static frame. She proceeds to take three attempts at striking a match and lighting the stove. There is no music, no dialogue, and no camera movement or cut whatsoever, there is only the passage of time around the mundane act of lighting the stove. The bare realism and inertia inherent in this scene is a chief example of the portrayal of the everyday that forms the basis of transcendental style as Schrader describes it – but, for him, it is just that; merely a basis. There is nothing in this representation of mundane reality that constitutes an expression of the transcendent, according to Schrader. Rather, in his

⁶⁹ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Figure 6.

eyes, it only sets the stage for an expression of the divine, the numinous, and the 'Wholly Other' in contrast to the immanent, the mundane, and the familiar. Schrader is right to recognise the value of delaying action and distancing the viewer (or disciplining the viewer, as Sontag puts it), but his reading of the scene neglects the theological significance of such attentiveness to the banal particulars of everyday existence. There may be nothing explicitly divine about the lighting of a match, or the sound of feet scratching against a stone floor, but a stylistic attentiveness to both might facilitate the transcendental in ways that Schrader has overlooked. Chapter IV will revisit this scene in *Umberto D* through this theme of attentiveness, particularly through the theological lens of contemplation.

For Schrader, then, an attentiveness to the everyday is merely a means to an end; this end being 'stasis', the final 'step' and apotheosis of transcendental style. Once again, Schrader's theological understanding here seems to have been drawn from Otto, for his description of 'stasis' appears to some extent to have been influenced by a particular passage in *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto devotes the third part of chapter nine to the discussion of the "means by which the Numinous is expressed in art,"⁷¹ in which he identifies the concept of 'the sublime' as the key to artistic representation of transcendent reality.⁷² He sets out three constitutive elements to his understanding of the sublime, all of which overlap in some form with descriptions of stasis and stillness: these are *darkness*, *silence*, and *emptiness*. Crucially, these are all forms of absence, which, when reframed theologically by Otto, connect divine disclosure with the sublime through techniques of portraying absence and negation in art. In this way,

⁷¹ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 65-71.

⁷² There is no doubt that Otto uses 'the sublime' in the Kantian sense, as discerned from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. This is because of Otto's association of awe (*tremendum*) with numinous experience; which is consonant with Kant's examples of sublime beauty in section one of *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, namely the mountain peaks and raging storms that provoke 'horror' in Kant's eyes (see also the same examples of mountains and the sea in the *Critique of Judgment*, §26, 256).

darkness, for Otto, is a facilitator of the sublime because it inspires the perception of “some last vestige of brightness”⁷³ through the absence of light:

The semi-darkness that glimmers in vaulted halls, or beneath the branches of a lofty forest glade, strangely quickened and stirred by the mysterious play of half-lights, has always spoken eloquently to the soul, and the builders of temples, mosques, and churches have made full use of it.⁷⁴

Similarly, Otto suggests that silence in art correlates with this darkness; it moves the soul through the ear as darkness moves the soul through the eye. One may consider the first verse of Psalm 62 (“For God alone my soul waits in silence”) in this regard, but for Otto silence is also the only appropriate response to experience of the divine presence: “it is a spontaneous reaction to the feeling of the actual *numen praesens*.”⁷⁵ The final element of the sublime in art that Otto dwells on is emptiness, empty space or ‘void’. He writes that “the wide-stretching desert, the boundless uniformity of the steppe, have real sublimity... they set vibrating chords of the numinous along with the note of the sublime.”⁷⁶ The entirety of this section in *The Idea of the Holy* appears to have been deeply influential on Schrader’s understanding of stasis, for the stasis he attributes to transcendental style seems to constitute a similar dissipation of abundance and noise as is captured by Otto’s triad of absences: darkness, silence, and emptiness. As Otto himself puts it, “‘void’ is, like darkness and silence, a negation, but a negation that does away with every ‘this’ and ‘here’, in order that the ‘wholly other’ may become actual.”⁷⁷ This is stasis in Schrader’s theory; the actuality of the

⁷³ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 68.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

transcendent divine experienced affectively in filmic stillness.

Of course, 'stasis' in Schrader's theory is precipitated by decisive action; that "final moment of disparity" which was outlined in the preceding section. Otto's influence on transcendental style is apparent here too. In particular, Schrader's description of decisive action and the stasis that it precipitates is strongly connected with Otto's articulation of the *Mysterium Tremendum*.⁷⁸ As has been outlined, Schrader's central argument is that, following a disciplined and attentive focus on the everyday, the portrayal of a decisive action will affect a silent and awed stasis in the viewer. This is couched in the same terms that Otto uses in *The Idea of the Holy*; specifically, it is couched in the terms of affective encounter. Otto describes the *Mysterium Tremendum* in such a way, emphasising the feeling of awe (*tremendum*) alongside the sense of radical, confrontational encounter:

The feeling of it [the *Mysterium Tremendum*] may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship... It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy... It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of - whom or what?⁷⁹

The indescribable and enigmatic nature of this encounter is precisely what Schrader wishes to convey through his account of decisive action and the ensuing stasis he describes. The affective nature of this experience, its feeling-content, is paramount; Otto deliberately makes the connection with Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-30.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

dependence,” but moves beyond this to describe the feeling as “the annihilation of self, and then, as its complement, of the transcendent as the sole and entire reality.”⁸⁰ At this point, Otto has shifted away from technical descriptions of the expression or experience of the divine and has entered the realm of mysticism. Schrader, however, does not fully engage with this theological nuance, and so it remains unclear as to whether or not he intends to designate decisive action as mystical in this way. Nonetheless, what is clear is that Schrader intends to align the kind of supreme affective expression integral to his concept of decisive action with Otto’s description of the *Mysterium Tremendum* as “the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion.”⁸¹

So far, I have endeavoured to identify the theological moves that Schrader makes, implicitly and explicitly, in his progression through the three ‘steps’ of transcendental style. He argues that a focus on the mundane ‘activates’ the viewer through emotional detachment; ‘disparity’ reveals the cracks in the apparently banal reality of ‘the everyday’, before a moment of decisive action shatters this facade entirely; this precipitates an experience which is something like a transcendent encounter with the divine, the only possible outcome of which is ‘stasis’. This argument stems from a valuable and insightful intuition; namely that cinematic art can facilitate epiphanic expression and experience of the divine. Yet this argument also belies several theological inadequacies which undermine Schrader’s theory. Above all, the notion that ‘disparity’ facilitates the possibility for the intrusion of the transcendent into the everyday perpetuates a flawed dualism of the transcendent and the everyday, the natural and the supernatural.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

This chapter will now critique this false binary, adopting the lens of sacramental theology for this purpose; for a sacramental reinterpretation of Schrader's theory recognises the everyday as far more theologically significant than a mere aesthetic tool for fostering a reflective distance between art and viewer. This sacramental critique was briefly alluded to through the work of Richard Kearney earlier in this section, but Louis-Marie Chauvet makes for a more effective dialogue partner in this regard because, as will be demonstrated, his phenomenological approach illuminates the possibility of a correction to transcendental style with which progress might be made.⁸²

A SACRAMENTAL CRITIQUE: LOUIS-MARIE CHAUVET

The single greatest shortcoming of transcendental style is this insistence on the false dichotomy of transcendence and the mundane everyday; the natural and the supernatural. I have held off from critiquing it thoroughly until now, because it is so fundamental to Schrader's theory, and therefore deserves a concentrated analysis. To begin with, though, it is necessary to return to transcendental style's focus on the everyday; after all, much of what Schrader describes here seems at first glance to assert the sacramental significance of the everyday. There is his remark that "the raw material taken from real life is the raw material of the Transcendent,"⁸³ and then, of course, there is his detailed focus on Bresson, whose sacramental perspective is evident throughout his films, interviews, and writing. Throughout his *Notes on the Cinematographer*, for example, Bresson talks about coming "face to face with the real,"⁸⁴

⁸² Chapter II attempts this correction.

⁸³ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 89.

⁸⁴ Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, p. 95.

as well as the transformative power of cinema and the real: “The most ordinary word, when put into place, suddenly acquires brilliance.”⁸⁵ Consider again his reflection that “the supernatural in film is only the real rendered more precise.” For Bresson, God is mediated in and through the everyday phenomena of the real. This is a deeply sacramental perspective of existence, an articulation of the *sacramentum mundi*, which extends beyond the parameters of the liturgical instances of the sacraments in order to designate the whole gift of creation as sacramental. This encompassing sacramental vision of our existence is at the heart of Louis-Marie Chauvet’s “fundamental theology of sacramentality,”⁸⁶ and it provides a fascinating and productive way in which to develop a critique of transcendental style, for it recognises the full theological significance of cinematic depictions of the everyday. To some extent, Chauvet’s theology reinforces and substantiates Schrader’s intuitions about the everyday in transcendental style. Crucially, though, Chauvet’s perspective challenges the inadequacies of Schrader’s insistence on the problematic binary of transcendence and immanence.

First, a brief overview of Chauvet’s theology is required. Through his sacramental approach, Chauvet is responding to the central tension between divine presence and divine perception: the absolute transcendence of God and the immanence of human experience in the world. This is evident from the subtitle of his second book *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (*Les Sacrements: Parole de Dieu au risque du corps*), which captures the tension inherent in the expression of the transcendent within the bodily world of human existence. This problem is expressed in phenomenological terms: how does the theologian make sense of the appearance of

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁶ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* [trans. Patrick Madigan & Madeleine Beaumont] (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995) p. 548. See also pp. 159-160.

the divine in the bodily phenomena given to her? Chauvet's answer is simple and radically sacramental; the theologian cannot make sense of the divine in any other way than through corporeality. This position is succinctly outlined in the 'Overture' to *The Sacraments*:

Faith cannot be lived in any other way, including what is most spiritual in it, than in *the mediation of the body*, the body of a society, of a desire, of a tradition, of a history, of an institution, and so on. What is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal [*Le plus spirituel a toujours lieu dans le plus corporel*].⁸⁷

Le plus spirituel a toujours lieu dans le plus corporel – these words resound with the echo of Bresson's idea that "the supernatural in film is only the real rendered more precise" (and so not 'super-natural' in the classical sense of vertical transcendence). In this quotation, Chauvet is offering a resolution of the tension between ontological transcendence and immanent experience: spiritual reality is always situated within corporeal reality; transcendence is always perceived through the immanence of worldly phenomena.

The first part of this quotation is also important, particularly in the wider context of Chauvet's thought, because it reveals his very particular understanding of *du corps*. In listing various theological categories of 'body' (as history, tradition, desire, and so on), he sets up the argument he is about to make for a sacramental understanding of worldly existence through the symbolic terms of 'the body'. This is to be understood as a "symbolic order"⁸⁸ of creation, including Church, scripture, language, and indeed

⁸⁷ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* [trans. Madeleine Beaumont] (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001) p. xii.

⁸⁸ It is not within the scope of this chapter to flesh out Chauvet's detailed explication of 'the symbolic order', but see: *The Sacraments* pp. 13-17, for his discussion of the term.

the physical entities ('bodies') that mediate God's presence and revelation, for example the bread and wine at the Eucharist. The result of this is not so much a sacramental taxonomy of the world, but rather an understanding of being and existence that is sacramental to its very core. It is a sacramental theology that extends beyond the parameters of the liturgical instances of the sacraments in order to designate the whole gift of existence as sacramental. This is the 'sacramental reinterpretation of Christian existence' that Chauvet identifies with the subtitle of *Symbol and Sacrament*.

The 'symbolic order' that Chauvet expounds represents what Joseph Martos recognises as Chauvet's rejection of ontotheology "in favour of a radically phenomenological analysis."⁸⁹ By ontotheology, Martos is of course referring to Heidegger,⁹⁰ whom Chauvet deals with explicitly and in detail,⁹¹ drawing from Heidegger's attempt to overcome the problem of ontotheology; namely, that it ignores the essential withdrawnness of Being.⁹² It is impossible to provide a proper account of Heidegger in this chapter, but it is necessary to mention Chauvet's rigorous treatment of him in order to illustrate the context of Chauvet's crucial move "toward sacrament,"⁹³ as he describes it at the end of his chapter on Heidegger. Chauvet's later development of this move, through his idea of a 'symbolic order' of being within creation, leads to a sacramental theology which emphasises the semiotic nature of bodily, worldly existence. And so a phenomenology of signification and symbolic order becomes the turning point of Chauvet's sacramental theology, which is why Martos designates it as "a radically phenomenological analysis."

⁸⁹ Joseph Martos, 'Louis-Marie Chauvet's Postmodern Sacramental Theology', *Assembly: A Journal of Liturgical Theology*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2009).

⁹⁰ Rather than Kant, with whom the term originates. (In section seven of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.)

⁹¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, pp. 46-83.

⁹² Here Chauvet points to Heidegger's deliberate striking of the word 'Being' in his *Contribution to the Question about Being* (1955).

⁹³ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 82.

Chauvet's theology is extremely valuable for a theological critique of transcendental style. At a fundamental level, it reinforces Schrader's basic intuition that cinematic art can indeed mediate experience of the divine; for if, as Chauvet suggests, divine presence is mediated through the bodily phenomena of the sacramental universe, then art can be recognised as another 'body' in the symbolic order of Christian existence. Moreover, Chauvet's focus on this embodiment can aid in a theological analysis of film's essentially corporeal form. Film is an embodied medium; it portrays the bodies of its subjects photographically, as they exist corporeally in the world, communicating from embodiment to the embodied viewer. Even the vital organs of cinema are analogous with the vital organs of the body: the camera and microphone as eyes and ears; a tracking rig or crane as musculoskeletal system; the filmmaker(s) as the brain and central nervous system which causes the muscles to move and which directs the senses towards sight and sound. The embodied nature of film will be explored fully in Chapter II's phenomenological analysis. However, at present, this discussion of film, embodiment, and the sacramental contributes another level to the theological critique of transcendental style and the inadequacies of its treatment of 'the everyday'.

At face value, there is an apparent consonance between Chauvet's and Schrader's positions: Chauvet recognises that "what is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal," while Schrader emphasises the transcendental significance of banal day-to-day living. However, there is a crucial discrepancy between Chauvet's 'fundamental theology of sacramentality' and the role that the mundane plays in transcendental style. Whereas Chauvet emphasises the sacramentality of existence through a theology of divine presence *in* everyday phenomena, Schrader emphasises that divine presence is *at odds with* the immanence of everyday phenomena. This is

clear from the way that Schrader develops the progression from the first 'step' of transcendental style ('the everyday') to the second 'step' ('disparity'). According to him, transcendence is only expressed through the immanent insofar as it constitutes an intrusion into the immanent. In Schrader's own words:

It is obvious why a transcendental artist in cinema (the 'realistic' medium) would choose such a representation of life: it prepares reality for the intrusion of the Transcendent... The everyday meticulously sets up the straw man of day-to-day reality... so that it may be knocked down later.⁹⁴

This is the development of 'the everyday' in Schrader's theory that is so at odds with Chauvet's theology. Any suggestion that "the enemy of transcendence is immanence"⁹⁵ is incompatible with a sacramental interpretation of Christian existence, such as Chauvet's, which disassembles the old false dichotomy of transcendence and immanence and suggests that the two are indissolubly connected.

So, the main theological inadequacy of transcendental style, as it is presented by Schrader, is its suggestion that there are two types of experience, which are presented as dialectically opposed to one another: day-to-day experience and so-called 'religious experience' or 'transcendental experience'. This is, of course, a distinction that Schrader inherited from Otto, whose concept of numinous experience is set up as

⁹⁴ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 67.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42. It is important to observe that Schrader makes this comment in response to several "conventional interpretations of reality: realism, naturalism, psychologism, romanticism, expressionism, impressionism, and, finally, rationalism." (p. 42) Yet in arguing that these "conventional interpretations" of life are devoid of the possibility for transcendence, Schrader denies the sacramental reality of creation and human being in the world. Schrader is right to observe that realism, naturalism, romanticism, and so on are not "imperatives" (p. 42), but would he really want to deny that naturalists, romantics, and realists (like Bazin) can encounter the transcendent through these interpretive modes of being in the world?

‘extra-ordinary’, and therefore in opposition to the ordinary.⁹⁶ Yet it is also inherited from Eliade, who imposes a similar dichotomy on human experience of the world when he sets out a distinction between “religious experience” and “profane experience”.⁹⁷ Such a dichotomy seems wholly inadequate because it limits the mediation of divine presence to small ‘pockets’ of experience, which are arbitrarily defined by ambiguous criteria (such as affect), and which label the divine as an intrusion upon the phenomena of worldly existence. At best this represents a significant myopia in the doctrine of creation;⁹⁸ at worst it expounds something like Manichaeism, where the material phenomena of creation is not simply void of divine presence but in fact hostile to it (the pejorative associations of Eliade’s “profane space”).⁹⁹

This is where Chauvet’s position offers a much-needed correction, through his sacramental and phenomenological approach. By deploying a sacramental framework, Chauvet’s theology escapes the somewhat arbitrary challenge of defining instances of ‘religious experience’, and by affirming that mediation of the divine is always accomplished through the bodily phenomena of creation (for we are embodied creatures), Chauvet radically extends his sacramental perspective of Christian existence. This amounts to a contradiction of Otto and Schrader, which suggests a necessary correction: the dichotomy of ‘transcendence’ and ‘immanence’ must be collapsed. There are no discrete boundaries between the sacred and the profane, between ‘transcendent experience’ and ‘mundane experience’; there is just experience, in which God may or may not mediate God’s presence.

⁹⁶ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 29.

⁹⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20-22.

⁹⁸ Chapter V will engage explicitly with this doctrine.

⁹⁹ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 22.

The key concept which emerges from this is participation.¹⁰⁰ While transcendental style suggests that the transcendent intrudes, bursts forth, or somehow spills into the immanence of everyday life, the sacramental perspective proposes a different understanding: the mundane, everyday reality of creation can participate in the transcendent reality of God. A focus on the banality of day-to-day living in cinema can perhaps facilitate experience of the divine, but not in the intrusive, dialectical manner that Schrader suggests. Rather, if such facilitation of divine disclosure is indeed possible, then it must be understood sacramentally as participation in and reception of the divine presence. Here, again, Chauvet's theology provides some insight, for *Symbol and Sacrament* climaxes with a discussion of participation and reception in the context of the doctrine of creation. The crux of this discussion is twofold: the realisation that "the grace of creation [is] the passage from language [Word] to body,"¹⁰¹ and the realisation that divine disclosure is not a 'decisive action' in any temporal sense. Sacramentally, divine disclosure cannot be understood in the terms of intrusion, because participation is continual activity and not a discrete, isolated event. The sacramental constitutes "the witnesses of a God who is never finished with coming: the amazed witnesses of a God who comes continually."¹⁰² And so, by bringing transcendental style into dialogue with Chauvet, the theological shortcomings of Schrader's theory become clear; particularly Schrader's notion that the divine is mediated by a sudden overflowing of the transcendent into the immanence of the everyday. On the contrary, divine presence is ongoing gift, not rarefied intrusion.

¹⁰⁰ The theology of participation will emerge in a pivotal role in Chapter V.

¹⁰¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 554.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 555.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Here, at the outset of this thesis, it is important to begin with transcendental style, because in many ways Schrader's theory attempts to answer the central question with which this project is concerned: what is the theological power of film? This first chapter has sought to set out and provide a theological critique of Schrader's theory, in order to determine how successful transcendental style is as a response to this question. I have shown that, according to Schrader, the expression of and encounter with the divine that is facilitated by transcendental style films belongs entirely to the realm of affective experience. By beginning with an analysis of how Schrader defines transcendence, as well as his use of terms like 'the Holy' and 'the Transcendent', I have demonstrated the influence of Otto's theology on his theory, which is exemplified by Schrader's preference for Otto's conceptualisation of God as the 'Wholly Other'. This, combined with the observation that Schrader favours Mircea Eliade's understanding of sacred experience as 'hierophany', demonstrates that transcendental style purports to facilitate an affective manifestation of the transcendent. From here, this chapter anatomised transcendental style itself, through a close reading of the three 'steps' that Schrader outlines in the text ('the everyday', 'disparity', and 'stasis'). A theological critique was initiated by re-examining Schrader's foundational definition of 'transcendental', and went on to flesh out and interrogate the theological moves he makes in the progression of his theory. Finally, bringing transcendental style into dialogue with Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology has proved especially fruitful, because it reveals a crucial discrepancy between his and Schrader's understandings of transcendence; namely, that transcendental style emphasises a theologically inadequate dichotomy of the transcendent and the mundane.

In the first instance, then, transcendental style's account of the theological power of film is limited because of this false dichotomy that it imposes on our experience of the world; that there is transcendent, 'religious' experience on the one hand, and mundane, 'secular' experience on the other. Yet there are more fundamental issues with the theory too. Transcendental style rests on the assumption that it is meaningful to talk about affective experience of the transcendent, yet it does not provide an adequate theological analysis of affective perception and expression of the divine. It does not attempt to answer the crucial questions of whether God can actually be expressed and perceived affectively, or how such expression of the divine might be verified and described theologically, or even whether such affective discourse is useful within theology in the first place.

For all these reasons, this response must continue and look beyond transcendental style for an answer to the questions posed by this thesis. Nonetheless, Schrader's basic intuition, the 'hunch' at the foundation of his theory, is inherently valuable and entirely worth pursuing. This is his recognition that a certain style of filmmaking can prime and facilitate the experience and expression of the divine. The great merit of this position is its emphasis on the formal and stylistic elements of cinema, rather than merely the narrative and thematic elements of individual films; it is not enough to simply film a 'religious story' if cinema is to realise the full extent of its theological significance. Indeed, Schrader's account of this stylistic potential of film is deeply valuable for the theologian. As has been argued throughout this chapter, his emphasis on the attention to the mundane 'everyday' is particularly significant, even though it ultimately reveals the shortcomings of his theory. Likewise, his description of 'stasis', although underdeveloped theologically, is valuable because it aligns transcendental style with the concept of the sublime in art. Schrader may not provide a wholly

adequate analysis of affective expression of the divine, but his theory does provide an important starting point in the crossover between understandings of the film experience and of the perception and expression of the divine. As a result, it is necessary to consider transcendental style as underdeveloped rather than simply erroneous or misconceived. This thesis will not reject Schrader's theory outright, then, but will instead seek a correction that will retain the virtues of transcendental style while acknowledging its limits as outlined in this theological critique. After pursuing such a correction I will be able to move beyond transcendental style and to open up the theological analysis of cinematic art in a variety of ways. This will be the purpose of Chapter II.

II

From Affect to Encounter: A Phenomenological Correction to Transcendental Style

At the very end of Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959), a young woman waits tentatively by the bars of a prison ward. Her head is bent over her lap, her eyes downcast, and in all she appears as some host of commingled shame and sadness. When at last she does look up, it is to see the man she has come to visit, Michel, the eponymous pickpocket. She goes to him and they embrace through the bars.¹⁰³ It is an unexpected, unprecedented moment of intimacy in the film and it is the only moment in the entire picture which Bresson underscores with music. "Something lit up her face," Michel's voiceover says, and the viewer witnesses some form of epiphany in their encounter as they realise a transfigured love for one another.

This scene is one of Paul Schrader's favourite examples of what he termed 'decisive action' in the cinema; a jarring event which, as was illustrated in the previous chapter's exposition, precipitates a sudden paroxysm of emotion, the only response to which is stasis. For Schrader, such a moment constitutes the emotional perception and expression of the transcendent. For him, scenes like the finale of *Pickpocket* manifest as nothing less than affective experience of the divine. However, in focusing purely on this burst of feeling, Schrader's understanding of divine expression and perception leads him to a myopic reading of Bresson's ending to *Pickpocket*. In attending solely to

¹⁰³ Figure 7.

the appearance of affect in this scene, Schrader neglects what is essential to it; the epiphanic encounter between the two characters and the viewer,¹⁰⁴ their somatic and sensuous embrace through the bars even while their bodies are separated by this partition. It is an emotional experience, of course, but to focus solely on this emotion is to ignore what the scene really depicts.

Transcendental style is built on the theological assumption that the divine can be perceived in and through affective experience. That the divine appears in the realm of affect, however, cannot be taken for granted, and it is necessary to interrogate this assumption if transcendental style is to play a part in a response to the question this thesis poses. Indeed, by raising and exploring the question of the possibility for affective experience of the divine, an alternative understanding of the theological power of film emerges with which to move forward, beyond transcendental style. This is the notion of encounter, and specifically embodied encounter with the other. This chapter will pursue this alternative as a correction to transcendental style, using a phenomenological analysis to navigate the question of affective experience and the concept of encounter with the other ‘in the flesh’, which I will argue is at the heart of Christian theology, and which finds its supreme expression in the incarnation.

1. THE QUESTION OF AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE

The question of affective experience of God (of whether God appears in the realm of

¹⁰⁴ I am using the word ‘epiphanic’ to describe this encounter as a deliberate allusion to Levinas’ ‘epiphany of the face’, which plays a major role in the discussion below. Indeed, it is worth observing that only the two faces of Michel and Jeanne are shown in the final scene of *Pickpocket*; the gaolers who deliver Michel to the visiting cell are shown from behind or else left unfocused in the background, rendered faceless, so that the only face-to-face encounter is the one between the two protagonists.

‘feeling’) is most insightfully explored through phenomenology, for in the first and last instances phenomenology is the study of experience. This necessarily includes affective experience; the phenomenologist’s task is “the study of the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view,”¹⁰⁵ and no study of the structures of consciousness would be complete without taking into account the appearance of affective phenomena to consciousness.

Of course, phenomenology is a vast philosophical field and it is unrealistic to attempt any phenomenological inquiry with the pretence of exhausting all the resources within the field. For the present discussion, the work of two phenomenologists is fundamental: Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It will be invaluable here, at the beginning of this chapter, to introduce the rudiments of their respective contributions and to say something of the relationship between the two philosophers.

HUSSERL AND MERLEAU-PONTY

Phenomenology is the philosophy of phenomena – the objects of our perception – and how they appear to us as we experience them. Thus, the goal of phenomenology is to describe and develop the conscious processes of perception and cognition. In 1907, over the course of a week at the end of April, Edmund Husserl, in many ways the ‘founding father’ of phenomenology, delivered five lectures introducing and summarising the principle ideas of this new philosophical method.¹⁰⁶ In these lectures,

¹⁰⁵ David Woodruff Smith, ‘Phenomenology’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>.

¹⁰⁶ These lectures, together with Husserl’s *The Train of Thoughts in the Lectures*, were later collected and published in 1950 as *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* (*The Idea of Phenomenology*). This text is an excellent entry point into Husserl’s phenomenology and is the main source for the introduction provided in this section.

Husserl begins with the idea that the fundamental starting point for “the possibility of cognition”¹⁰⁷ is the rigorous reflection of experience itself; that is, the appearance of the phenomenal world *and* the activity of consciousness in experiencing and making sense of the phenomenal world. This idea forms the basis of Husserl’s phenomenology throughout the rest of his account.

Since it is primarily a philosophical method (or “attitude of mind” as Husserl puts it),¹⁰⁸ rather than a doctrine or philosophical school, a codified definition of phenomenology is difficult to formulate. Husserl himself seems reticent to offer a concise definition that could be considered exhaustive or comprehensive in such a way. However, one brief passage towards the end of the first lecture goes some way to defining Husserlian phenomenology:

[If we] confine ourselves purely to the task of *clarifying the essence of cognition and of being an object of cognition, then this will be phenomenology of cognition and of being an object of cognition* and will be the first and principle part of phenomenology as a whole.¹⁰⁹

Simply put, clarifying the essence of cognition and clarifying the essence of being an object of cognition is the fundamental principle of Husserl’s phenomenology. In other words, for Husserl, phenomenology is the philosophy of phenomena as they appear in the world and as they are taken up as conscious experience via perception.

Here, already, an essential reciprocity at the heart of cognition is implied; there is an

¹⁰⁷ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964) p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18

indissoluble connection between the phenomena perceived and the act of perception itself. This is possibly Husserl's most important contribution; he identifies that experience is reciprocally informed by the twin natures of *the thing itself* and *consciousness' grasp of the thing*. Husserl concisely describes this as the "marvellous correlation between the *phenomenon of cognition* and the *object of cognition*."¹¹⁰ This irreducible correlation of objective phenomena and subjective consciousness is the key to understanding intentionality (the quality of consciousness to be directed towards something) in Husserl's thought.

It is this understanding of experience, cognition and intentionality which drives Husserl's phenomenology. Crucially, because Husserl views phenomenology as a philosophical method or 'attitude', it becomes a practice for understanding the nature and processes of experience, with a kind of applied ruleset. The goal of this practice is, in Husserl's words, "to grasp the meaning of the absolutely given [...] to grasp the absolutely 'seeing' evidence which gets hold of itself."¹¹¹ This functions as the deconstruction of various mediating actualities or presuppositions which colour or frame experience, obfuscating it and inhibiting any given phenomenon from appearing "as it is."¹¹² Such deconstruction constitutes Husserl's principle concept of phenomenological reduction.

The goal of Husserlian reduction is "to attain an absolute datum...to get back to the pure phenomenon"¹¹³ - to display and perceive the essence of an object of experience *as it is*, unencumbered by the trappings of intentional perception. This goal therefore

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹² *Ibid.* Husserl labels these mediating actualities of cognition 'transcendent' or 'transcendences'; and so his task becomes the transcendental reduction that pursues the absolutely immanent data of a phenomenon.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

produces a methodology centred on the necessity of, first, making mediating actualities and presuppositions explicit and, second, of setting these actualities and presuppositions aside. (This methodology of reduction is the stand-out characteristic of Husserl's phenomenology. However, as will be discussed, Merleau-Ponty emphasised the vanity in seeking 'the pure phenomenon', because reflection - however rigorous - can never be separated from embodied consciousness.)

Husserl formally articulates the process of reduction "for the first time"¹¹⁴ in the third lecture. Phenomenological reduction is the process of 'bracketing out' the mediating actualities ('transcendences', as he terms them) which colour the experience of any given phenomenon; to this process Husserl applies the Greek concept ἐποχή (*epochē*; 'cessation' or 'suspension of judgement'). These mediating actualities could be any 'common sense' belief¹¹⁵ about the nature of a phenomenon. Indeed, even the belief of a phenomenon's actual existence must be 'bracketed out' when describing how it appears to consciousness. According to Husserl, after such reductions have been made, the 'absolute datum' is all that remains, which presents the 'pure phenomenon' as it is. So Husserl presents "the device of phenomenological reduction"¹¹⁶ as a 'scientific' method for the phenomenologist to apply to any conscious experience, in order to perceive the phenomenon of that experience as it really is.

As was suggested, it is precisely over the question of Husserl's method (the question of the possibility for phenomenological reduction) that Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed his own phenomenology in the 1930s and 1940s. In his *Phénoménologie de la perception* (*Phenomenology of Perception*), Merleau-Ponty argues at the outset that it is

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹¹⁵ Or, what Husserl terms the 'natural attitude' or 'natural science'. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

impossible to separate the philosophical reflection necessary for reduction from the primordial moment of perception in consciousness. Essentially, the process of phenomenological reduction is itself subject to the same irreducible correlation of intentionality that it purports to discern and suspend (ἐποχή).

To put it roundly, although Husserl and Merleau-Ponty both argued that human consciousness and its objects are constitutive of experience *together*, there is an important difference between their respective positions: Husserl contends that it is theoretically possible to perceive the objective reality of phenomena (“the pure phenomenon”) by applying phenomenological reduction to our subjective perception of them; Merleau-Ponty on the other hand contends that such “pure impression”¹¹⁷ is inconceivable. He writes: “Pure impression is thus not merely undiscoverable, but imperceptible [...] An isolated perceptual given is inconceivable, so long as we perform the mental experiment of trying to perceive it [*si du moins nous faisons l'expérience mentale de la percevoir*].”¹¹⁸ In other words, the very attempt to perceive a phenomenon objectively immediately renders the possibility of seeing it as “pure phenomenon” impossible.¹¹⁹

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology thus emphasises the absolute and indissoluble nature of perception/perceived: “we must not wonder if we truly perceive a world; rather, we must say: the world is that which we perceive.”¹²⁰ This is the foundational principle of Merleau-Ponty's entire phenomenology: conscious experience is entirely contingent on our worldly embodiment; our ‘being-in/towards-the-world’ (*être au*

¹¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ It is worth observing that the French word ‘impression’ usually connotes physical impression, such as printing or stamping, since Merleau-Ponty prioritises the embodied nature of perception throughout his phenomenology.

¹²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. lxxx.

monde). *Être au monde* is of course developed from Heidegger's *In-der-Welt-sein*, but Merleau-Ponty's unique hermeneutical contribution was to take the original French translation of Heidegger's phrase (*être dans le monde*) and reconfigure it with the preposition 'à' ('au' in contraction) instead of *dans*; this is because 'à' "introduces a rich set of relations"¹²¹ ('in', 'to', 'of', 'at', for example) compared with the limited '*dans*'. In particular, the relation of being oriented *towards* the world. The point which is at stake here is the ultimate significance of corporeality; whereas Husserl sought the meaning of experience in the absolute data of phenomena, Merleau-Ponty contends that the meaning of experience can only be understood through our embodied and corporeal perception of phenomena 'in the world'.¹²²

Perhaps Merleau-Ponty gives the best summary of his phenomenology when reflecting upon his own writing process, at the beginning of the third and final part of his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Here, he problematises the Cartesian cogito; rejecting a dualism of cognition and body and preferring a radically corporeal understanding.¹²³ "I am thinking of the Cartesian cogito, wanting to finish this work, sensing the coolness of the paper under my hand, and perceiving the trees of the boulevard through the window."¹²⁴ Merleau-Ponty goes on to suggest that cognition is intrinsically bound to the phenomenal, to embodiment. All such mediating actualities - the coolness of Merleau-Ponty's paper, or the feel of his pen, or the breeze through the window - are the 'transcendences' that Husserl subjects to phenomenological reduction; yet Merleau-Ponty argues that such transcendences are in fact the very

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. xlix. (Donald Landes' translator's introduction.)

¹²² See especially *Phenomenology of Perception* p. 84: "The body is the vehicle of being in the world [...] For if it is true that I am conscious of my body through the world and if my body is the unperceived term at the centre of the world toward which every object turns its face, then it is true for the same reason that my body is the pivot of the world. I know that the objects have several faces because I can move around them, and in this sense I am conscious of the world by means of my body."

¹²³ This corporeal focus is taken up by Louis-Marie Chauvet in his phenomenological theology, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

¹²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 387.

fabric of conscious perception and cognition. "Life continuously throws itself into transcendent things; it happens entirely on the outside."¹²⁵ Which is to say, cognition cannot be dissected into the discrete categories of perception and the perceived; the object that is perceived only ever appears to consciousness through the act of perception, all mediating actualities ('transcendences') included:

The 'interpretation' that I give of my sensations must surely be motivated, and it can only be motivated by the very structure of these sensations [L'interprétation que je donne de mes sensations doit bien être motivée, et elle ne peut l'être que par la structure même de ces sensations], so much so that it can be equally said that there is no transcendent interpretation or no judgment that does not spring from the very configuration of phenomena.¹²⁶

Such is the primordial nature of Merleau-Ponty's *être au monde*. Our 'being in the world' means that consciousness is never able to eschew its temporal and phenomenal context, and so cannot engage in pure thought or doubt in the way that Descartes or other dualists suggest. Objectivity and subjectivity are an impossible distinction for Merleau-Ponty; he pursues "the opportunity to leave behind, once and for all, the classical subject-object dichotomy."¹²⁷ Above all, embodiment is the governing principle behind *être au monde*, such that Descartes' 'I think therefore I am' is supplanted by Gabriel Marcel's 'I am my body'¹²⁸ as a fundamental tenet of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹²⁸ Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having* (Westminster, London: Dacre Press, 1949).

The backdrop of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty provides the phenomenological apparatus with which to investigate the question of affective experience. Specifically; does God appear affectively to consciousness, that is, within the realm of feeling? It is necessary to say from the outset that this is a complex question, and one for which a definitive answer cannot necessarily be given. Nonetheless, the exercise of responding to this question is itself extremely valuable because, as will be shown, such a response indicates an alternative strategy for understanding affective experience of the divine; one which, crucially, is sufficiently grounded in the incarnation.

This complex question is judiciously addressed by Jean-Yves Lacoste, who is often associated with the 'theological turn' of French phenomenology.¹²⁹ Lacoste's fifth book, *La phénoménalité de Dieu: neuf études*, is published in English as *The Appearing of God: Nine Studies*, however, the anglophone reader does well to keep in mind the more literal translation of this title: 'The *Phenomenality* of God'. The question of affective experience is prominent in each of the 'nine studies' which comprise this book, but Lacoste provides his most thorough treatment of the question in the second essay, 'Perception, Transcendence, and the Knowledge of God'. This text merits detailed attention in the present discussion.

Working from Husserl's framework of cognition and perception, Lacoste first asks if affective phenomena appear to consciousness as perceptible entities; as he succinctly puts it, "When we feel, is there 'something' that we feel?"¹³⁰ In other words, does affect

¹²⁹ I am referring to Dominique Janicaud's account of this 'theological turn'. Janicaud does not include Lacoste in his critique of the 'turn', but Lacoste has become widely associated with it, particularly because of his engagement with philosophers like Levinas and Ricoeur.

¹³⁰ Jean-Yves Lacoste [trans. Oliver O'Donovan], *The Appearing of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

possess phenomenality in some way? Before analysing Lacoste's response to this, there is a more basic interpretation that must be addressed. For the instinctive, obvious response to this question seems to be the negative; surely the defining feature of affective experience is its abstraction from the (physically) sensory, its appearance as a kind of 'pure consciousness'? The issue is not so straightforward, however, for this response would imply that what we feel when we feel is the affect itself; so that 'feeling sad' or 'feeling happy' is the feeling 'of sadness', 'of happiness', where 'sadness' and 'happiness' appear as phenomena themselves. Psychology and neuroscience might corroborate this position, for affects like 'happiness' or 'sadness' are phenomenally observable in human brain chemistry.¹³¹

To take this a step further, along the Merleau-Pontian lines described above: is the feeling of 'happiness' or 'sadness' the feeling of our own cognition; a reflexive experience of the the act of perception itself which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is indistinguishable from the object of perception? Lacoste argues something similar, referring to aesthetic values (for example, that Schoenberg's music is 'good').¹³² He points out that aesthetic values "may lose their phenomenality"¹³³ because they do not always appear as shared or constant phenomena; I might value the films of Ingmar Bergman, but you might not. More interesting than a simple disagreement over a value judgement though, is the matter of my own mode of viewing; I might value the paintings of the impressionists but, if I view them whilst preoccupied by a painful or traumatic memory, I might cease to feel any value for them in that moment.¹³⁴ Other affective experience may also "lose their phenomenality" in this way, appearing more

2018) p. 29.

¹³¹ See, by way of an accessible introduction: Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (London: Vintage Books, 2012).

¹³² Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 30.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

and more reflexively: “What I feel, moreover, may be no more than myself, my existence as being-in-the-world. To feel comfortable, to feel lonely, to feel anxious, are affective tonalities that show me only how I am.”¹³⁵ In short, when we feel, the ‘something’ that we feel may be nothing other than our own consciousness. Of course, we cannot preclude the possibility that there are objects of affective experience outside of our own consciousness, but the question of how to verify these remains unresolved and perhaps unresolvable; “Is it object, or is it simply myself that I feel, myself mostly as being-in-the-world? We cannot always make the distinction clearly...With sensory perception we can always give a name to the object of experience, with affective perception we cannot always do so.”¹³⁶ This is the problematic that Lacoste introduces and then applies to the question of affective experience of God.

As he turns explicitly to the question of whether God appears in the realm of feeling, Lacoste’s first strategy is to call upon St John of the Cross’ writings about emotional experience of the divine. He summarises St John’s approach as the precept, “If you feel, it is not God that you feel,”¹³⁷ though he provides no exact reference of where he reads this maxim in John’s writings. Perhaps, though, Lacoste is referring to the way John suggests emotions hinder the believer from comprehending God during spiritual instruction. For example, in *The Living Flame of Love*, John writes that “the natural operations and affections at this time [when God infuses himself into the soul through contemplation] impede rather than help.”¹³⁸ John argues for an annihilation and detachment of the affections when trying to comprehend God; a voluntary and kenotic movement into ‘the dark night of the soul’ (in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*) where faith and trust in God alone are prioritised above any affective experience that purports to

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ St John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 3, paragraph 47.

‘feel’ God. As John says:

A soul may lean upon any knowledge of its own, or any feeling or experience of God, yet, however great this may be, it is very little and far different from what God is.¹³⁹

Such is Lacoste’s initial strategy of responding to the question of whether God appears in affective experience. Yet he is quick to caution against throwing out the question entirely: “John of the Cross and his followers must face the objection that we have no right to forbid the Absolute to appear within the sphere of emotion.”¹⁴⁰ This is true, of course, for to say that God cannot appear in the realm of feeling is to limit God’s transcendence. However, to say unequivocally and conclusively that one has experienced God emotionally is equally limiting of God’s transcendence, because it implies that the divine presence can be contained within human feeling. As Lacoste argues: “God is not more felt than unfelt. To know that he eludes the captivity of our feelings is to respect his transcendence.”¹⁴¹

Herein lies the problem which undermines Schleiermacher’s understanding of affective experience of the divine. Because the appearance of God to feeling is so difficult to perceive with clarity (in light of a sufficient understanding of transcendence), the “intuition of the universe”¹⁴² that Schleiermacher hopes to introduce in the *Speeches* becomes an incertitude. As Lacoste describes it, “We cannot exclude the possibility that the experience to which Schleiermacher wished to

¹³⁹ St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book 2, Chapter IV, Paragraph 3.

¹⁴⁰ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 32.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁴² Friedrich Schleiermacher [trans. Richard Crouter], *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 24.

introduce the readers of his *Speeches* could open the door to true revelation. But neither can we exclude the alternative: that that experience concealed God rather than revealing him. There is our problem.”¹⁴³ To paraphrase Karl Barth: God may speak to us through a flute concerto or a dead dog, and we do well to listen to him if he really does, *but*, unless we regard ourselves as prophets, we cannot proclaim with certainty that he does so.¹⁴⁴ Simply put, how can Schleiermacher - or Otto or Schrader for that matter - be sure that ‘religious feeling’ really *feels* divine revelation, and that they are not according any given affective experience more significance than it warrants?

On the other hand, Schleiermacher’s ‘feeling of absolute dependence’¹⁴⁵ probably communicates an evident theological reality: the omnipotence of God and the absolute dependence of the creature on the creator. More than this, it is a helpful way of describing how the mode of the believer guides religious sensibility. The key question is whether a feeling of absolute dependence also entails the feeling of absolute transcendence because, as St John of the Cross observes, “any feeling or experience of God...however great this may be, [it] is very little and far different from what God is.” This is precisely why Rudolph Otto’s conceptualisation of religious affect falls short; it is impeded by an inadequate understanding of transcendence, which does not recognise that God must (at least partly) transcend affective experience. Even though terms like the ‘Wholly Other’, or ‘terrible and fascinating mystery’, imply something like transcendence, they still intend to define the divine nature and not simply the mode of the believer. To describe the immanence of affective experience of God, one must also describe God’s transcendence of that experience: “It is a perfectly serious suggestion that God may appear, paradoxically, as a hidden God. It is a property of

¹⁴³ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Alexandria, district of Columbia: Alexander Street Press, 2007) p. 55.

¹⁴⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

the divine revelation that there is always more that is unrevealed [...] To put it roundly, the appearing of God can only be understood in the light of his transcendence of appearing."¹⁴⁶ After all, even the apostles often failed to recognise Christ at first when he appeared to them after the resurrection (John 21:4 and Luke 24:13-35).

The matter, then, becomes a question of presence for Lacoste. Does affective experience claim to be experience of God, or experience of something else, which some might call 'the sacred' (that is, the phenomenal signs of the divine in creation)? Does affective religious experience claim that emotion has the capacity to bear the real presence, in the properly theological sense? To answer this question, Lacoste differentiates between 'presence' and '*parousia*', where the former is understood as a kind of *sacramentum mundi* (the sacred, present in creation), and the latter as an event or vision which anticipates the eschatological presence of God. In Lacoste's own words (employing the analogy of a house's facade): "God 'known in the heart' is simultaneously present and absent, felt and unfelt [...] We perceive houses, though only part of a house is adequately presented to our view. We feel God's presence (or may do so), though only presence, not *parousia*, is in reach of feeling."¹⁴⁷ In other words, affect may grasp something of the sacred, something of divine presence in creation, but this feeling of presence does not - and cannot - take possession of the divine in any sense of a 'coming' or of a 'vision', which rightly belongs to the eschatological order of creation.

Continuing from this distinction between presence and *parousia*, Lacoste appeals to interpersonal relationality in order to unpack this further:

¹⁴⁶ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, pp. 34-38.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

God can appear not in theophany but in the modest form of a presence felt. Pierre's presence does not guarantee comprehensive affective cognisance of Pierre. I know that this is Pierre, I am familiar with Pierre, yet I continue to discover new aspects of Pierre's personality [...] It will take me years to know Pierre completely, if I succeed in doing so. Can we say that complete acquaintance with God could ever be achieved?¹⁴⁸

The fact that experience of the 'other' emerges in response to the question of affective experience is telling. In light of everything that has just been discussed, it seems clear that affective experience of the divine is characterised by a particular elusiveness, an intrinsic uncertainty which surrounds the perception of a God who is at once present and absent, a God who at once appears and transcends appearance. And so, out of this (necessary) hesitancy, emerges an alternative way of understanding affective experience of the divine: as encounter with the other. Affect is a primal element of encounter with the other; when the other appears to our embodied consciousness we perceive them as much in the realm of feeling as in the realm of the physically sensory. Yet, if the theologian treats an affective experience by focusing on the phenomenon of the affect itself (for example 'wonder', 'awe', 'joy', 'absolute dependence' or 'the numinous'), she risks getting lost in the uncertainty of whether God truly appears in that affect. In the instance of encounter, however, the experience can be interpreted without having to describe the phenomenon of a given affect - without the need to seek "comprehensive affective cognisance," as Lacoste puts it. In the instance of encounter, the appearance of the other, rather than the appearance of emotion, is the primary phenomenon which presents to consciousness. This will be the subject for

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

analysis in the next section of this chapter.

2. EMBODIED ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER

I have not, by any stretch, said all there is to say about affective experience of the divine, and the above is in no way intended as an exhaustive account of the question. Rather, my aim is to illuminate the shape of the problematic at hand, its pitfalls and conceptual roadblocks, in order to demonstrate the value of taking an alternative approach. Indeed, to move away from a focus on the phenomenon of affect and to concentrate primarily on the phenomenon of encounter is mainly intended as recognition that the latter is the more fruitful line of thought, especially as the present response pursues a correction to Paul Schrader's theology in *Transcendental Style in Film*.

This move from affect to encounter should not be altogether surprising, either, given much of the theology discussed above. Otto's notion of experiencing the 'Wholly Other' strongly connotes encounter, though he does not explore the idea in a meaningful way. Schleiermacher's 'feeling of absolute dependence' presumably refers to dependence on a *someone* rather than a *something*. Even Schrader's theology of hierophanies in film intimates some kind of encounter, again expressed through Otto's 'Wholly Other'. Furthermore, working from the previous chapter's sacramental critique of transcendental style, an understanding of sacramentality as encounter is not far from reach, for communion (in all senses of the word) entails encounter; and, what is more, encounter *in the flesh*. And here is the greatest advantage of understanding affective experience of the divine through the notion of encounter: it is

sufficiently incarnational; the phenomenon of embodied encounter with the other is at the very heart of Christian theology.

Indeed, encounter with the other is theologically crucial:¹⁴⁹ it is epiphanic, in some similar way to that which Levinas suggests (see the discussion below); it is a manifestation of the interpersonal relationality revealed in the Trinity; and above all it is paradigmatic of love in Christian theology.

The goal of this section, therefore, is to explore the theology of encounter, particularly as an essentially embodied phenomenon. More than ever, the phenomenological method proves invaluable to this enterprise; the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas is central, as is Lacoste's interpretation of him, while Merleau-Ponty's particular contribution is to emphasise embodiment in intersubjective encounter. Ultimately, this discussion of embodied encounter with the other precipitates a crucial development in this thesis' interpretation of the theological power of film, which will be expounded in a third and final section of this chapter.

ENCOUNTER AS IRREDUCIBLE EPIPHANY

One of Levinas' mentees provides an apposite introduction to the theological significance of encounter with the other. Richard Kearney, in his book *Anatheism*, emphasises the motif of the stranger as "a primary scene of religion: the encounter with a radical Stranger who we choose, or don't choose, to call God."¹⁵⁰ He writes of

¹⁴⁹ In the literal sense, too: 'crucial', from the Latin *crux*, meaning 'cross'.

¹⁵⁰ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 7.

“inaugural encounters with a divine stranger,”¹⁵¹ citing the appearance of God to Abraham as three strangers in Genesis 18, Mary’s encounter with God in the Annunciation, and Muhammed’s encounter with the angel Gabriel when he hears the Qur’an. In similar fashion, the significance of encountering the divine stranger was alluded to earlier in this chapter, in observing the disciples’ repeated failures to recognise Christ after the resurrection. Kearney situates the encounter with the other (the stranger; the alien) at the heart of his theology and, showing the influence of Levinas, describes this encounter as an “epiphanic moment of awakening.”¹⁵²

In this way, Kearney demonstrates the fundamental significance of encounter with the other in theology. He goes on to extend this significance to the everyday, through the twin notions of guest and host, so that interpersonal encounter in day-to-day life takes on theological meaning. Yet the everyday significance of the guest/host encounter with the other is evident throughout the gospels. In Mark 9:37, for example, Christ says, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” Likewise, in Matthew 25:35-40, Christ equates encountering the human other with encountering the divine other: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me [...] Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family [lit. *τουτων των αδελφων μου* ‘these who are my brothers’], you did it to me.” “Love thy neighbour,” then, renders the encounter with our neighbour theophanic; as Kearney frames it, “theophany as the guest become host.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

When Kearney studied in Paris under Paul Ricoeur, one of his other mentors was Emmanuel Levinas, whose work on intersubjective encounter is profoundly insightful. Levinas' thought, specifically his conceptualisation of encounter as "the epiphany of the face (*l'épiphanie du visage*),"¹⁵⁴ concisely demonstrates the theological significance of encounter. For Levinas, to encounter the face of the other is to encounter a form of transcendence, if not explicitly divine transcendence then certainly the transcendence of finite humanity: "The epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity [...] The presence of the face, the infinity of the other, is a destituteness, a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole of humanity which looks at us)."¹⁵⁵ For Levinas, the appearance of the face also constitutes an ethical command; it is a similar ethic, in fact, to that which is expressed in the gospel passages cited above: there is "an ethical commitment to the 'face' of the other - the widow, the orphan, and the stranger - as the trace of God."¹⁵⁶ In other words, encounter with the other is, in some sense, a manifestation of encounter with the divine.

Levinas' idea of the epiphany of the face is a phenomenology of *visage à visage* encounter. Because of its specific phenomenological context, it can only be properly understood in light of the phenomenological method that has been expounded in this chapter. In particular, Levinas' use of the word *l'épiphanie* derives much of its meaning from the context of Husserlian reduction (*ἐποχή*, *epochē*), or at least as a reaction to Husserl's assertion that everything within conscious experience can be subjected to reduction. This Husserlian context is precisely what makes Levinas' notion of epiphany so meaningful.

¹⁵⁴ Emmanuel Lévinas [trans. Alphonso Lingis], *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (London: Kluwer Academic, 1991) p. 213.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 65.

In short, the epiphany of the face, the encounter with the embodied other, constitutes the appearance of an irreducible phenomenon for Levinas. That is to say, the unique character of the perceptive instant in which we behold the other and are beheld ourselves entirely resists the process of Husserlian reduction, the process of 'bracketing out' various transcendences of the phenomenon. Levinas himself describes *visage à visage* encounter as "an irreducible relation,"¹⁵⁷ by which he means a phenomenon where the act of perception cannot be described; where the act of perception appears as nothing less than an epiphany. Lacoste describes this well:

We have to deal here with the solemn reality of an 'epiphany', a presence and phenomenality that can be possessed only by a human face, excluding all reality other than itself from consideration. When the other person enters, the world disappears.¹⁵⁸

Lacoste does indeed provide a good exposition of Levinas' account.¹⁵⁹ He focuses, in the first place, on the dichotomy of essence/existence; for, as was mentioned earlier, in Husserlian reduction the existence of a phenomenon can be 'bracketed out' when describing said phenomenon. Levinas' great insight is to observe that, in the encounter with the face of the other, the question of the existence of the other cannot be 'bracketed out'; simply put, we cannot "describe the *appearance* of the other, while putting the matter of *existence* to one side."¹⁶⁰ To attempt to do so is a symptom of a deep misunderstanding about the essence of a human being, stemming from the

¹⁵⁷ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 79.

¹⁵⁸ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁹ It is worth pointing out that Lacoste's interest in the irreducible epiphany of encounter with the other is to use it as a model for encounter with God. He argues that, just as the human other appears irreducibly to consciousness, so too would God appear irreducibly to consciousness, in an (eschatological) event where God's essence and existence are indistinguishable and irreducibly connected, somewhat in the way Anselm suggests through his ontological argument. See: *The Appearing of God*, pp. 61-67.

¹⁶⁰ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 51.

fallacy that the other possesses existence only in our consciousness: "Reduction of the other person to existence in our consciousness would be a denial of his or her humanity."¹⁶¹ We can certainly describe the sensory phenomenon of encounter with the other, even in terms which doubt its existence (as with the phenomenon of hallucination, for example), but such a description could not be what actually appears in the phenomenon of face-to-face encounter. Again, Lacoste expresses this problem aptly: "When reduction had done its work, whatever was left over would simply not be the other person."¹⁶²

There is one final, crucial point to make here: the key to the irreducible epiphany of the face is language. For Levinas, embodied encounter with the other constitutes an irreducible 'I-Thou' speech event. In the epiphany of the face, language is that which is irreducible to consciousness,¹⁶³ because "language is not enacted within a consciousness; it comes to me from the Other and reverberates in consciousness by putting it in question."¹⁶⁴ Precisely what makes *visage à visage* encounter an epiphany is not the appearance of 'pure existence', or anything so abstract, but the appearance of speech which, crucially, demands of us a response. "It is not enough to say that the other person 'is', but we must say that the other person appears and 'speaks'."¹⁶⁵ The address of the face necessitates an answer because the face addresses us. It is not just a metaphor to say that this encounter 'speaks' even when it is silent. In the epiphany of the face our very existence is distilled into an irreducible speech event; a response is inevitable, it will occur even without our choosing, and this response will be framed in Kearney's dialectic, in either the language of hospitality or in the language of

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Here is a hint of the influence which Levinas had on Derrida, and the latter's philosophy of language and meaning.

¹⁶⁴ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 204.

¹⁶⁵ Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, p. 53.

hostility.¹⁶⁶

THE EMBODIMENT AND SACRAMENTALITY OF ENCOUNTER

Levinas' clearest contribution is to suggest that encounter with the other is an irreducible epiphany, unsusceptible to deconstruction through the Husserlian *epochē*. Yet another important contribution he makes is to emphasise the inherent embodiment of interpersonal encounter; *l'épiphanie du visage* explicitly suggests an encounter with the other as an embodied, sensual and fleshly face. The theological significance of this second contribution cannot be overstated: if, as has been discussed, a primal scene of Christian theology is encounter with the other (Kearney's 'stranger'), then the apotheosis of that scene is the incarnation; the encounter with Christ *in the flesh*, theophany as embodied encounter.

The christological and ecclesiological resonances of this are as polyvalent as the idea of 'the body of Christ' itself. It is not within the scope of one chapter (or indeed an entire thesis) to engage with all the implications here, but the fact that these are anticipated in the present discussion demonstrates the ultimate theological significance of embodied encounter with the other.

For now, exploring one particular valency of the incarnation is especially pertinent: that *the Word* was made flesh. Present in this article of faith is a proposition which leads us right back to Levinas' phenomenology; language (of God, of scripture, of creation) is embodied. It is fascinating that Levinas uses the language of incarnation

¹⁶⁶ Kearney is following Derrida here, who used the term *étranger* before Kearney in his book *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

himself: "To regard language as an attitude of the mind does not amount to disincarnating it, but is precisely to account for its incarnate essence, its difference from the constitutive, egological nature of the transcendental thought of idealism."¹⁶⁷ Although it is unlikely that Levinas intends to refer to the incarnation of Christ here, his own Jewish tradition also testifies to the embodiment of divine language. In the Hebrew Bible God speaks through various 'bodies'; the three strangers who come to Abraham, the angels of God who call to Abraham telling him to sacrifice Isaac, even the burning bush constitutes a specific embodied locus in which God appears to Moses, rather than any sense of a 'disembodied voice' (As God says to Moses, "*Here I am*" Exodus 3:4).

Yet it is important also to recognise the fundamentally embodied nature of language in the everyday. To begin with the obvious example, the very notion of 'body language' reveals something of this nature. It is evident that (at least in some sense of the verb) we can and do 'speak' to one another without the need of voice or words; we also often change the precise meaning of our words through accompanying bodily gestures. What this demonstrates is this: if interpersonal encounter can be distilled to an epiphanic speech event, as Levinas suggests, then the conscious experience of encounter with the other depends on our corporeality for its meaning, for the speech event itself entails corporeal expression. It is not only the appearance of the face that is embodied, but also the appearance of speech, which is intrinsically connected with the appearance of the face.

Language is addressed extensively by Merleau-Ponty and, naturally, his corporeal phenomenology has much to say on the matter of its embodiment. His philosophy of

¹⁶⁷ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 204-205.

language is extremely complex, but a good starting point is his phrase ‘the signification of the perceived.’ For Merleau-Ponty, language appears because “it has taken on a signification.”¹⁶⁸ Words are signs, in this sense. Yet Merleau-Ponty takes great pains to stress that words are not *just* signs; words are, at the fundamental level, embodied sensory phenomena. First, consider the written word: in any language, from modern French to ancient hieroglyphics, a written word is only a collection of letters, which are themselves only an arrangement of ink, a certain impression on stone or wax, or coloured pixels on a screen. There is a fundamental corporeality to language, and all too easily this embodiment is overlooked:

The wonder of language is that it makes itself be forgotten: my gaze is drawn along the lines on the paper, from the moment that I am struck by what they signify, I no longer see them. The paper, the letters on the paper, my eyes, and my body are only present as the minimum of production materials necessary for some invisible operation.¹⁶⁹

It is important to note here that Merleau-Ponty includes the embodiment of the reader alongside the embodiment of the written word; “the letters on the paper, my eyes, and my body.” This is part of his effort “to leave behind the classical subject-object dichotomy” (see above). His argument is clear; written language is contingent upon its - and our - corporeality.

Consider spoken language similarly: the words we speak are signs, but they are also, fundamentally, corporeal phenomena. They are a physiological product; of the voice box and the lungs, of the tongue and the lips and the teeth, and of the ears and the

¹⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 422.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

eyes, for *perceived* and *perception* are a sensory unity. When considering what language signifies, it is necessary to recognise the corporeality of the sign itself; for any sign must be understood by its phenomenal terms. The salient point is this: language as sign is indissolubly connected with language as corporeal phenomenon. To put it in Merleau-Pontian terms, language is a product of our *être au monde*, our being in and towards the world.

In this way the sign of the face, that is, encounter with the other, must be understood by its corporeality; *embodied* encounter with the other. Since, as Levinas says, the epiphany of the face corresponds with an irreducible I/Thou speech event, the embodied nature of encounter takes on even more significance, because it is not only the other who is embodied but also language itself.

For the theologian, this discussion's consideration of language and perception, of signification and corporeality, may provoke thoughts of the sacramental. After all, the sacraments deal in corporeality and signification, in (scriptural and liturgical) language and perception of the divine other. Edward Schillebeeckx, for example, offers a phenomenological approach to the Eucharist which embraces the corporeality of the signs of bread and wine through his concept of transignification.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, it will be valuable here to return to the sacramental thread which runs throughout this thesis, picking up on the previous chapter's engagement with Louis-Marie Chauvet,¹⁷¹ as well as a little of Schillebeeckx's thought. The Eucharist will be the particular sacrament in focus here.

¹⁷⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 2005).

¹⁷¹ Chauvet's treatment of language and signification is conducted very similarly to the above, also using the phenomenological grammar. See especially: Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, pp. 30-34.

Recalling Chauvet's statement that "what is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal"¹⁷² further elucidates the theological significance of embodied encounter. If the theologian leans on the famous definition of a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace,"¹⁷³ then it is reasonable to assert that the 'inward grace' of a sacrament is experienced via corporeal encounter. Schillebeeckx is insightful on this point for two reasons: first, because he, like Chauvet, emphasises the fundamental sacramentality of the world: "What comes to us from heaven - grace - in fact comes to us *from the world*."¹⁷⁴ And second, because he uses the language of "reciprocal encounter"¹⁷⁵ to describe this sacramental grace, specifically in the context of the Eucharist. Exploring Chauvet's thought further will help to elucidate this.

Chauvet's theology of the Eucharist centres around an encounter with Christ, specifically one that takes place in the flesh. For Chauvet, the real presence is understood "through its *inscription* in a particular body."¹⁷⁶ *Inscription, l'inscription* in the French, like the verb *inscrire*, connotes the written word; we are still in the realm of incarnate, corporeal language, here, alluding to an epiphanic (and indeed theophanic) speech event - the Word that became flesh:

The Word of God cannot make itself understood except as placed in a specific body of traditions and writings, down to its ultimate and complete enfleshment, according to the Christian faith, in the uniqueness of the human being Jesus of Nazareth. For God is not 'nowhere in particular'; God is

¹⁷² Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, p. xii.

¹⁷³ This being the Tridentine summary of Augustine's understanding of sacrament.

¹⁷⁴ Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁷⁶ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 405.

somewhere.¹⁷⁷

The ultimate importance of the incarnation for Chauvet leads him to a remarkable realisation: Christ is present in the bread of the Eucharist not inasmuch as the bread is whole, but precisely inasmuch as the bread is broken. He writes, "The breaking of the bread, inasmuch as it is a sharing between members and for their unity of one body broken for all, sacramentally manifests the indissoluble bond with Christ and with others which it joins sym-bolically. It is thus from *the very heart of the break* that the Eucharist above all speaks."¹⁷⁸ The breaking of bread is the ultimate sign of shared encounter. This is the power of the Eucharist as *communion*; Christ's gift of himself (of his own body), received as shared gift by his ecclesial body.

Communion entails encounter, and embodied encounter in light of the Eucharist and the incarnation. To encounter the body of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist is to join in the body of Christ as Church. When the Christian receives communion it is as embodied encounter. The sensory and physical act of receiving the sacrament is indissolubly connected with its *significance* (its power as sign); the Christian kneels at the altar, shoulder to shoulder with her fellow congregants, coming face to face with the celebrant, and receives the corporeal, organic phenomena of bread and wine, along with the phonetic sensation of the words "take, eat, this is my body" and the embodied gesture of the proffered cup. At the same time and in this way, she encounters the divine other *in the flesh*.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

3. FILM AS ENCOUNTER: THE OTHER ON, THROUGH, AND BEHIND THE SCREEN

Embodied encounter with the other, then, possesses a profound significance within Christian theology. It is incarnational and sacramental in shape, “a primary scene of religion,” as Kearney portrays it, and epiphanic in some similar sense to that which Levinas realises. Encounter with the other is experienced affectively; the other appears as much in the realm of feeling as in the realm of the physically sensory. Yet focusing on the appearance of the other to consciousness, rather than just the appearance of a given affect, is far more productive theologically for two reasons drawn from the discussion above. First, because of the uncertainty that surrounds affective experience; to follow Lacoste, if the theologian focusses purely and abstractly on the appearance of affect, she can never be certain of its ontology, of whether the given affect is genuinely experience of the divine or merely experience of her own consciousness. Secondly, the emphasis on encounter is far more consonant with the tradition of Christian theology than the emphasis on affect; it is witnessed in the Biblical instances of the divine stranger, which Kearney identifies, it bears a sacramental significance, particularly through the embodied act of sharing inherent in communion, and, above all, it sufficiently recognises the incarnation as the ultimate expression of divine experience in creation.

Through recognising the theological significance of embodied encounter with the other in this way, a crucial insight into the theological power of film begins to emerge. For film is an essentially embodied art form. Cinema communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment; that is, from the embodied filmmaker(s), to the embodied viewer, through the body of film itself. In the previous

chapter, I briefly described a notion of cinematic embodiment: the camera and microphone as eyes and ears; tracking rigs and cranes as musculoskeletal apparatus; director and cinematographer as the brain and central nervous system which directs the motion and the senses of all. Now, in light of the phenomenological analysis of this chapter, I wish to develop a notion of filmic embodiment far more substantially. Of particular importance to this is the concept of intentionality, for the relationship between the participants of filmmaker(s), viewer, and cinematic body is given to understanding through the reciprocity of subjective-objective consciousness; through the interaction of intentionality directed by all participants upon the cinematic image.¹⁷⁹

In understanding film as embodied encounter with the other, the theologian takes a significant step towards realising the theological power of film. This is primarily because of what has been said above about the theological significance of encounter, but such an understanding also suggests a corrective to Schrader's theory of transcendental style. In moving away from an emphasis on affective experience and towards an emphasis on encounter, the theological inadequacies inherited from Otto's concepts of 'numinous experience' and the '*mysterium tremendum*' can be rectified, and the valuable insights of transcendental style can be salvaged. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, understanding film as embodied encounter brings the theologian into dialogue with a major project of film theory: the phenomenological analysis of the film experience. This is where this section must begin its line of inquiry.

¹⁷⁹ This will be expounded further shortly, through Vivian Sobchack's idea that meaning in film comes from the interplay of "all viewers viewing." Vivian Carol Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 5.

There is a longstanding dialogue between phenomenology and film theory.¹⁸⁰ Merleau-Ponty famously engaged with cinema in his 1945 lecture *Le Cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie*, publishing an essay under the same title in his 1948 book *Sens et non-sens*.¹⁸¹ In the same decade the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden conducted a Husserlian study of the cinema,¹⁸² while in the 1950s the great French film theorist, André Bazin, precipitated a flood of cinematic theory which emphasised film's capacity for realism from a phenomenological perspective (in the Husserlian sense of seeing phenomena as they are; the 'absolute datum' of the thing). By far the most influential film-phenomenology of recent years, though, is Vivian Sobchack's work throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Sobchack's main contribution (which is central to this thesis) is to develop a Merleau-Pontian understanding of corporeality in order to emphasise the experience of the body as the supreme quality of cinema.

One of the primary concerns of this thesis is to engage with film through a formal or stylistic focus, and not only through narrative or thematic focus. Phenomenology, in this respect, provides a critical insight because it recognises the power of film *formally*, in its corporeal immediacy. I have said that film communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment, and I will add that I think cinema is a more phenomenologically immediate art form than any other we possess. Embodiment and encounter with the other are important elements of other artistic media too, of course, but they seem more fundamental to cinema because there is less mediation of

¹⁸⁰ For a good introduction and overview of this important project within the field, see the entry on phenomenology in: Paisley Livingston and Carl R. Plantinga, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁸¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, (Paris: Nagel, 1948) pp. 85-106.

¹⁸² Annette Kuhn & Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 309.

corporeality in film than in other art forms: in the novel the visual is mediated through the verbal; in painting and sculpture movement is mediated through the static image; in theatre lived-space is mediated through staged-space. Film, with its capacity to render the verbal and the visual as well as the spatial and the temporal *almost* as they appear to consciousness in the lived world, seems the most phenomenologically immediate art form at our disposal.¹⁸³

It is this corporeal, bodily immediacy which so interested Merleau-Ponty in 1945, and which has driven Vivian Sobchack's highly influential film-phenomenology in recent decades. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Sobchack cites Merleau-Ponty in the epigraph to her seminal book *The Address of the Eye*, and again as a particular epigraph to the first chapter. The text she chooses on both occasions is Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*; the phrase she dwells on in that first chapter is "an expression of experience by experience,"¹⁸⁴ and she asks "what else is a film if not 'an expression of experience by experience'?"¹⁸⁵ Sobchack unpacks this by examining Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. She emphasises Merleau-Ponty's understanding of language as a fundamentally embodied concept, describing his concern with "the living exchange of perception and expression, with the sensuous contours of language, with meaning and its signification born not abstractly but concretely from the surface contact, the fleshly dialogue, of human beings and the world together making sense sensible."¹⁸⁶ This understanding of language as a carnal, fleshly, sensuous and haptic mode of being in the world (*être au monde*) is the key to understanding cinema as a communicative art

¹⁸³ The *almost* is indispensable here; there is still mediation in the film experience, of course, as with any artistic medium.

¹⁸⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty [trans. Alphonso Lingis], *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) p. 155.

¹⁸⁵ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

form; as an art form which speaks from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment. Sobchack describes this precisely and eloquently:

More than any other medium of human communication, the moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience. A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflective movement that makes itself reflexively felt and understood [...] the cinema makes visible and audible the primordial origins of language in the reversibility of embodied and enworlded perception and expression.¹⁸⁷

There is much of note in these few lines. The embodied, fleshly and haptic nature of cinematic expression is the first point of emphasis, but of further importance here is the reflexivity and reciprocity that Sobchack identifies in film. She describes the film experience with reflexive, reciprocal language; an experience that at once sees and is seen, hears and is heard, perceives and is perceived.

What does Sobchack mean by this? The answer requires another exposition of Merleau-Ponty's thought, and particularly his desire to overcome "the classical subject-object dichotomy."¹⁸⁸ In the first section of this chapter, I outlined Merleau-Ponty's position that the perceived phenomenon and the act of perception itself constitute a sensory unity. In other words, conscious perception is always already 'enworlded'; that is, situated in and towards the world (*être au monde*) in such a way that the meaning of any perceived object is indissolubly connected with our bodily perception of that object. To illustrate this, take the following example: consider a four-

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 179.

legged wooden structure, waist-high, with a flat and circular platform across the top of all four legs; if I sit *on* this object, I perceive it as a stool, but if I sit *at* it, I perceive it as a table. This is no mere trick of language, but a phenomenological question of an object's significance, utility, and reality as it appears to consciousness embodied in the world.

What I wish to demonstrate with that example is this: a perceived object (stool/table) is experientially inseparable from the perceiving subject. This is not to say, however, that any given object is existentially contingent upon human subjectivity; this is not idealism. Of course the stool/table would still exist without my perceiving it, but it would not exist *significantly* as 'stool' or 'table' without my perceiving and signifying it as such, and instead it would exist *in-significantly*, unapprehended by language. In Merleau-Ponty's own words: "Perception is just that kind of act where there can be no question of separating the act itself and the term upon which it bears. Perception and the perceived necessarily have the same existential modality, since perception is inseparable from the consciousness that it has or rather that it is of reaching [or 'attaining' '*atteindre*'] the thing itself."¹⁸⁹ To put it in concise terms, there is a radical reciprocity between subject and object, such that perception cannot be discretely divided into the categories of subjectivity and objectivity.

It is this radical reciprocity between subject and object which Sobchack emphasises in her film theory, when she describes cinema as 'an act of seeing which is seen', 'hearing which is heard', and so on. Sobchack captures this reciprocity particularly well with the phrase "*all viewers viewing*,"¹⁹⁰ which realises the reciprocal intentionality of all participants in the film experience. In other words, the film experience is not a discrete

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

¹⁹⁰ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 5.

or self-contained act of perception, but a dynamic, ongoing, and corporate act of perception,¹⁹¹ in which the intentionality of each participant lays a mutual and commensurate claim to the experience. In this way, film cannot be understood as an experiential 'object' in the classical sense, and the subject-object dichotomy is left behind in much the same way that Merleau-Ponty asserted it should be, so that perceived cinema is only understood via the ongoing and dynamic act of perception ('an act of seeing which is seen'). As Merleau-Ponty describes it, referring specifically to painting, "The seer is caught up in what he sees [...] the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is passivity."¹⁹² In cinema, the participants in question - the viewers in Sobchack's 'all viewers viewing' - include in the first instance the spectator and the filmmaker(s) (which is to say all those involved in that process; director, writers, producers, technicians, actors, and so on), but it also includes the film itself, insofar as "the cinema assumes and assures its own intelligibility."¹⁹³ This is to say that, through the radical reciprocity between subjectivity and objectivity, film participates reflexively in the film experience; such is Sobchack's understanding of film as 'an expression of experience by experience', 'an act of seeing which is seen' or 'an act of hearing which is heard'.

Some specific film analysis will best demonstrate the radical reciprocity of subjectivity and objectivity in the cinema: cinematic voyeurism serves as an excellent example of the way that film participates reflexively in the film experience. Consider a scene from David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), for example (though one might just as easily consider something from Hitchcock or Peter Greenaway, or any number of other

¹⁹¹ Indeed, *corporate* is the precise word here; the film experience is shared *embodied* experience.

¹⁹² Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139.

¹⁹³ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 6.

directors). Early on in the film, the young and naive protagonist, Jeffrey Beaumont, is caught spying on Dorothy. Eventually, his encounter with Dorothy is cut short as Frank, the picture's main antagonist, returns unexpectedly. Dorothy, desperate to protect Jeffrey, ushers him back into the closet just before Frank bursts into the room. The scene that follows, an unnerving deflagration of innocence, is presented in the voyeuristic style pioneered by Hitchcock during the 1950s and 60s. In typical fashion, it is presented with a point-of-view shot framed by the closet doors left just slightly ajar, and accompanied by the diegetic sounds of Jeffrey's shallow breathing. At the same time and inseparably informed by this voyeuristic framing, the viewer witnesses the unexpected and unnerving scene within the bedroom, between Frank and Dorothy.¹⁹⁴

Here, then, is a perspicuous example of cinema as 'an act of seeing which is seen', 'an act of hearing which is heard'; the viewer perceives Dorothy and Frank through Jeffrey's own act of perception, while simultaneously perceiving Jeffrey himself, reflexively, through this very act of perception. Who, truly, is subject or object in this sequence, according to the traditional models of perception? The question seems absurd now; cinema (and almost all cinema is in some sense voyeuristic) resists the subject-object dichotomy and can only be properly understood through a radical reciprocity of subjectivity and objectivity. The cinematic perspective (the spatial positioning of the camera and microphone) should be understood all at once as a reflexive and non-reflexive act of perception; the shot is an act of seeing which is itself seen, diegetic sound is an act of hearing which is itself heard. And all the while, each participant in the film experience shares a mutual possession of this act of perception; filmmaker(s), film, and viewer all lay claim to the same embodied space of cinematic

¹⁹⁴ Figure 8.

perception.

An extended quotation from *The Address of the Eye* helps to elucidate this point even further:

The mutual possession of this experience of perception and its expression by filmmaker, film, and spectator - all viewers viewing, engaged as participants in dynamically and directionally reversible acts that reflexively and reflectively constitute the perception of expression and the expression of perception. Indeed, it is this mutual capacity for and possession of experience through common structures of embodied existence, through similar modes of being-in-the-world, that provide the intersubjective basis of objective cinematic communication.¹⁹⁵

So, Sobchack understands the film experience as dynamically and reciprocally intersubjective, in which cinema is perceived and expressed by virtue of each participant's embodied mode of being in and towards the world (*être au monde*). And it is here that the language of encounter is again recognisable, for the film experience becomes significant precisely through the mutual and reciprocal interplay of each participant's intentional state of perception; through the *inter-subjective* encounter of 'all viewers viewing'. As this chapter nears its conclusion, it is time to draw the various strands of this phenomenological and cinematic analysis together, realising an understanding of film as a fundamentally embodied and corporeal artistic medium, which precipitates an experience of encounter with the other 'in the flesh' that is theologically powerful in the way that the previous sections have set out.

¹⁹⁵ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 5.

In what way does it make sense to write about experiencing film in the flesh? What exactly is understood when I write that cinema communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment? It is high time to put an answer to these questions.

When we watch a film we enter an expressive and communicative domain, contingent on our embodied perception of the world. Just as Merleau-Ponty observes that we only experience the world through our bodies, so we only experience film through our corporeal embodiment. Everything from the other bodies around us in the cinema to the smell and sound of popcorn, from the feel of the seats to the physical space on which the picture is projected shapes the film experience. Even though watching a film can be a profoundly cerebral experience, the viewer's consciousness can never be dissolved from her phenomenal existence as an embodied human being. This embodiment is in no sense a limitation of the capacity to interpret film, but rather the actual mode for all interpretation of the film experience. On an obvious and rudimentary level, for example, it seems evident that the experience of a film watched on a smart phone during the daily commute will be very different from experiencing the same film on the big screen in a cinema. Film can only be understood in light of the viewer's embodied position in and towards the world, and it is impossible to conceive of film outside of embodiment.

Yet there is an embodied nature to all of the film experience, not only the spectator.

For one thing, both narrative and non-narrative cinema is inhabited by bodies; characters, living people, animals, and inanimate corporeal phenomena. For another, the filmmaker(s) (including everyone who has a role in the creation of a film; director, writer, actor, composer, technicians, and so on) creates the film from a position of embodied existence themselves. At the same time, they communicate the film through an array of physical and material means, working - as they are - with the technical and mechanical mediation of light and sound. As such, the corporeal and sensuous existence of filmmaker and spectator is the domain of cinematic expression; in the film experience, the spontaneous and liquid generation of meaning by 'all viewers viewing' occurs in the somatic crucible of embodied consciousness.

The corporeal nature of the film experience is not restricted to the embodiment of spectators and filmmakers, either: film itself is embodied. I have already mentioned something of film's inherently embodied mode of communication and perception through the analogy of the human body; camera as eyes, microphone as ears, crane and tracking rig as limbs, and filmmaker as brain and central nervous system which directs the movement and senses of all (a certain intentionality). Yet it makes sense to talk about film having a body in more than a simply analogous way. Sobchack is particularly interesting on this point, as she refers to "the film's body" in order "to describe in concrete terms that invisible presence of an other who perceives and expresses perception in the film experience along with, as well as opposed to, the spectator."¹⁹⁶

This 'other' she refers to is that fundamental point of experience characterised not only by the position of the camera, but by that spatial-temporal perspective embodied

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

through the screen. It is a 'point of view' in many senses of the phrase, and Sobchack calls it "an eye that belongs neither solely to the filmmaker, the camera, or the spectator,"¹⁹⁷ although each participant of the film experience certainly has a hold on it. The key to this 'invisible other' is that radical reciprocity between subjectivity and objectivity, such that perception becomes performance and performance becomes perception in the film experience. When the viewer experiences film *through* this 'other', she both simultaneously perceives and invisibly performs the existential and experiential acts that are given to her as the film.

This is the power of cinema. In the corporate domain of embodiment film finds its language. Its power is to signify perception and experience, and that power depends on the embodiment of all participants in the film experience; spectator, filmmaker(s) and, of course, the film itself, which is embodied in camera and technology as well as in that perceptive-performative and perceived-performed 'other'. Film only makes sense in such a phenomenological way. As can be realised from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, film, like any experience in and of the world, is sensible only in the sensuous; it makes sense only in the domain of phenomena and their somatic appearance to us in the flesh.

There is an important anti-Cartesian thread here which ought not to be overlooked. Perception, thought, and expression are immanent in and inseparable with the body. In his seminal dual-volume work on the cinema, Gilles Deleuze recognises the significance of this for film:

The body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself, that which

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

it has to overcome to reach thinking. It is on the contrary that which it plunges into or must plunge into, in order to reach the unthought, that is life [...] Life will no longer be made to appear before the categories of thought; thought will be thrown into the categories of life. The categories of life are precisely the attitudes of the body, its postures [...] It is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought.¹⁹⁸

To be “thrown into the categories of life, the attitudes of the body,” is the immediacy of cinema; it confronts us with the world, appearing to consciousness in its and our embodiment. Once a Cartesian notion of mind-body dualism is abandoned, the attitudes of the body and other bodies which appear in cinema cannot be held at a conceptual distance; instead they are grasped immediately by consciousness as affective, sensuous, cognitive, and somatic encounter with the other.

The philosopher and film theorist Steven Shaviro describes this with particular resonance to what has been discussed in this chapter: “[Film] brings me compulsively, convulsively face to face with an Otherness that I can neither incorporate nor expel. It stimulates and affects my own body, even as it abolishes the distances between my own and other bodies.”¹⁹⁹ Shaviro’s language of encounter is strikingly similar to that which is found in Levinas, Kearney, and Lacoste; he writes of film in such a way that the concept of ‘the epiphany of the face’ comes immediately to mind.

This kind of embodied encounter with the other lies at the heart of the film experience. It is encounter with the other on, through, and behind the screen in the sense of

¹⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) p. 195.

¹⁹⁹ Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p. 259.

Sobchack's 'all viewers viewing', that is, in the sense of a radical reciprocity between the subject-object. If the viewer might be considered as 'in front of' the screen, then the other 'on' the screen consists of the bodies and faces encountered in the actors or models of a film; the other 'through' the screen consists of Sobchack's 'invisible other', the "eye/I"²⁰⁰ of a film, which is that spatial-temporal perspective embodied *through* the screen; and the other 'behind' the screen consists of the filmmaker(s), that corporate body of creativity which quite literally sets a film in motion. This encounter with the other on, through, and behind the screen is reflexive and reflective, such that the reciprocity between subjectivity and objectivity does not merely 'go both ways' but in fact manifests in all directions; no discrete cerebral synthesis, but ubiquitous and fleshly experience of the other.

Such an understanding of cinematic encounter is essential to the theological power of film. Perhaps the greatest mistake of Paul Schrader's transcendental style is to neglect the significance of corporeal encounter and to focus solely on affective experience, as was discussed at the very beginning of this chapter with the example of Bresson's *Pickpocket*. This not only leads to the inadequate binary of 'religious' and 'profane' experience, which was critiqued in the previous chapter, but it also causes Schrader to equate affective experience of film with affective experience of God far too loosely. Moreover, without recognising the significance of encounter with the other, Schrader fails to realise the extent of cinema's theological potential. The aim of this chapter, therefore, has been to correct Schrader's approach, on the way to saying something more precise about the theological power of film as an art form. To this end, I have sought to accomplish two things: first, I attempted to trace something of the theological significance of interpersonal encounter, especially from a corporeal,

²⁰⁰ A wordplay Sobchack employs throughout *The Address of the Eye*.

phenomenological perspective. The theological significance of encounter can be expressed through Levinas' 'epiphany of the face', and through Kearney's notion of the divine stranger, and it finds its ultimate expression in the incarnation. Secondly, I have argued that embodied encounter with the other is at the heart of the film experience, taking particular recourse from film-phenomenology which - crucially, and not coincidentally - uses the same language of corporeal encounter. A significant element of the theological power of film, then, can be articulated as follows: embodied encounter with the other on, through, and behind the screen facilitates the expression of the divine, because encounter with the other 'in the flesh' is at the heart of Christian theology; it is epiphanic, sacramental in shape, and it represents the primal theological scene of encounter with the divine stranger, the supreme expression of which is the incarnation.

III

A Space for Time

The essentially corporeal, embodied nature of the film experience is qualified principally by the spatiality of the art form. That is to say, the embodied encounter with the other on, through, and behind the screen occurs within and is governed by cinematic space; a 'motion picture' necessarily depends on a spatial dimension for its movement. This is one fundamental way in which cinema manifests its immediacy as an art form, for the essential embodiment of our being in the world is also principally determined by the spatiality of our existence. To talk of embodiment, then, and of encounter with the other in the flesh, is to talk in terms of corporeal space. This spatial dimension, though, entails a temporal dimension which must be considered. Embodied existence is qualified temporally as well as spatially;²⁰¹ our being in the world is grasped by consciousness as an experience in and of time and space. This leads to a simple but crucial observation about the film experience; the embodied nature of cinema, the enfleshed encounter with the other at the heart of the art form, is expressed as movement within a particular spatial *and temporal* dimension. To put it roundly, the motion picture is contingent on the time given for that motion.

That time is essential to the medium of film is a key insight of Paul Schrader's transcendental style. In the previous chapters, I have critiqued Schrader's theory and

²⁰¹ The co-contingency of space and time is asserted as early as Galileo's foundational formula of speed, distance (space), and time. It has been at the centre of 20th century scientific models of space-time (including in Einstein's theory of relativity), which posit that the three dimensions of space are in fact fused with the dimension of time. For an accessible introduction, bridging mathematics and physics with philosophy, see: J. B. Kennedy, *Space, Time and Einstein: An Introduction* (Chesham: Acumen, 2003).

proposed an alternative understanding of the theological power of film along the phenomenological lines of encounter; the aim of this critique and correction was precisely to recognise the shortcomings of transcendental style in such a way that its virtues can be revisited and retained, because certain elements of Schrader's contribution are profoundly valuable for the theologian and the film theorist. One such virtue of Schrader's theory is his insight into the temporal nature of cinema, and how this lends itself to introspective, transcendently and spiritually minded filmmaking. Schrader first recognised the significance of time in cinema in 1971 with the first edition of *Transcendental Style in Film*, observing that film "uses precise temporal means"²⁰² for its composition. However, it is in his new introduction to the 2018 edition that Schrader really hones this particular line of thought. This essay, entitled 'Rethinking Transcendental Style', identifies time as an essential concept of cinema and traces a brief history of scholarship concerned with time and film. It therefore provides a valuable entry point to the discussion at hand. In particular, much of his essay focusses on the film theory of Gilles Deleuze and Andrei Tarkovsky, both of whom are crucial to this chapter and this thesis.

Where the previous chapter explored cinematic space in terms of phenomenal, fleshly encounter, this chapter explores how the lived space of cinema and the bodies which inhabit it are rendered, experienced and performed through time. The temporality of cinema is vital to understanding the theological power of film, but this thesis has reached a point where it cannot proceed theologically before attaining an adequate understanding of time within cinematic theory. After all, the challenge of any interdisciplinary project is to treat each discipline involved with sufficient rigor. The theological concepts which arise from this chapter's discussion of time and cinema are

²⁰² Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 36.

crucial to the chapters to come; in particular, time opens up the possibility of fostering an attentive, contemplative style of filmmaking, which will be fully explored and analysed in Chapter IV. While much of the analysis of this next chapter will be anticipated here, the present study attempts the necessary and foundational investigation of the role of time in film aesthetics. I wish to argue that the interrelation of time and embodied space constitutes the fabric of cinema; that the physical appropriation of time on celluloid and the spatial representation of time on screen determines the communicative and performative power of film. It is from this interpretation that the following chapter will be able to make a crucial advance in understanding the theological power of film.

1. THE TEMPORAL FABRIC OF CINEMA

In this first section, I will examine the fundamental ways in which cinema is determined by its temporality. This is an important progression from the previous chapter's argument for the centrality of embodiment in film, because the spatiality of embodiment and embodied encounter entails a temporal aspect. Since Einstein's theory of relativity, space and time have been understood as interrelated, to the extent that time has even been considered as inseparably joined with the spatial dimensions.²⁰³ Even on a less theoretical level, it seems intuitive that our embodied being in the world is an existential position within time as well as within space; bodies move, and movement is reckoned by the interrelation of time and space. When examining ideas of embodied space, then, such as those essential to the medium of film, the role of time cannot be neglected.

²⁰³ Such is Einstein's concept of space-time, wherein time becomes the fourth dimension. As will be discussed below, Bergson developed his philosophy of time out of the context of Einstein's work.

In fact, there is a far more basic and specific relation between time and cinema which must be observed; time is what distinguishes cinema among other artistic media. Cinema, as a visual art, differs from media like sculpture, painting, and photography (its closest relative) because of the way time is incorporated into the image; the gallery viewer determines the viewing-time of a work of art herself, but for the cinemagoer the viewing-time is itself incorporated into the work of art.²⁰⁴ Likewise, the reading-time of a novel or a poem is determined by its reader. Additionally, the film-image is a movement image, unlike painting, sculpture, still photography, or a similar visual medium; this is not only a movement in time of camera and microphone, but a movement in time of the bodies and objects captured on set. While theatre time seems at face value to function similarly to film time, a critical difference is that cinematic time is uniquely replicable and re-creational; re-presentable in a way that theatre can never be. Even at a first glance, then, the unique temporality of cinema and the film space seems clear. This is the starting point from which the present discussion proceeds.

FILM-TIME AND VIEWING-TIME: COMPRESSION, EXTENSION, AND RE-PRESENTATION

The cinema is objectivity in time [...] For the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration and, as it were, mummified change.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ This is even true, to an extent, for modern film-viewers, who may pause, skip, rewind or rewatch sequences as many times as they chose. For, even though they may choose the number of times they view a film in this way, how much to view in one session, and how often to repeat a viewing, the actual viewing-time of any film's individual sequences remains fixed once they hit 'play'. Unlike the novel, for example, where we all read at different speeds, we cannot watch a sequence at different speeds in the same way. To do so would require editing a sequence so that it played slower or faster, but this is not simply the manipulation of the film image, but the creation of a new film image entirely.

²⁰⁵ André Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Vol 1* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005) pp. 14-15. "*Le cinéma apparaît comme l'achèvement dans le temps de l'objectivité photographique... Pour la première fois,*

When André Bazin wrote these words in 1958, he captured an essential reality of the film-image: “the image of things is likewise the image of their duration.” In fact, the French phrase he uses is “*l’image des choses est aussi celle de leur durée*,” which translates more literally as “the image of things is *also that of their* duration.” In other words, duration - time itself - is incorporated into the film-image so that time and space are viewed inseparably therein. As Bazin wrote when considering the long and drawn-out hunting scene in Robert Flaherty’s seminal documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922),²⁰⁶ “the length of the hunt is the very substance of the image, it’s true object.”²⁰⁷ At the same time, he captures something of that re-creational, re-presentable nature which I mentioned above in contrast to the theatre; “mummified change.” With these words, Bazin observes film’s capacity not only to represent phenomena, but to represent the transformation of phenomena, configured in a re-creational, re-presentable spacetime. An example from Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona* radically illustrates Bazin’s notion of mummified change.

In the film *Persona*, an actress suffering a psychological breakdown, Elizabet (Liv Ullmann), retreats to a clinic on an island, where she is taken into the care of a nurse, Sister Alma (Bibi Andersson). The film documents their relationship and the revelations which emerge during their time together. Above all, as the film develops, it is strongly suggested that the two characters actually constitute one self; one persona. In this way, the film explores one character via two performative subjects. In one very famous scene between Alma and Elizabet, Alma delivers a long monologue sparked by the photograph of Elizabet’s “little boy”. The trauma behind this

l’image des choses est aussi celle de leur durée et comme la momie du changement.”

²⁰⁶ Figure 9.

²⁰⁷ Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Vol 1, p. 27.

photograph is arguably the source of Elizabeth's breakdown; a failed abortion attempt, where the child survived and afterwards was "delivered with forceps," and then given into his mother's care despite her attempted termination. Towards the end of this monologue sequence Bergman employs an extreme close-up of Andersson's face, which fills the screen from chin to hairline, her eyes staring directly into the camera. The screen-left portion of Andersson's visage is enshadowed, like a mask worn over half her face. Then, abruptly, the shadow is lifted and half of Ullmann's face is superimposed onto Andersson's in an eerie, grotesque mesh of appearance, profile and identity.²⁰⁸

Any phenomenal transformation such as this is experienced over time; change necessarily entails a 'before' and 'after', or at least a 'during'. Bergman's transformed image is imposed suddenly upon the viewer, with a sharp musical note and a swift fade rather than a dissolve which would slow its appearance in time, and it endures for a certain period after it appears. It is a viewed experience, then, which is determined by its expression in and through time; by the abruptness of its appearance and by the duration of its lingering. More than this, it exemplifies Bazin's "mummified change" because it demonstrates cinema's capacity for re-presentation; for no matter how many times this transformation takes place in re-play and re-view it remains the same observationally, because the time given for the transformation - its duration - remains the same.²⁰⁹ Film has the capacity to re-present the same changing phenomenon on a factual level, because the temporal mode of this change remains constant.

²⁰⁸ Figure 10.

²⁰⁹ To edit the sequence so that it played more quickly or in slow-motion would not simply change the sequence, but would be nothing less than the creation of another, different film-image.

This re-presentability is an important potential of film and, in this regard, there is another crucial point to be made about this particular sequence in *Persona*: the monologue itself is immediately repeated - or, more accurately, replicated. Indeed, Bergman presents the viewer with the exact same monologue twice in sequence, preceded by the exact same shot and dialogue from when the photograph is first discovered. There is one important change, though: in the first instance, the monologue is delivered while the camera focusses entirely on Ullmann's face; in the second instance, it is delivered while the camera focusses entirely on Andersson's face, until Bergman delivers that sudden fusion of both faces. There is a remarkable intensity in this immediate doubling of the sequence; the introductory shot of Alma reaching for the photograph is framed with a distinctive low angle, composed around the overlapping hands of the two women, and its second appearance functions as a kind of anaphora. Combined with the identical dialogue, in an identical time frame, the viewer is essentially given the same experience, doubled within viewing-time by its re-presentation through precise cinematic means.

Film's capacity to re-present and replicate time in such a way as this is what leads Bazin to celebrate film as the supreme artistic medium for realism. In viewing the photographed image, and by extension the film image, he argues, "we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, set before us, that is to say, in time and space."²¹⁰ He goes further with this idea of temporally documented, photographic realism, appealing to the example of family photo albums (to which we can now add, in our modern lifestyle, home video footage): "Hence the charm of family albums. Those grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost undecipherable, are no longer traditional family portraits but rather the disturbing

²¹⁰ Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Vol 1*, pp. 13-14.

presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration [...] for photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time."²¹¹ However, for Bazin, cinema - the moving photographic image - goes further; film not only embalms a halted instant in time, but it embalms transformation in time through duration ("mummified change"). As Bazin puts it: "The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber. The film delivers baroque art from its convulsive catalepsy."²¹² For Bazin, then, time and duration is what separates the film image from the still-life of painting, or sculpture, or of other art forms.

The re-presentation of objects in time may well empower film as a realist medium, but it also instantiates the formal capacity of cinematic art to appropriate time. That cinema appropriates time is apparent from the nature of the film experience; a film compresses or extends time (often a combination of both), so that it appropriates its subject time-period into a viewing experience usually of around two hours. Often lifetimes are compressed into these hours, and at other moments seconds are drawn out over minutes, as in *Persona* with its doubled and protracted monologue scene, or with a film's use of slow-motion or freeze-frames. Rare are the films which attempt to re-present phenomena in 'real time'. Fred Zinnermann's western *High Noon* (1952) is one example, yet the use of real time in this picture is not intended for realist purposes but rather for fostering a mounting tension; the camera repeatedly refers back to clocks in the mise-en-scène in order to show the progression of time, while the very title foretells the precise instant of the film's climax, to the point where the viewer can work it out mathematically from the start of the picture. In television, the series *24* attempts something similar, using real time for the purposes of building suspense, but even

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

then the show was forced to compress and condense the 'hour' of each episode into roughly forty-five minutes due to the advertisement breaks. Indeed, real time is so seldom used in film and television that it seems more like an artistic device than any kind of realism; instead, cinema's natural mode of expression is one which appropriates time, via compression, extension, and sometimes repetition.

The appropriation of time in film, however, is perceived by the viewer through the embodied and phenomenal encounter of the film experience, which has its own temporal constitution: the spectator's conscious, lived time. There are, then, at least two temporalities to the film experience.²¹³ On the one hand, there is the compressed-cum-extended film-time in which the characters or documented objects exist in duration as a sequence of moving images; and on the other, there is the viewing-time in which the spectator perceives the film's passing from their embodied state of being in the world, whether that is in the ritual dark of the cinema theatre or the social setting of the living room, or even the morning commute.

The aesthetic philosopher Haig Khatchadourian identifies the temporal structures of film and film-viewing in his article 'Space and Time in Film'.²¹⁴ Khatchadourian's work informs what I have called 'film-time' and 'viewing-time' in the previous paragraph, and it will be useful to expand on these categories now. In the first place, as regards film-time, I follow Khatchadourian in recognising the running time of a film as a compression or extension of another cinematic temporality, which he calls 'action time' and which he describes as follows: "The time in which we must imagine the characters to exist or endure; consequently it is a purely imaginary or conceptual time,

²¹³ I say "at least two" in order to be mindful of the filmmaker(s) in the film experience, including their temporal experience of the film, with shooting and editing periods often taking more than a year.

²¹⁴ Haig Khatchadourian, "Space and Time in Film," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1987): p. 169.

like the characters and the action themselves."²¹⁵ It is the corollary of this imaginary or conceptual 'action time' with its compression and extension into a film's running time which I mean to describe with the term 'film-time'.

Moreover, Khatchadourian makes an interesting point about the interrelatedness of film-time and the spectator's lived temporal experience of a film (viewing-time). He observes that "the flow and rhythms of the occurrences the viewer experiences, presented in action space and time, as a function of the felt duration of the successive experiences, are also an aspect of lived time."²¹⁶ In other words, the rhythm and flow of a film's action simultaneously informs the spectator's lived experience in viewing a film *and* is informed by the spectator's lived experience while viewing a film.²¹⁷ This seems evident from the way that films are composed with a certain pacing. Any thriller director will attest to the importance of using film-time to affect and manipulate the spectator's own sense of time, as well as the importance of the spectator's own temporal mode of viewing (Hitchcock famously sought to control the latter by barring any late entry to theatres showing *Psycho*).²¹⁸ The pacing of the action in a film is accomplished by appropriating time; by compressing, extending, and repeating time in a certain way which paces the film. Yet films are also paced in order to impact the viewer's lived time cognitively and affectively; to make the viewer's experience of the film rush by in tension, or slow down for reflection and introspection. And so it is not the case that film-time and viewing-time form a dualism in the film experience, but rather that each affects and informs the other, the synthetic

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Again, here is another instance of the radical reciprocity between film and viewer which was explored in the previous chapter.

²¹⁸ Signs outside cinemas showing the film read: "We won't allow you to cheat yourself. You must see PSYCHO from the very beginning. Therefore, do not expect to be admitted into the theatre after the start of each performance of the picture. We say no one -- and we mean no one -- not even the manager's brother, the President of the United States, or the Queen of England (God bless her)!"

consequence of which is the temporal fabric of the film experience.

When discussing the nature of cinema as appropriating time, it is necessary to examine its methods for doing so. These are technical and mechanical methods: the process of light entering a camera through the lens and imprinting on celluloid; the recording of sound through a microphone and the accompanying temporal rhythms of a musical score; the controlled speed with which a crane pans or a dolly tracks the moving camera. These essential filmic mechanisms reveal the fabric of cinema as the interrelation of time and embodied space, since the mechanisms for appropriating time are themselves spatialised; they render photons and sound waves via position of camera and microphone, and they determine the movement of the camera and the film's embodied perspective over speed and distance.

These mechanical methods were one of the aspects of film which most fascinated Walter Benjamin, who wrote that: "The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment."²¹⁹ He does not take long, either, to arrive at a discussion of the mechanical appropriation of time in film, turning his attention to the technical function of slow motion. Slow motion constitutes a key element of film's capacity for the extension of time, as described above. In Benjamin's eyes, film derives a revolutionary power from its capacity to extend time; "the dynamite of the tenth of the second,"²²⁰ as he puts it. The potential for such an appropriation of time as slow motion is nothing less than the transformation of perception, and in this regard Benjamin compares slow-motion with the close-up: "With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is

²¹⁹ Walter Benjamin [ed. Hannah Arendt], *Illuminations* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 2015) p. 235.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones."²²¹ In other words, the appropriation of time in film is not merely a matter of intensifying perception, but in fact a matter of transforming perception, and, in many ways, such transformation of the viewer is the purpose of art.

Of course, slow motion is by no means the sole mechanism for appropriating time in film; similar techniques must also be considered, such as the dissolve, the freeze-frame, the time-lapse, and even the presentation of a blank screen for an extended period. All of these, to various and varying degrees, accomplish the compression or extension of time. The dissolve has become a fixture in cinema for glossing the passing of time; for compressing a lot of time into a few seconds. Likewise, the time-lapse portrays the passing of a significant period of time in mere moments; consider Terrence Malick's use of time-lapse in *The Tree of Life* (2011), where he captures the passing of cosmic eons in minutes. Conversely, the freeze-frame halts duration so as to extend an instant indefinitely, and the presentation of a blank screen (such as those which occur at regular intervals in Pawel Pawlikowski's 2018 film *Cold War*) extends film-time through the performance of an interlude rather than by freezing an image in an instant. All of these techniques (and there are many others I have not named) are part of the mechanical appropriation of time in film. Yet they also have another crucial characteristic in common: they are techniques of the post-production process; they are accomplished through the editing of film.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

The shots or 'takes' of a film render time through the capture and re-presentation of light and sound within a particular time frame. The editing of these takes, including the retrospective application of the techniques described above, is an integral part of the process of composition; of putting these shots into a particular sequence which flows with a particular temporal rhythm, and which constitutes the film (film-time). Editing, then, plays a primary role in the cinematic appropriation of time.

When discussing film editing, there is no other place to begin than with the idea of 'the cut'. Originally, of course, the process of editing a film literally involved a series of cuts to a roll of celluloid followed by the physical splicing together of these cut-out sections of film; 'cutting' film is no mere metaphor for the exclusion of content, but actually a physical description of the process. Now, though, computer software has digitalised the process, so that the cutting and splicing of film is accomplished with the clicks of a mouse and the input of keyboard shortcuts. What has not changed over the years, however, is the central importance of decision-making left to the filmmaker(s); where to place the cut, with which take or shot to follow the cut, how to transition between cuts, and so forth. These decisions are absolutely vital to the composition of a film, which is to say that they are vital to the temporal fabric of cinematic art, for the decisions involved in making or not making a cut determine the temporal rhythm of the sequence of images which constitutes a film.

The effect of the cut and its role in establishing film-time can be well demonstrated by examining some of the alternative strategies for making a cut; in particular, rational

and non-rational cuts,²²² and the offset cut. First, consider the contrast between a rational and non-rational cut. The rational cut, on the one hand, is logical and easy to anticipate: a woman turns a door handle and pulls; cut to her entering the room from the other side of the threshold. It appeals to our intuitive sense of time and movement in the world because it is entirely consonant with our lived experience in time and space. The non-rational cut, however, introduces an illogical temporal interval to the sequence: a woman turns a door handle and pulls; cut to a lit fireplace for eight whole seconds; cut back to the woman entering the room. The difference is worlds apart; the temporal interval creates dead time because the irrationality of the cut to the fireplace completely dislocates the viewer, suspending them in the few seconds of dead time created. Again, consider that the words used in this description are spatialised: we are dealing with the *dislocation* and *suspension* of the viewer in time; temporality in film is spatialised in and through a spliced-together roll of celluloid. The result of this particular example of a non-rational cut is more space for stillness and introspection in the film; a space for time.

The offset cut works similarly, in the sense that it reorients a rational narrative sequence to create what I will call 'spare time'. Take the example just used to consider this. Conventionally edited, the sequence runs like this: a woman turns a door handle and pulls; cut, *while the door is still opening*, to the woman entering the next room. This is a neat, concise, sequence; the next shot 'comes in early' as some cinematographers like to say. With an offset cut, though, the sequence looks like this: a woman turns a door handle and pulls, *and there is no cut*; the door opens and she enters and the viewer is left looking at the open door long after she has passed through - then, finally, there is a cut to her already inside the next room. What happens when the viewer is left

²²² Deleuze is the first to introduce the term 'non-rational cut', I am inferring what a 'rational cut' would be from his analysis of the former. More on Deleuze below.

staring at that open door? It is 'spare time'; time left over from the necessary action of the story. Simply put, it is yet more space for time, created in a different manner from the non-rational cut, but to a similar effect.

Paul Schrader examines these cutting techniques lucidly, dwelling on them because they are crucial to fostering the dead time which is so important to his theory of transcendental style.²²³ First, Schrader recognises that the offset cut is most prominently used to effect delay, although it is occasionally used to abruptly foreshorten a scene - as with the very end of Schrader's own *First Reformed* (2017). There is a different name for this delay, given to it by the film scholar Ben Singer: "post action lag."²²⁴ Singer's phrase aptly captures the crucial element of the offset cut: it shifts focus away from action; the cut is defined precisely by neglecting to follow the action of a film and by seeking out inertia instead. A period of 'lag', as Singer calls it, follows action by interrupting the film before the next action is presented. In short, film which employs an offset cut does not follow the logical, intuitive flow of time and action, but distorts the flow and rhythm of time which the viewer expects. Through the offset cut, "the film-maker reorients time,"²²⁵ as Schrader observes.

Schrader similarly captures the essence of the non-rational cut in his new introduction to *Transcendental Style in Film*, citing Deleuze. He describes the technique as "time-image editing,"²²⁶ referring to the title of Deleuze's second volume on cinema (again, the next section will address Deleuze in full). The cinematic example Schrader refers to is an old favourite; Ozu and the vase scene from *Late Spring* (1949), which I

²²³ See the exposition of transcendental style in Chapter I. Schrader's analysis of dead time will also play an important role in the next chapter, which explores the theological power of attentiveness and contemplation in cinematic art.

²²⁴ Ben Singer, "'Jeanne Dielman': Cinematic Interrogation and 'Amplification,'" *Millennium Film Journal*, vol. 14, no. 22 (1989): pp. 56–75.

²²⁵ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 12.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

discussed in Chapter I. Interestingly, Deleuze uses the same example to illustrate his argument. It is the way that the eight-second shot of the vase is interposed between the two shots of Noriko which so interests Schrader and Deleuze. To put it in the terms I am using in this chapter, the vase-shot expands time in the scene; in the imaginary and conceptual action time of the film, there is no delay between the vanishing of Noriko's smile and the tears appearing in her eyes, but Ozu's static shot of the vase interrupts and expands this time, reconfiguring it with eight seconds of expanded screen time.

Indeed, recalling the discussion in Chapter I of what Noël Burch refers to as Ozu's 'pillow-shots', it can now be observed that the power of these shots (including the vase shot) is drawn explicitly from their temporality. The pillow-shot is an early example of what Deleuze would later call a non-rational cut; this might explain why he focuses so much on Ozu's work. Schrader's focus on Ozu (as one of the three filmmakers he includes in the subtitle of *Transcendental Style in Film*) is equally understandable, given his description of transcendental style as using "precise temporal means [...] for predetermined transcendental ends."²²⁷ If the pillow-shot is indeed a defining feature of Ozu's style, as Burch claims, then it reveals all the more the essential role of time in his and in other filmmaking. This also explains why scholars like Deleuze and Schrader are so fascinated by Ozu's films, given their own preoccupations with cinema and time.

The concept of the pillow-shot leads to another crucial element of editing and the temporal composition of cinema: juxtaposition. Before it can be considered as anything else (like an analogue of the 'pillow-word' in Japanese poetry, as Burch

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

argues - see Chapter I), the pillow-shot is simply an image juxtaposed with another for a certain effect. Film, especially as montage, is comprised of such juxtapositions; because film is fundamentally a sequence of moving images, the decisions involved in positioning these images are always in some way decisions of juxtaposition. The cardinal point to be made is this: the cinematic technique of juxtaposition refers to a positioning together in space and time; not only in space and not only in time. The word 'juxtaposition' is primarily a spatial word, but, because of the essential temporal nature of cinema, any filmic positioning of images or objects alongside one another in space will also necessarily be a positioning in time. Juxtaposition, then, is a prime illustration of filmic space-time, where the temporal fabric of cinema is indissolubly connected with its spatial fabric; two images placed side by side on a spool of celluloid will be rendered next to each other in time by virtue of their spatial adjacency.

There is a very well-known effect which demonstrates the temporal significance of juxtaposition in film editing. Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov identified the power a film's sequence has on the viewer, realising that juxtaposed images can generate meaning in and of themselves, simply by virtue of their spatial and temporal adjacency. The Kuleshov effect is illustrated by an experiment which the Russian filmmaker and theorist carried out himself: first, he showed one set of spectators a shot of a man with a generic longing or wistful expression gazing into the middle-distance, juxtaposed with the image of a prison cell door; the door then opens and Kuleshov cuts back to the man, whose expression now turns to joy. Second, Kuleshov showed another set of spectators the same sequence of the man, but this time he replaced the footage of the cell door and its opening with someone bringing a bowl of soup to him. When asked what the man's emotions were, the audience of the first sequence said that he was longing for freedom from prison and then joyous at his

release, while the audience of the second sequence said that he was clearly hungry and then joyous to receive food. Moreover, both audiences were said to have praised the quality of the acting in capturing the respective states of longing and hunger, even though, because of the nature of the experiment, there was no acting whatsoever specific to the situation of prison or food. According to Kuleshov, the experiment proved that the identical reactions of the man “were rendered completely unnoticeable by montage.”²²⁸ In other words, the meaning of the footage of the man was transformed by whichever footage followed or preceded it in time.²²⁹

Juxtaposition is the driving principle behind montage and Kuleshov was a foundational influence on the Soviet school of montage, not least because the Kuleshov effect demonstrates the power of juxtaposition to create meaning. He is therefore essential to any discussion about time and film, and his work leads to an important realisation about the temporal composition of cinema. Film, as has been argued, appropriates time by the capture and re-presentation of light and sound through the shot; montage, then, as the cutting and splicing together of these shots, is the ultimate deferral to the appropriation of time through editing.²³⁰

It is hard to find a better illustration of the way film editing can appropriate time than Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Nor is it any easier to find a figure more intimately associated with montage cinema than Eisenstein himself. A direct contemporary of Kuleshov (they were born just one year apart), Eisenstein shared a

²²⁸ Ronald Robert Levaco, *Kuleshov on Film: Writings by Lev Kuleshov* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019) p. 192.

²²⁹ Hitchcock demonstrated the Kuleshov effect in a famous interview, using footage of himself squinting at something and then smiling, juxtaposed in one instance with a mother and her baby and, in the next, with a woman in a bikini. In the first instance he appears as a kindly old man, in the second he appears - in Hitchcock’s own words - as “a dirty old man.”

²³⁰ As will be illustrated, however, film also appropriates time through the absence of editing; in the long take, for example.

similar focus on the power of juxtaposed images, and one particular scene from his silent film *Battleship Potemkin* demonstrates the power of montage to appropriate time (in this particular instance by extending it). In his famous scene of the runaway baby carriage in Act IV, 'The Odessa Steps', a detachment of Cossacks arrive armed at the top of the stairs and open fire on an unarmed group of civilians. The Cossacks are depicted as one inimical machine; they step in time with the scene's music, with an alien precision and an inhuman synchronicity. Their volleys of bullets are likewise aligned with the score so that they punctuate the sequence like a drumbeat or some other percussive and metronomic pulse; each salvo a mortal systole keeping time to the carnage. And, at the heart of all the chaos, a mother is shot dead and relinquishes her hold on her infant's carriage, which begins its runaway descent down the stairs and into the killing frenzy.²³¹

Essential to the meaning which Eisenstein creates in this scene is the montage of the baby's frightening cascade down the stairs; images of the infant and its carriage are interposed and juxtaposed with images of the massacre. The first effect of this is obvious; it creates fear for the infant's life, who is the apotheosis of innocence in this crowd of innocents. The second effect is a telling example of the appropriation of time through editing in order to create tension; Eisenstein uses each cut to extend the duration of the infant's descent. There is no delay in the action time of the fall, but its screen time is drastically protracted through the montage. At the same time, Eisenstein ensures that the sequence does not appear slowed down or prolonged; on the contrary, the action rushes by in tension and the frenzy of the massacre passes in a stampede. He achieves this again through montage, for the average length of each shot is barely more than a second, and - because of their sequential speed and the uneven

²³¹ Figure 11.

way in which they are spliced together - each image seems to flicker and coruscate, passing in a blur. It is this flurry of coruscating images which gives the impression of speed, despite the fact that the action is actually being drawn out through the extension of montage.

There is a final observation to be made about this scene: again, the temporal nature of this montage is intimately connected with its spatial nature. For, in extending the time of the baby carriage's descent, Eisenstein simultaneously expands the architecture of the stairs. The montage does not just create a particular film-time which is distinct from the factual time of the action, but also creates a particular spatiality in the scene which is distinct from the lived space of the filmed location. As Eisenstein himself later wrote about the power of juxtaposition in cinema, "the juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot - as it does a *creation*."²³² Perhaps the scene's power to appropriate and create space is best revealed by the meta-reception of *Battleship Potemkin*; the steps from the Odessa sequence, which were originally called the Richelieu Stairs, are now renamed the Potemkin Stairs because of this very scene.

I want to conclude this section with a counter-observation which will be crucial to the analysis of Tarkovsky to come. Film editing is absolutely essential to the temporal fabric of cinema; patently through the the manifest and tangible power of montage, but also through the conspicuous absence of such meticulous editing. Indeed, many filmmakers take a deliberately minimalistic approach to editing and coverage for reasons to do with time; such an approach is used not to appropriate time in order to reorient it or manipulate it, but rather simply to allow time to be felt in the shot. Let

²³² Sergei Eisenstein [trans. Jay Leyda], *The Film Sense* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1975) p. 7.

us return to the match scene in De Sica's *Umberto D* (1952), which was examined in Chapter I, in order to demonstrate this. The match scene (where the maid enters the kitchen and proceeds to light a match over three struggled attempts) is accomplished in one single and unbroken long take, held in a static frame. There is no cut and no real editing throughout the entire sequence, and yet the scene is defined by its temporality; it is defined by its inertia, by the inherent waiting and attentiveness to duration involved in its experience. "Irrelevant action in real time."²³³ André Bazin celebrated this scene for its realism; for him, the long take represents 'essential cinema', which he defines in contrast to montage: "Montage which we are constantly being told is the essence of cinema is, in this situation, the literary and anticinematic process *par excellence*. Essential cinema, seen for once in its pure state, on the contrary, is to be found in straightforward photographic respect for the unity of space."²³⁴ And, it should be added - given their inseparability and given Bazin's observation that "the cinema is objectivity in time [...] the image of things is also that of their duration" - the unity of time.

To be clear, minimalist approaches like the long take remain a decision of editing; they are a positive and deliberate choice by the filmmaker(s) before and during the editing process. What is at stake between the styles of montage and of the long take is the way in which time is rendered and appropriated in film; to simplify it slightly, will the film *make* a certain time be felt, as in *Battleship Potemkin*, or will the film *allow* time to be felt, as in *Umberto D*? It is no coincidence that montage style films regularly employ complex temporal transitions like time-lapses and intricate dissolves, while films grounded in the minimalism of the long take seldom make use of anything more complex than a cut or swift fade. Nonetheless, both styles reveal the temporal fabric

²³³ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 5.

²³⁴ Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Vol 1*, p. 46.

of cinema through the interplay and reciprocity of film-time and viewing-time, which is itself spatialised in the editing process on a spool of celluloid, cut and spliced together in a phenomenal roll of cinematic space-time.

2. TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS OF TIME AND CINEMA:

DELEUZE AND TARKOVSKY

In the space of a single year, between 1985 and 1986, two groundbreaking developments were made in the theoretical analysis of time and film. The first was the publication of the second volume in Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema* study, subtitled *The Time-Image*, and the second was the publication of Andrei Tarkovsky's remarkable hybrid of memoir and aesthetics, *Sculpting in Time*. Fascinatingly, neither possesses a direct influence on the other: Tarkovsky shows no sign anywhere of having read Deleuze, and Deleuze himself cannot specifically reference *Sculpting in Time* because his work antecedes it (although he does make a passing reference to an earlier essay of Tarkovsky's written in 1981, titled 'On the Cinematographic Figure').²³⁵ Both of these texts address with unprecedented insight the temporal fabric of cinema, and both (although especially Deleuze's) have reverberated and continue to reverberate throughout the field of film aesthetics. As such, they are indispensable contributions for any attempt to explore the questions of time and cinema with which this chapter is concerned.

²³⁵ This passing reference is important, though, and will be considered later in this section.

The crystal reveals a direct time-image, and no longer an indirect image of time deriving from movement. It does not abstract time; it does better: it reverses its subordination in relation to movement.²³⁶

In the very first paragraph of this chapter, I said that the motion picture is contingent on the time given for that motion; movement is contingent on its temporality. This is aligned with what Deleuze argues here, in the above quotation, in which he suggests that movement in cinema is subordinate (although intimately related) to the filmic time-image. Deleuze's two-volume study of the cinema is renowned within film theory for its esoteric and enigmatic complexion; his terminology (like 'crystal-image', 'chronosigns', or 'opsigns', and the overarching 'time-image') is idiosyncratic and uniquely original, while the structure of his argument is free-flowing, fluent, and radically discursive. As such, there is much to unpack here.

First, some context: Deleuze, one of the most important philosophers of the latter half of the twentieth century, was primarily a metaphysician and key figure in the project of poststructuralism. Towards the end of his career, though, he published a two-volume study of the cinema, entitled: *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (1985). These two volumes trace the development of the film image since the advent of cinema with the Lumière Brothers and their *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* in 1895, and ultimately recognise the profound philosophical significance of cinema: "Cinema itself is a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as conceptual practice."²³⁷ Indeed, Deleuze's project

²³⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 103.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

is fundamentally a philosophical one. However, *Cinema I* and *Cinema II* are not mere philosophical ‘companions’ to film; “it is not a question of ‘applying’ philosophical concepts to the cinema.”²³⁸ Deleuze’s project is something more substantial; in his own words, it is “a logic of the cinema” seeking to “isolate certain cinematographic concepts.”²³⁹

To give a summary of Deleuze’s dual volume study, he recognises two major and fundamental ‘images’ of film, which fall into two cinematic epochs, roughly demarcated by the Second World War. *Cinema I* describes pre-war cinema as art whose primary character was ‘movement-image’. Deleuze follows the trajectory of this “classical” cinema from its inception, through the advent of the talkie, and finally to Hitchcock, whom he situates “at the junction of two cinemas, the classical that he perfects and the modern that he prepares.”²⁴⁰ The principle concept of the movement-image is that the semiotic meaning of film is derived from movement and action, which is to say that the movement-image infers and projects action onto a reciprocally performative viewer. *Cinema II* identifies a shift in cinematic art that took place sometime around the beginning of the post-war period, roughly identified with the career of Hitchcock. According to Deleuze, this was a shift away from the movement-image and towards what he calls the time-image. *Cinema II* is concerned with the semiotic meaning of the time-image, and much of the discourse is devoted to an esoteric taxonomy of what Deleuze calls ‘chronosigns’. Indeed, this taxonomy can feel nearly inscrutable, with the glossary of *Cinema II* defining no less than six specific types of ‘chronosign’ (including ‘hyalosigns’ and ‘onirosigns’). In overview, a ‘chronosign’ is, for Deleuze, a film image where time appears directly, as the primary

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) p. xi.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

substance of the image. This is the time-image itself; a 'crystal image', by which Deleuze understands a direct image of *crystallised* time of the same kind as memory or dream. I will explain what Deleuze means by this in due course, but first it is necessary to examine a crucial and foundational influence of his.

Both volumes are united by the philosophy of Henri Bergson, who is the major influence on Deleuze's project. *Cinema I* and *Cinema II* are interspersed with four chapters which are designated by subtitle as commentaries on Bergson, each of which functions as a brief excursus, preserving the unity of the project over the two separate books, which were published two years apart. In the first volume, Deleuze draws from Bergson the basis for identifying three varieties (or 'avatars') of the movement-image: perception-image, action-image, and affection-image, in ascending order.²⁴¹ For the purposes of this chapter, though, it is Bergson's philosophy of time, and the influence this had on Deleuze's second volume, which is of particular interest. It is not within the scope of this chapter to explore the entirety of Bergson's philosophy, but it is absolutely essential to highlight those key elements of his thought which influenced Deleuze's theory of cinema and time.

The primary text on which Deleuze draws in this regard is *Time and Free Will*, and the main Bergsonian concepts he addresses are that of multiplicity and *la durée*. The starting point is Bergson's realisation that what we consider to be time scientifically is different from our actual conscious perception of time. This is primarily because, for Bergson, in our scientific measuring of time (through a clock, for instance) we do not actually measure duration but instead units of space.²⁴² The hands on a clock, for

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-73.

²⁴² Bergson demonstrates this for the first time with the example of the bell: Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013) pp. 86-87.

example, merely measure the spatial intervals between seconds, minutes, and hours. This can be demonstrated on a grander scale, as well, by considering what hours, days, years, and other units of time actually are: for they are in fact spatial quantities; a day is nothing other than the complete rotation of the planet on its axis, a year is the distance the planet travels through space on its orbit of the sun. For Bergson, when we measure time scientifically, we subscribe to a false understanding of what time actually is; time as it is consciously perceived is pure duration (*durée*), but the scientific measuring of time fails to grasp duration properly. "When I follow with my eyes on the dial of a clock the movement of the hand which corresponds to the oscillations of the pendulum, I do not measure duration, as seems to be thought; I merely count simultaneities, which is very different."²⁴³

For Bergson, this is because we have confused space and time, almost synonymising them. The confusion of space and time is necessary in order to measure it scientifically, as with a clock, and Bergson concedes that this is important in our day-to-day lives. However, conscious perception of time is very different from this, and it is the conscious perception of time which Bergson seeks to describe as *la durée*. Time does not appear to consciousness as a set of units; we do not perceive the world as a neat sum of hours and minutes and days, but rather as pure duration, where time might seem to fly by in a rush or to pass slowly in tedium. As Bergson puts it, "pure consciousness does not perceive time as a sum of units of duration; left to itself it has no means and even no reason to measure time."²⁴⁴ The key to understanding this is Bergson's realisation that the units we impose upon time lead us mistakenly to believe that time is a sum of discrete moments. This could not be further from Bergson's position, for he considers the conscious perception of time to be the opposite of

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

discrete - continuous and interpenetrating:

Within myself a process of organisation or interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration. It is because I endure in this way that I picture to myself what I call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillation.²⁴⁵

The essential word here is 'interpenetration': the scientific units of time present the idea of a homogenous sequence of discrete temporal events, which are 'broken up' by each unit as if the pendulum can cut out a segment of time; Bergson, however, argues that the reality of conscious perception of time is such that every present instance is interpenetrated by the heterogenous instances which precede it. When explaining Bergson's idea of interpenetration, Deleuze turns to Augustine: "Adopting St Augustine's fine formulation, there is *a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past*, all implicated in the event, rolled up in the event, and thus simultaneous and inexplicable."²⁴⁶ This is what Bergson means when he says that *durée* is a qualitative multiplicity rather than a quantitative multiplicity; conscious time, which is to say duration, is not a quantitative sum of moments, but the quality of all moments indissolubly wrapped up in the present moment without juxtaposition.

This is the key to Deleuze's understanding of the time-image in cinema. While film is itself a temporal phenomenon (it is experienced in and through time), it also has the potential to present its viewer with a direct time-image. The concept of the direct time-image is understood by Deleuze through the Bergsonian notion of time that interpenetrates each moment as a qualitative multiplicity. This is why he describes the

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 105.

time-image as a crystal-image, and why he compares this crystallisation with dream and memory. The time-image is crystallised in the sense that past and present appear in the image all at once and without juxtaposition, as pure duration; as Deleuze describes it, “the present is the actual image, and *its* contemporaneous past is the virtual image,”²⁴⁷ while the crystal-image is “the uniting of an actual image and a virtual image to the point where they can no longer be distinguished.”²⁴⁸ In other words, the crystal-image is the interpenetration of the present and the past (which is itself contemporaneous with the present) such that duration is crystallised in a direct time-image. “The image has to be present and past, still present and already past, at once and at the same time.”²⁴⁹ Or, as Deleuze writes later in *Cinema II*, “what the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself.”²⁵⁰ To summarise this in Deleuze’s (and therefore Bergson’s) terms: the time-image is the crystal; an image of pure duration, which is not the sum of spatialised temporal intervals, but time itself as it appears directly to consciousness.

This is Deleuze’s radical insight as regards this chapter’s discussion: although film uses the spatial-temporal techniques of the shot, including those of montage and juxtaposition,²⁵¹ these techniques have the potential to create a unique temporality, which is not subordinate to space. They can create or reveal “an image where time ceases to be subordinate to movement and appears for itself”²⁵² - a direct time-image of past and present, crystallised and without juxtaposition. This is not to say that

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁵¹ Deleuze devotes much of *Cinema II* to analysis of Kuleshov and Eisenstein with regard to montage and time.

²⁵² Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 345.

montage and cinematic juxtaposition are opposed to Deleuze's concept of the time-image. On the contrary, Deleuze explicitly includes montage in the direct time-image, because (just as Kuleshov said) juxtaposed images can create something entirely new; montage can create something beyond the sum of its parts: "The shot goes beyond the movement-image, and montage goes beyond indirect representation of time, to both share in a direct time-image, the one determining the form or rather force of time in the image, the other the relations of time or of forces in the succession of images (relations that are no more reducible to succession, than the image is to movement)."²⁵³

I will come full circle, for Deleuze's conceptualisation of the time-image is held in microcosm in his analysis of a scene that I have referred to time and again: the pillow-shot of the vase in Ozu's *Late Spring*. It is the way that the still life of the vase is interposed and juxtaposed with the film's action that, for Deleuze, reveals the unique temporal fabric of cinema; that it is in fact an inert, still life image which paradoxically reveals time through change because of its (spatial) positioning in the film. In his own words:

The vase in *Late Spring* is interposed between the daughter's half smile and the beginning of her tears. There is becoming, change, passage. But the form of what changes does not itself change, does not pass on. This is time, time itself, 'a little time in its pure state': a direct time-image, which gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced.²⁵⁴

"A direct time-image, which gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced." Perhaps this is what Bazin was getting at with his description of

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the cinema as “mummified change.” In any case, it expresses that Bergsonian *durée* in which past and present crystallise in quality, appearing contemporaneously in the film image. And perhaps the best indication that the temporal fabric of cinema ought to be understood through these Bergsonian terms comes from one of his own analogies. In *The Creative Mind*, Bergson uses the image of two spools with a tape running between them to illustrate *durée*:²⁵⁵ the spools wind and unwind the tape like the passing of time, while the tape itself is continuous, without any breaks or discrete segments; just as time appears irreducibly to consciousness as pure duration, without any discrete units or intervals. Could not the spool of tape in this image be replaced with a spool of celluloid? Perhaps, as Deleuze suggests, cinema ought to be understood through Bergson’s concept of *durée*, and perhaps the fabric of cinema is time itself, printed and spatialised on a roll of film, unspooled through a projector to *endure* in its screening.

1986 - TARKOVSKY AND IMPRINTED TIME

Time, printed in its factual forms and manifestations: such is the supreme idea of cinema as an art.²⁵⁶

This central insight permeates the whole of Tarkovsky’s work, from his films on the screen to the pages of *Sculpting in Time* and other writings. Tarkovsky conceived these words at the same time that Deleuze was formulating his concept of the time-image, and it is unfortunate that Deleuze was never able to engage with Tarkovsky on this

²⁵⁵ Henri Bergson [trans. Mabelle L. Andison] *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Incorporated, 2007) pp. 175-176.

²⁵⁶ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 63.

particular level. Indeed, there seems to be a profound consonance between Tarkovsky's understanding of the temporal fabric of film and Deleuze's philosophical study of cinema and time; a consonance which has not escaped the wider field of film aesthetics, and which has proved a rich vein for theorists working on the subject.²⁵⁷ Just as time is an essential concept for Deleuze, it is absolutely foundational to Tarkovsky's understanding of the cinema. Indeed, the vast majority of scholarship exploring Tarkovsky's work recognises, as Maya Turovskaya does, that "time was the key concept for Tarkovsky's whole approach to cinema."²⁵⁸ But what does Tarkovsky mean when he talks about the 'printing' of time "in its factual forms and manifestations," and what could it even mean to 'sculpt in time'? These are the questions with which any study of Tarkovsky must begin.

First, consider *Sculpting in Time*. The English translation of this title (запечатленное время) does not, perhaps, convey the full meaning of the Russian. The root of the first word here is 'печать' (pechat), which is usually translated as 'print', 'stamp', or 'seal' (with the latter two especially invoking the sense of a wax seal or stamp). The translation 'sculpting in time' is understandable for a variety of reasons - not least because Tarkovsky himself does use the image of director as sculptor (see below) - but it is extremely valuable to be mindful of the more literal meaning here; something like 'imprinted time'. For Tarkovsky, the power of cinema is its capacity to render time and the passing of time through the material subject of the camera; to *imprint* time on film. This is, in Tarkovsky's own words, "the one precious potential of the cinema -

²⁵⁷ See, especially, "Sculpting of the Time-Image: An Exploration of Tarkovsky's Film Theory From a Deleuzian Perspective" in: Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson and Þorkell Ágúst Óttarsson, *Through the Mirror: Reflections on the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006). Consider, also, articles like Robert Eford's "Deleuze on Tarkovsky: The Crystal-Image of Time in 'Steamroller and Violin,'" as well as Alexander Kozin's "The Appearing Memory: Gilles Deleuze and Andrey Tarkovsky on 'crystal-Image.'"

²⁵⁸ Maya Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry* (London: Faber, 1989) p. 85.

the possibility of printing on celluloid the actuality of time.”²⁵⁹ Of course, the resonances of this statement with Deleuze’s concept of a direct time-image are inescapable.

How, though, might we interpret this vision of cinema as ‘imprinted time’? Tarkovsky’s commentary on the invention of cinema, and the Lumière brothers’ *L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895), further illuminates the idea. Tarkovsky considers this short, prototypical film in response to the question, “in what material does a director work?”²⁶⁰ He writes passionately about the story of that first ever movie screening, invoking the mythology that has since shrouded the event: a theatre of nascent spectators who cried out and panicked and even fled from the image of the onrushing locomotive. His passion for this legendary moment is easy to empathise with, but, for Tarkovsky, the significance of the moment extended far beyond its immediate effect: “That was the moment when cinema was born; it was not simply a question of technique, or just a new way of reproducing the world. What came into being was a new aesthetic principle. For the first time in the history of the arts, in the history of culture, man found the means to take an impression [-печать-] of time.”²⁶¹ This is Tarkovsky’s answer to his own question: a director works *in the material of time itself*; time imprinted materially on celluloid. For him, the invention of cinema marks the moment that humanity “acquired a matrix for actual time.”²⁶² This is the “new aesthetic principle” he is writing about in *Sculpting in Time*.

Specifically, according to Tarkovsky, it is the shot which possesses this power to imprint time. For him, the cinema prints time because it prints the image *and* its

²⁵⁹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 63.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

duration with every take. Because of this, Tarkovsky becomes the champion of the long take (consider the single, eight-minute long take at the end of *Nostalghia*,²⁶³ or the similarly protracted shot at the end of *The Sacrifice*, as two examples among countless others). The Tarkovsky long take is almost unmistakable, and it is one of the principle techniques of his filmmaking which makes his work so distinctive; it is delivered (unlike the complex and dynamic long takes of Orson Welles, for example)²⁶⁴ with a static frame and minimal camerawork so that the duration of the take is in many ways the real substance of the shot. In the next chapter I will say much more about Tarkovsky's long takes, especially with regard to the deeply significant theological concepts which arise from them. For now, though, it is important to observe that Tarkovsky's disposition towards the long take is driven by his desire to give the viewer an experience of pure time; an experience of unbroken, untouched duration, printed factually and barely edited, since in his eyes editing distorts the actuality of time captured in the shot. Thus he emphasises the realism inherent in the filmic printing of time, which smacks of Bazin's own realist approach to film and its temporality.²⁶⁵

However, Tarkovsky also recognises that film necessarily involves the manipulation of time by the director. In fact, he edits most of his films with a very deliberate temporal composition. *Mirror*, in particular, employs swift bursts and montages of images in its poetic structure - a barn ablaze, rainwater the colour of rust, a distant

²⁶³ See the following chapter for analysis of this extraordinary scene.

²⁶⁴ The difference between the long takes of Tarkovsky and of filmmakers like Welles is enormous. Welles and others move the camera around the scene, transitioning from wide-shot to close-up, from tracking shot to static frame without a cut, so that in one long take they still accomplish conventional coverage of a scene. Tarkovsky, on the other hand, uses the long take and forgoes conventional coverage entirely, holding on exclusively to one or two angles during the take. Where Welles' style is intricate but seamless, Tarkovsky's is minimalist and withholding.

²⁶⁵ Turovskaya in particular emphasises that Tarkovsky's understanding of 'imprinted time' "comes very close" to Bazin's account, citing the French theorist's phrase "the image of things is likewise the image of their duration". Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. xx.

body with face unfocussed. Yet the reality of time, not despite this kind of montage but precisely because of it, is the very essence of *Mirror*. Indeed, Tarkovsky acknowledges the temporal manipulation of editing frequently in *Sculpting in Time*, at one point writing that “editing brings together shots which are already filled with time, and organises the unified, living structure inherent in the film; and the time that pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive, is of varying rhythmic pressure.”²⁶⁶ There is then, as Turovskaya observes, “a ‘double articulation’ of time in cinema” according to Tarkovsky; “there is the necessary, but fraught, manipulation of this time by the director,” but, in the first place, there is “the time already inscribed in individual shots”²⁶⁷ - what Tarkovsky describes as “the actuality of time printed on celluloid.” Tarkovsky uses multiple images in *Sculpting in Time* to illustrate this; there is indeed the image of the director as ‘sculptor’, chiselling their film “from a ‘lump of time’,”²⁶⁸ but underlying and prior to this is the image of time passing through the camera lens and imprinting on celluloid like a seal in melted wax.

These ideas were present in Tarkovsky’s earlier text, ‘On the Cinematographic Figure’, to which Deleuze makes a brief reference in *Cinema II*. Deleuze is particularly interested in one particular image here: “Tarkovsky says that what is essential is the way time flows in the shot, its tension or rarefaction, ‘the pressure of time in the shot’.”²⁶⁹ Deleuze recognises that a superficial reading of Tarkovsky might claim that the Russian director rejects montage in favour of the long take - “he appears to subscribe to the classical alternative, shot *or* montage, and to opt strongly for the shot.”²⁷⁰ But, just as Deleuze says, Tarkovsky only *appears* to subscribe to this position;

²⁶⁶ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 114.

²⁶⁷ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, pp. xx-xxi.

²⁶⁸ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 64.

²⁶⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 42.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

in reality, as Deleuze argues in the preface to the English edition of *Cinema II*, “Tarkovsky challenges the distinction between montage and shot when he defines cinema by the ‘pressure of time’ in the shot.”²⁷¹ Indeed, Tarkovsky expands on the image of ‘time pressure’ and ‘flow’ in *Sculpting in Time*, illustrating it through the metaphor of a reed in a river: “Just as from the quivering of a reed you can tell what sort of current, what pressure there is in a river, in the same way we know the movement of time from the flow of the life-process reproduced in the shot.”²⁷² Yet this time, Tarkovsky addresses the apparent dichotomy between shot and montage that Deleuze observed, synthesising the two around this image of ‘time flow’ and demonstrating that he does not subscribe to that “classical alternative,” just as Deleuze had astutely observed one year earlier.

The director’s sense of time always amounts to a kind of coercion of the audience, as does his imposition of his inner world [...] I see it as my professional task then, to create my own, distinctive flow of time, and convey in the shot a sense of its movement [...] Assembly, editing, disturbs the passage of time, interrupts it and simultaneously gives it something new. The distortion of time can be a means of giving it rhythmical expression. Sculpting in time!²⁷³

Editing disturbs the passage of time and simultaneously gives it something new, Tarkovsky says. It is not the case, then, that Tarkovsky subscribes to the old dichotomy of montage *or* shot. Rather, Tarkovsky recognises - just as Deleuze did - that both shot and montage share in a time-image, because the interplay of the two is precisely what orchestrates the flow of time in cinema with a particular rhythm and pressure.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

²⁷² Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 120.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

Mirror, which I mentioned above, is the film of Tarkovsky's which most fully realises this vision of cinema as the sculpting of imprinted time, and some important conclusions for this chapter will emerge from a short analysis of this film. All of Tarkovsky's films deal in some way with time thematically, as well as formally and stylistically; *Ivan's Childhood* is about memory and the loss of past innocence, for example, *Andrei Rublev* is in a sense about the relationship of the personal with the historical, and *Nostalghia* is about the question of time, personal history and identity. Yet *Mirror* seems to be about the existential reality of time itself. The film possesses the form of a stream-of-consciousness, with a nonlinear structure largely lacking a cohesive narrative. Its non-chronological arrangement breaks all conventions of cinematic time, and its amalgam of abstract visuals, newsreel footage, and fictional drama creates a unique sense of time in the film. As a result, the way the film segues between its three time periods (pre-war 1935-1936, wartime 1943-1945, and post-war 1969) completely resists the terminology of 'flashbacks' and 'flashforwards'; instead present and past interpenetrate very much in the manner of Bergson's *durée*. This is augmented by the rhythm of the film's abstract images and dramas so that the final result is more like an elegy for the passage of time, composed as a polyphony of historical events, personal memory and innermost dreaming. There is no hierarchy of scenes real or imagined or fictionalised, and neither is there any hierarchy based on the order of their occurrence in the film. In *Mirror*, "the past always exists on an equal footing with the present; the world of the imagination coexists with the real world."²⁷⁴

The similarity between these words and Deleuze's discussion of the way past and present interpenetrate in the time-image is palpable; perhaps Turovskaya is even

²⁷⁴ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 87.

attempting to identify *Mirror* with Deleuze's image of crystallised time. Either way, it comes as little surprise that Deleuze himself wrote (in his typically esoteric manner) that "*Mirror* is a turning crystal."²⁷⁵ The rhythm of the film comes from the interplay of shot and montage; Tarkovsky exerts his 'time pressure' through the flow of protracted long takes as well as through flurries of abstract images. For example, an early sequence begins by depicting the protagonist, Alexei, in his childhood home. He is eating with his brother (both are about six or seven years old) when his mother tells them there is a fire outside. In his distinctive style, Tarkovsky moves through the house after the boys and then outdoors to the fire, which is consuming a barn, in a single long take.²⁷⁶ While Alexei and his brother burst out to see the fire, Tarkovsky makes the viewer wait. The camera is in no hurry to keep up with them. Indeed, Tarkovsky even uses a mirror to restrict the spectator's first view of the fire to just its reflection. Only eventually does he turn the camera and track slowly outdoors so that the blaze is shown in plain sight. The effect of this is to protract the stream of time in the scene: while the action unfolds rapidly, with characters hurrying to the fire, Tarkovsky presents the action inversely, exerting a time pressure on the viewer through the slowness of his camerawork.

The perception of time in this sequence is further complicated as he cuts away from the burning barn to sometime later (or earlier), when Alexei lies in bed. A monochrome shot of wind moving through foliage, which is a recurring motif in the film, precipitates more oneiric imagery as the sequence moves into something like dream; the young Alexei leaves his room as if he is sleepwalking, then Alexei's father is briefly glimpsed drawing a basin of water for Alexei's mother, Maria, who washes her hair as the ceiling collapses and water falls around her. In a fogged mirror she sees

²⁷⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 78.

²⁷⁶ Figure 12.

a vision of her older self, deliberately out of focus. The final images of the sequence are of hands; Maria's hand trying to wipe clean the mirror and demystify her vision, and then an unknown hand, now in colour, placed over a controlled fire. Such a montage of varied and disparate imagery might be expected to jar with the viewer and cause all meaning to disintegrate, but instead the sequence holds together, consolidated by its rhythm in a cinematic fugue; Alexei is configured as a viewer in the barn scene and reconfigured as a visionary in the dream, fire and water feature time and again in the sequence, and various apparitions of Maria are taken up in different forms.

In *Mirror*, then, Tarkovsky appropriates time in a highly distinctive manner; past and present seem to crystallise and interpenetrate so that the film endures through a fluctuating rhythm of compressed, extended, and re-presented time. This is accomplished through a multitude of techniques, but the two most prominent are the two demonstrated in the consecutive sequences I have just discussed: long takes and abstract montages of recurring images. Within the film both exert a certain time pressure, to use Tarkovsky's own words, and both share in Deleuze's concept of the time-image. Their tandem helps to give the film its oneiric quality, as a crystalline experience of past and present that plays out like a dream or a memory. What emerges here is a very particular style of filmmaking, not unique to Tarkovsky but expressed supremely in his films. It is a style which is made possible entirely by the decisive role that time plays in cinematic art; a style wherein a certain filmic appropriation of time facilitates attentiveness and primes the viewer for deep contemplation. It is this capacity of cinema which makes time such an important concept in understanding the theological power of film, and it is with this observation that I want to draw some conclusions before the next chapter goes on to explore this attentive potential of

cinema.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CINEMATIC TIME

This chapter has explored time as a fundamental concept within film aesthetics; it has sought to establish the theoretical understanding of time and cinema which is necessary for this thesis to proceed theologically. I have argued that time is the fabric of cinema, that the embodied encounter with the other at the heart of the film experience is rendered temporally as much as it is rendered spatially. In examining the reciprocal interplay of film-time and viewing-time, as well as the primary role of editing in the cinematic appropriation of time, and the seminal contributions of Deleuze and Tarkovsky, I have attempted to open up a space for various significant theological concepts to emerge.

In particular, from the introduction of Tarkovsky in the last section and the unique temporality of *Mirror*, a crucial insight into the theological power of film can begin to take shape. This is the capacity of film for a certain attentiveness, which is more than any mere 'deep thinking' and which is essentially theological in its scope and reach. For Tarkovsky, time is "the supreme idea of cinema as an art," and, precisely because of this supreme role of time, "the art of the screen is able, even called, to become a matrix of the individual soul."²⁷⁷ As he writes at the beginning of an important chapter in *Sculpting in Time*, "Time is necessary to man, so that, made flesh, he may be able to realise himself as a personality [...] Time is a state: the flame in which there lives the salamander of the human soul."²⁷⁸ Even Deleuze, who does not share Tarkovsky's

²⁷⁷ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 204.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Christian or Eastern Orthodox imagination, uses something of this language to describe the cinematic time-image (alluding to Nietzsche): "In the crystal-image there is this mutual search - blind and halting - of matter and spirit: beyond the movement-image, 'in which we are still pious'."²⁷⁹ These are the early intuitions, raw and not yet developed, of an insight into the theological power of film which is realised from understanding the temporal fabric of cinema.

²⁷⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 79.

IV

Through the Attentive Lens: Film as Contemplation

Time, rendered and appropriated in film, invests cinematic art with a profound potential for attentiveness. Such attentiveness, when pertinently realised in the medium, is of the utmost theological significance; it is an attentiveness to creation, to the enfleshed other encountered on, through, and behind the screen, and by extension to the infinite divine which at once sustains and transcends the finite substance of the art form. Crucially, it is not an emphasis or a preoccupation with the overtly theophanic, or any kind of extraordinary or preternatural action; rather, it is an attentiveness to the everyday, to the ordinary aspects of creation encountered in the day-to-day of our being in the world. In this respect it is a stylistic attentiveness, insofar as such a style maximises the formal potentials of the cinema; not by deploying any contrived blasts of lighting or special effects to represent some divine parousia, as with certain films of 'religious stories', but instead by utilising the cinema's capacity to render temporally the minutiae of life in order to foster an attentiveness to the everyday, where the divine "walks among the pots and pans."²⁸⁰

This attentiveness to the everyday is sacramental and incarnational in shape. It is a response to the call to seek the God incarnate; the Word made flesh, who is to be sought in the bread of everyday existence, that is to say, in the minutiae of ordinary life. As such, it is what Richard Kearney describes sacramentally as "a retrieval of the

²⁸⁰ St Teresa of Avila, *Book of the Foundations*, 5.8.

extraordinary in the ordinary” which “calls for a special attentiveness to infinity embodying itself in daily acts of eucharistic love and sharing. An endless moving over and back between the infinite and the infinitesimal,” for “the highest deity becomes - kenotically - the ‘very least of these.’ The word made everyday flesh.”²⁸¹ Just as Teresa of Avila passed through the ‘long, dark night’ of Carmelite mysticism and then, among her pots and pans, found the divine in the banalities of quotidian life, so too does this attentiveness in cinema reorient itself to our mundane and fleshly existence; “the ultimate step in mystical abandonment is a sanctification of our mundane experience.”²⁸² The cinema, too, without having to participate in mysticism, can participate in an attentiveness to the sacramentality of the everyday.

In the first section of this chapter, I will explore the role of time in facilitating this attentiveness to the mundane in film. This attentiveness is expressed supremely in the work of Tarkovsky, who emerged in a central role in the previous chapter, though other filmmakers, like Robert Bresson and Terrence Malick, also use certain renderings of time to perform such an attentiveness in their films. At this point, I will further develop what I have written in this introduction about the theological and contemplative significance of the mundane and the everyday; in doing so I will return to the sacramental thread which runs through this thesis as a leitmotif, once again revisiting Louis-Marie Chauvet’s “fundamental theology of sacramentality”²⁸³ as well as drawing on the sacramental approach Richard Kearney takes in *Anatheism*, which was introduced in the paragraph above. In a second section, I wish to explore the connection between this attentiveness and theological understandings of prayer. This is inspired by an article of Gerard Loughlin’s, in which he analyses Tarkovsky’s

²⁸¹ Kearney, *Anatheism*, pp. 86-87.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁸³ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 548.

attentive style of filmmaking as “a kind of prayer,”²⁸⁴ and in which the temporal fabric of film plays a central role. A valuable exposition of this connection between attentiveness to the mundane and prayer is Walter Burghardt’s essay ‘A Long, Loving Look at the Real’, which I will explore in depth in this second section. This chapter, like the last, continues to be rooted in the phenomenological approach introduced and developed in Chapter II, for to talk about the sacramentality of our enfleshed being in the world is to realise in phenomenological terms the significance of the incarnation.²⁸⁵

1. ATTENTIVENESS

THE ROLE OF THE TIME-IMAGE

What is understood by ‘attentiveness’, theologically and cinematically? The etymology of the word provides a fairly useful basis for interpreting the concept; it derives from the Latin verb *tendere*, ‘to stretch’, prefixed with the preposition *ad*, ‘towards’, and through its use in Middle English and in French it comes to mean the stretching of one’s senses and thought towards an object or idea. Theologically, attentiveness entails a stretching of one’s cognitive, affective, and spiritual faculties towards the divine. As such, it is an important aspect of contemplation, meditation, and indeed (as the second half of this chapter will explore) prayer. In particular, especially in a panentheist worldview, a theological attentiveness is often manifest as an attentiveness to the order of creation; attentiveness to the world insofar as the created world participates in God (*παν-εν-θεος*; *all-in-God*).²⁸⁶ Cinematically,

²⁸⁴ Gerard Loughlin, “The Long Take: Messianic Time in Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Nostalgia*,” *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 13, no. 3–4 (2009): pp. 365–379.

²⁸⁵ Chapter VI will develop this analysis of the incarnation far more thoroughly.

²⁸⁶ I will say more about panentheism in this regard later, in light of Chauvet’s preference for a model

attentiveness can be manifest phenomenologically in the medium's 'stretching out towards' the corporeal and embodied world; 'the address of the eye', as Sobchack understands cinema, presents a uniquely attentive possibility of addressing the world. Crucially, given the essentially temporal fabric of cinema, time is integral to this capacity for attentiveness in film.

All of Tarkovsky's films realise this capacity and illustrate the temporal aesthetic which is so crucial therein, but his sixth film, *Nostalghia*, does so particularly distinctly. Between his slow, contemplative long takes, his static, wide-angle shots, and his minimalist editing, Tarkovsky primes and performs a powerful attentiveness. In the picture's extended silences and prolonged inactivity, Tarkovsky spurns action in favour of stasis and presents the viewer with spare or dead time. The effect of this is paradoxical; the distance established by stasis and dead time demands a more intimate response to the film, engaging the viewer by presenting her with silence and space for contemplation. In other words, by retarding time and withholding what the viewer expects, Tarkovsky's long takes precipitate a kind of attentiveness that is centred in the duration of the shot; in the passing of time itself, which, as the previous chapter explored in dialogue with Deleuze, appears directly as a time-image.

Close consideration of the beginning of *Nostalghia* helpfully illustrates something of this attentive style. The opening five-and-a-half minutes of the film are made up of only two shots. The first of these functions as a prelude, complete with rolling credits and musical overture, yet its content and composition represent the film's beginning both thematically and stylistically. Four figures accompanied by a dog descend into a low valley. Mist rolls down the slope around them, overtaking them, stretching out

of creation as 'gift'.

beyond them to a lake lying in the shallow basin below. The camera rises, so slowly that the movement is nearly imperceptible, and at some unobservable moment (for the figures below have already slowed to a near stop) the picture freezes and becomes a still frame. The whole film expands out of this instant: thematically, this opening image establishes the concepts of home, memory, and family (for that is what this valley is and who the four figures are to *Nostalghia's* protagonist); stylistically, it establishes the glacial rhythm of the film, the time afforded throughout, and the attentiveness which this facilitates.

The second shot of the film commences the narrative proper, and with this the viewer encounters Tarkovsky's unique perception and appropriation of time. This first scene consists of one unbroken long take. It is framed with a wide angle that deliberately encourages the viewer's eye to wander over the countryside setting; the turbulent lie of the earth, the dawn-mist rolling in, the mundane fixtures of wire fence and electrical masts. After some time a solitary car enters screen right. Driving slowly, it crosses a winding path through the field and traverses the entire screen. The camera tracking is minimal and eventually the car is allowed to pass off screen and out of sight - and there is no cut. Instead of segueing to a different shot and pursuing coverage of the car as a conventional filmmaker would, Tarkovsky holds on to the mist-shrouded field. There is nothing but stillness for a while and pure duration. When the car does re-enter and Andrei and Eugenia disembark, Tarkovsky still holds on to the shot. And so the viewer's first encounter with the film's two protagonists is faceless and deliberately distant, reckoned only by their silhouettes and sparse dialogue, which seems to get lost among the mist in the screen's expanse. If the very first shot of the film is a thematic and stylistic prelude, then this second long take substantiates this style with Tarkovsky's familiar directorial techniques, all of which are designed to

make time felt in the scene, and all of which - through this temporal aesthetic - engender the attentiveness essential to the film.

What emerges from these first two shots is a style which seeks to extend time; to present the viewer with a retarded and protracted sense of time. Benjamin, as discussed in the previous chapter, emphasised the temporal power of film through such ideas of protraction and extension, appealing to slow motion and “the dynamite of the tenth of the second.”²⁸⁷ Tarkovsky, with the opening of *Nostalgia*, also embodies the protraction and extension of time, although through the use of the long take rather than slow motion. Indeed, in films which can be readily described as attentive, ‘slowness’ seems to be the normative mode; Tarkovsky is often celebrated as a progenitor of the ‘slow cinema’ movement - which, not coincidentally to the present discussion of attentiveness, is often interchangeably called ‘contemplative cinema’.²⁸⁸ Robert Bresson, whose films often retard and extend time, is another attentive filmmaker sometimes associated with slow cinema. Indeed, in his *Notes on the Cinematographer*, Bresson sets out the mantra, “Against the tactics of speed, of noise, set tactics of slowness, of silence.”²⁸⁹ Such tactics involve the techniques considered in the previous chapter: the non-rational cut, the offset edit, the long take, and the static frame. All of which create protracted moments of stasis, spurning the action of a film in favour of confronting the viewer with spare or dead time.

Paul Schrader, as was discussed in Chapter I, dwells on this idea of dead time and emphasises its critical role in transcendental style. The theological significance of dead time, for Schrader, lies in the way it affects the viewer; the way in which it “activates

²⁸⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 236.

²⁸⁸ For a summary of slow cinema, see: Tiago De Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge, *Slow Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

²⁸⁹ Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, p. 52.

the viewer,"²⁹⁰ to use his terminology. This is what Susan Sontag describes as imposing "a certain discipline on the audience"²⁹¹ in order to foster spiritual reflection and introspection. Schrader and Sontag are partly right, I think; to talk of priming the viewer for attentiveness is to talk in very similar terms to the Thomist understanding of how faith affects the believer's 'mode of receptivity'.²⁹² It seems that Schrader is talking about the viewer's 'mode of receptivity' when he talks about the role of dead time in transcendental style, especially given the way he describes a focus on the everyday in film as preparing the viewer for the 'intrusion' of the transcendent. This, of course, is this thesis' major point of departure from transcendental style, for it plays into a false binary of transcendence and immanence, the sacred and the profane, while also failing to recognise the fundamental sacramentality and incarnational significance of the everyday, which this thesis has sought to develop in dialogue with Chauvet and other sacramentally minded theologians.²⁹³ This, too, is where Schrader's understanding of dead time is incomplete. Although he is certainly right to recognise the significance of preparing (or 'priming') the mode of the viewer, the time-image is also far more substantial than this.

For the time-image, as an image of pure duration, not only primes the viewer for attentiveness, but in fact *performs* this attentiveness as well. By way of example, Ozu's vase in *Late Spring* yet again aids the present discussion, because it is favoured by both Deleuze and Schrader in contrasting ways. Schrader saw the eight-second shot of the vase as 'stasis' (the third and final 'step' of transcendental style, to recall the exposition of Chapter I). He describes the shot of the vase as "stasis, a form which can accept

²⁹⁰ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 9.

²⁹¹ See Chapter I for analysis of this idea in Sontag's essay: Sontag, "Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson," p. 180.

²⁹² Aquinas describes this as "a cognitional and spiritual mode" in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*. Aquinas, *De Anima*, Book II, Lectio 24. For Aquinas, however, any receptivity in the 'spiritual mode' of the believer engenders response; it is not a purely passive mode of reception.

²⁹³ See Chapter I for this critique.

deep, contradictory emotion and transform it into an expression of something unified, permanent, transcendent.”²⁹⁴ He does not, however, resolve the question of affective experience of the divine (as I argued in Chapter II), and so we are left frustrated by his affective approach, which introduces a false dichotomy of disparity between the ordinary and the divine. Deleuze’s frustration in this regard is especially palpable; “We cannot follow Paul Schrader when he contrasts, like two phases, ‘the everyday’ on one hand, and, on the other, ‘the moment of decision’, ‘the disparity’, which introduce an inexplicable break or emotion into daily banality.”²⁹⁵ Deleuze is right to say that “there is no need at all to call on a transcendence,”²⁹⁶ not because the vase scene has no theological significance, but because it does not necessitate a theological significance in and of itself. What does make the vase scene theologically significant, however, is its nature as a direct time-image, which both primes *and performs* a certain attentiveness. Even Deleuze seems to recognise something of this:

In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought. This is the very special extension of the opsign: to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound.²⁹⁷

Deleuze’s language is strikingly similar to the language of attentiveness: he talks of bringing the senses “into direct relation with time and thought,” and of the image’s “extension” (*ex-tendere*; a ‘stretching out’) “to make time and thought perceptible.”

²⁹⁴ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 77.

²⁹⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 14.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Simply put, a time-image, like the vase in *Late Spring*, does not precipitate a kind of stasis through contrast between the banal everyday and the disparity of the divine; rather, in the making visible of time itself, a time-image primes and performs an attentiveness to everyday banality.

This is what Tarkovsky is doing in *Nostalghia*, through his particular rendering of time. The opening of the film, the image of the car passing through and beyond the mist-shrouded field, confronting the viewer with dead time in the form of pure duration, does not attempt anything like a contrast between the everyday and the divine. It simply performs an attentiveness to the banality of the field, the mundane, which is rendered in such a way that the substance of the image actually ceases to be the field or the car or the mist, and becomes instead the appearance of time itself. Out of the time-image, the attentive image.

Schrader's own analysis of Tarkovsky is particularly telling, because he seems to misread the significance of time in the Russian director's filmmaking. Schrader reads Tarkovsky as being specifically concerned with the study of time: "Tarkovsky used film techniques to study time. For Tarkovsky time was not a means to a goal. It was the goal."²⁹⁸ Schrader is right, I think, to observe that Tarkovsky was interested in time itself, yet his interest in time goes beyond merely the study of it; in fact, as was observed in the previous chapter, Tarkovsky contends that time is the "material [in which] a director works."²⁹⁹ Time is not, in this sense, the object of his filmmaking but the substance of all filmmaking in his eyes. Indeed, Tarkovsky contradicts Schrader in *Sculpting in Time*, informing his reader of what he believes his films actually study: "I am interested in man, for he contains a universe within himself [...] In one form or

²⁹⁸ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 8.

²⁹⁹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 62.

another all my films have made the point that people are not alone and abandoned in an empty universe, but are linked by countless threads with the past and the future."³⁰⁰ These are Tarkovsky's real concerns, then, rather than any direct or metaphysical study of time, as Schrader suggests. And, moreover, Tarkovsky's strongest, innermost concerns are theological; evident from the christological and trinitarian imagery which suffuses his work, evident also from the soteriological forms of his films, and above all evident from his theological anthropology, which he expounds in the very final sentences of *Sculpting in Time*, in relation to the doctrine of creation: "Perhaps the meaning of all human activity lies in artistic consciousness, in the pointless and selfless creative act? Perhaps our capacity to create is evidence that we ourselves were created in the image and likeness of God?"³⁰¹

Tarkovsky, in similar fashion to Bresson and Ozu, usually pursues attentiveness with the slowness exemplified in *Nostalghia*; an appropriation of time which I described as extension in the previous chapter. Time appears in his films in its protraction, through moments of dead time, in the duration before a cut or in the inertia of his compositions. However, while such slowness does indeed seem to be the normative mode of an attentive style of filmmaking, a contrasting approach in which time is compressed rather than extended also possesses a potential for attentiveness. A striking example of this is found in Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*, and particularly during the 'creation' sequence in this film, which compresses cosmic eons into a sixteen-minute montage.³⁰² This sequence, like many others in the film, is narratively untethered, bound coherently to the film in style while addressing primordially the film's

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-6.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241. Part Two of this thesis will further explore the theological elements of Tarkovsky's cinematic corpus. In particular, this quotation will become very important in Chapter V, as I discuss the doctrine of creation and the theology of participation.

³⁰² Figure 13.

eponymous theme of 'life'. Creation is the subject of the sequence and time is its substance: celestial gasses swirl and settle, forming the galactic bodies of stars and planets through storms of fire and lightning; minutes later the sequence closes in on the sublunary, visiting one such planet after the conflagration has abided and primordial life has appeared; soon the montage shifts in scale again, moving from the nebulous enormity of planets and stars to the microscopic detail of a biological cell; prehistoric beasts are juxtaposed with something remarkably like a human foetus, while a scene of primal suffering is inserted into the montage as a dinosaur hunts another. In the end, Malick returns to the planetary perspective, depicting an extinction event before revisiting the motif of water and with it the latent presence of life beneath the face of the deep - that primordial and liquid chaos of Genesis' first verses.

Time is compressed in this montage, not extended or protracted in any way, and yet it is a deeply attentive sequence. It feels like a meditation on the birth of the universe, like a contemplation of creation which at once emphasises both the precious significance and fleeting insignificance of life on the cosmic stage. Malick even attends to the theological theme of suffering; overtly with the two dinosaurs but subtly as well because the music which underscores the entire montage is the 'Lacrimosa' from Preisner's 'Requiem for my Friend' (one of Preisner's few compositions which wasn't originally intended for the cinema). The use of a requiem in a sequence portraying the birth of the universe displays a clear connection between birth and death, while a ceaseless weeping (*lacrimosa*) accompanies the entire montage as if all of creation were crying out for God: "*Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem,*" as the lyrics call out again and again.

In all, this sequence illustrates how montage, like the long take, can share in a time-image (as Deleuze puts it). Slowness may be the normal mode for pursuing attentiveness in film, but it is not the only mode for doing so; Malick accomplishes an attentive rendering of time in this sequence with more conventional editing and without a single long take, all the while compressing billions of years into minutes. Examples of the attentive potential of montage are everywhere; even the first few sequences of Disney/Pixar's *Up* (2009) come to mind, as the film distils two human lifetimes into minutes through a wordless montage attentive to the most unexciting, quotidian and mundane elements of a lifetime shared in love. Indeed, Tarkovsky himself realises his attentive style through montage as well as through his inimitable long takes; consider again the oneiric sequences of *Mirror*, its bursts of illusive compositions interspersed with the film's many long takes. Both montage and shot facilitate attentiveness throughout the film, and not independently from one another but reciprocally, appropriating time precisely through the rhythmic interplay between them.

Whether through the extension or compression of time, then, the cinema possesses a profound potential for attentiveness. This potential is accomplished through certain renderings of time, often through the slowness of spare or dead time, but also through the quick fluidity of montage. Either way, it is out of a time-image that this attentiveness emerges; a time-image (that is, an image where time appears directly as its substance) at once *primes* the viewer for attentiveness and *performs* this attentiveness itself. Schrader realised the first part of this; his notion of dead time 'activating the viewer' captures something important about the mode of the viewer and the way that cinema can prime the viewer for attentiveness. Yet Schrader's understanding is too passive, and the time-image is more substantial than this, as the

opening shots of *Nostalghia* demonstrate. For the time-image can perform attentiveness itself; it can bring the senses into direct relation with time and thought, as Deleuze says, and it can extend an attentive address to the corporeal phenomena that it images.

THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE MUNDANE

Poetics, in short, makes us strangers to the earth so that we may dwell more sacramentally upon it.³⁰³

The potential for the cinematic image to prime and perform attentiveness is a vital element of the theological power of film. But how is such attentiveness directed? Crucially, it is not a matter of film attending to the overtly divine; this attentiveness is not facilitated through some contrived attempt to represent parousia, which is a futile task. Rather, as in Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* and even in the cosmic meditations of Malick's *The Tree of Life*, it is an attentiveness which reorients us to the flesh of existence; it re-presents life and re-introduces us to the world - it makes us strangers to the earth, as Kearney puts it in the above quotation from *Anatheism*, describing the theological significance of poetics.

Kearney's words are part of a wider move he makes towards a sacramental understanding of our quotidian existence. This sacramentality of the mundane entails the incarnational dimension; the creative Word made flesh reveals that the divine is to be found in the bread of everyday existence. The attentiveness to the minutiae of

³⁰³ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 13.

life (whether it is Malick's single cell, or Tarkovsky's mist-veiled field) is a response to the call to seek the God incarnate, and art - especially cinematic art - possesses a powerful capacity for this attentiveness. Indeed, in a chapter of *Anatheism* titled 'In the Flesh', Kearney writes that "the flesh of art is invariably indebted to the bread of life."³⁰⁴ This sacramental and incarnational understanding of art is developed through Kearney's wider phenomenological method, particularly through dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's writings about art and painting. What excites Kearney so much in these passages is Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the embodied, enworlded and reciprocal position of artist and seer. He cites a passage on painting from an essay in *Signs*: "The body, the life, the landscapes, the schools, the mistresses, the creditors, the police and the revolutions which might suffocate painting are also *the bread his work consecrates*. To live in painting is still to breathe the air of this world."³⁰⁵ Here, Merleau-Ponty makes use of sacramental and incarnational idiom to describe artistic attentiveness to banal, everyday existence.

Kearney, who takes pains not to superimpose the role of the theologian onto the French phenomenologist, nonetheless talks about "Merleau-Ponty's sacramental vision."³⁰⁶ He argues that, "from a philosophically agnostic viewpoint, [Merleau-Ponty] offers an intriguing phenomenological interpretation of eucharistic embodiment as recovery of the divine within the flesh, a kenotic emptying out of transcendence into the heart of the world's body, becoming a God beneath us rather than a God beyond us."³⁰⁷ This is the key to understanding Kearney's emphasis on the sacramentality of the mundane, and in turn it is vital to understanding the theological significance of attentiveness to the everyday. Merleau-Ponty's particular

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁰⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) p. 64.

³⁰⁶ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 91.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

understanding of transcendence is at the heart of the matter; transcendence is not to be understood in opposition to the immanent world (as Paul Schrader understands it, following Otto), or as something 'above' our embodied and enfleshed existence in the sense of a vertical hierarchy. Indeed, compare Schrader's understanding of transcendence in *Transcendental Style in Film* (see Chapter I) with these words from Merleau-Ponty, which Kearney also cites:

The Christian God wants nothing to do with a vertical relation of subordination [...] Christ attests that God would not be fully God without becoming fully man. Claudel [the 19th and 20th century French poet] goes so far as to say that God is not above but beneath us - meaning that we do not find Him as a suprasensible idea, but as another ourselves which dwells in and authenticates our darkness. Transcendence no longer hangs over man; he becomes, strangely, its privileged bearer.³⁰⁸

Transcendence, then, in Kearney's (and perhaps Merleau-Ponty's) sacramental vision, is to be understood not as a movement *beyond*, but as a movement *within*; not just a sense of radical exteriority but of radical interiority also. It is worth, too, considering Merleau-Ponty's exposition of Paul Claudel's God "as another ourselves which dwells in and authenticates our darkness," for it speaks to Kearney's image of the familiar divine stranger and the profound theological significance of encounter with the other, the supreme expression of which is the incarnation (see Chapter II).

Attentiveness to quotidian existence, to the outwardly mundane and banal elements of life in the world, begins with this acknowledgement of transcendence within or

³⁰⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 71.

“beneath” creation. This is why Kearney makes reference to Teresa of Avila, identifying in her writings a testament to the “sacramental movement from mystical meditation back to the ordinary universe.”³⁰⁹ Indeed, the sacramentality of the mundane is captured in Teresa’s famous line about God walking among the pots and pans, and it is this mode of thought which imbues an attentiveness to the mundane with theological significance. This is where film’s own unique potential for attentiveness comes to the fore, as cinematic art renders and appropriates time in such a way that it primes and performs an attentiveness to the mundane.

One instance of this attentiveness in cinema comes immediately to mind when thinking of Teresa of Avila’s “God walks among the pots and pans.” This is the kitchen scene from De Sica’s *Umberto D*, which I discussed briefly in Chapter I. The scene is a picture of banality, coincidentally set among the pots and pans: the maid, Maria, enters and ambles over to the stove, she takes several attempts to strike a match against the wall and light the stove, and after succeeding she becomes preoccupied by a cat she can see out of the window. Eventually she fills the kettle, taking her time and also gathering some papers from the table while she does so, before finally and casually setting it to boil. Even then, De Sica continues the long take, quite literally watching the pot boil while Maria grinds the coffee. This mundane scene, a picture of the reality of our quotidian existence, is presented to the viewer in one single long take, without a cut or any attempt at distraction. There is just the mundane, attended to in detail.

The scene is, compared with mainstream filmmaking, boring. The subject of the camera is entirely ordinary, and the scene itself is useless with regard to the

³⁰⁹ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 86.

progression of plot. And yet it is one of the most well-remembered sequences of the film; such is the power of attentiveness to the everyday, which the scene facilitates. Does God walk among the stove and kettle as Teresa suggests? Perhaps, but the cardinal point is simply that the ordinary is as worthy a place to look for the divine as the extraordinary; Teresa locates the miraculous within the mundane, not limiting it to the mystical. Augustine says something similar in *The City of God*, writing that “Whatever marvel happens in this world [*‘mirabile’* in the Latin - perhaps *‘miracle’* would be a better translation], it is certainly less marvellous than this whole world itself - I mean the sky and earth, and all that is in them.”³¹⁰ In other words, to limit our understanding of the miraculous to the extraordinary is to overlook the most fundamental of miracles; the Word incarnate in mundane, worldly existence. This is what Merleau-Ponty recognises when he writes that “the body, the life, the landscapes, the schools, the mistresses, the creditors, the police and the revolutions which might suffocate painting are also *the bread his work consecrates*.”³¹¹ The maid’s lighting of the stove, her mundane chores and drudgery, might suffocate the film and lose the interest of some viewers, but such banality is actually consecrated by the attentiveness the scene facilitates. As Merleau-Ponty and Kearney suggest, the mundane is re-presented through artistic attentiveness, such that everyday existence appears imbued with a sacramentality, revealing a transcendence within or beneath its finite surface.

Now, the words ‘sacramental’ and ‘sacramentality’ are crucial here, and it is necessary to ask what exactly is meant by them in this argument, given the very specific understanding of ‘a sacrament’ in an ecclesial context. In particular, there is a possible objection which must be anticipated at this point: if all experience of life in the world,

³¹⁰ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* X.12.

³¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 64.

the entirety of our everyday existence, is imbued with a deep and profound sacramental significance, then does that render the word 'sacramental' meaningless? If everything is sacramental, then perhaps nothing is. To respond to this potential problem, I will return to the theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet, and the various perspectives he alludes to while expounding his own position.

Chauvet himself is aware of this possible objection, and he takes great care to propose an alternative model as he expounds his "fundamental theology of the sacramental."³¹² In particular, Chauvet wishes to avoid the notion that all of existence participates *de facto* in the divine presence, simply by virtue of its being created. For Chauvet, a fundamental theology of sacramentality does not assign some general wash of divinity or sacramentalism to all of existence, like certain forms of pantheism (*παν-θεος*; *all-[is-]God*). Nor does it assume *a priori* that every created phenomenon is always necessarily sacramental because it participates automatically in God's creative act, like certain modes of panentheism which emphasise creation's intrinsic participation in God (*παν-εν-θεος*; *all-in-God*). Rather, Chauvet emphasises that creation is *gratuitously* - and therefore not necessarily - sacramental: "Inasmuch as it is created, the world of entities is posited as a *gift* from the start."³¹³ This understanding of creation as gift is at the heart of Chauvet's theology; "the world is confessed as creation insofar as it is marked by the word; and this word makes the world come forth immediately as an offer."³¹⁴ In short, the world is simply 'here', unnecessarily, inexplicably, gratuitously and graciously. As such, because it is an offer, a gift, it calls for a response; a 'return-gift' in the form of sacrament, wherein the Church offers up the cup and the host in response. This scheme of 'gift and return-gift' constitutes

³¹² Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 159.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Chauvet's theological model of participation, and it is this which he sets out in his fundamental theology of sacramentality, and which he sees suffused throughout the created world:

The 'reception' of the world as creation, that is, as 'gift', implies the 'return-gift' of the offering. Thus, the confession of creation is itself charged with sacramentality.³¹⁵

Thus, for Chauvet, we participate insofar as we receive. Participation is not entailed in some vague blur of sacramentality, from which all of creation emanates and in which the entire universe automatically participates. Rather, participation is the embodied response to the gift of the world; a response to the call to seek the God incarnate in the flesh of everyday existence. This is what I intend to express through the idea of the sacramentality of the mundane, and particularly through the capacity of art to consecrate the worldly phenomena it witnesses, as part of a response to the gift of quotidian existence.

While Kearney does not expound his sacramental theology in as systematic a manner as Chauvet, there is a striking consonance between both approaches. Both express their theologies through incarnational language: Chauvet by preserving the liturgy and the Church - the ecclesial body of Christ - as the primary sacramental locus; Kearney by asserting the sacramental significance of encounter with the other, the divine stranger. Above all, though, both share in a similar language of the sacramentality of the mundane: Chauvet's "fundamental theology of the sacramental" is intended as part of a broader "reinterpretation of the world as creation,"³¹⁶ in which

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

the corporeality of our worldly existence is “charged with sacramentality,”³¹⁷ while Kearney’s theology seeks a retrieval of the divine within the everyday flesh of creation; the bread of life within quotidian existence. Cinematic art, by priming and performing an attentiveness to the everyday, makes us strangers to the earth in precisely the manner that Kearney articulates, so that we may dwell more sacramentally upon the gift of embodied and mundane existence.

2. CONTEMPLATION AND PRAYER

To talk theologically about attentiveness is to draw from the language of contemplation and prayer. So far, this chapter has explored attentiveness as a crucial element of the theological power of film without mentioning prayer specifically, although various allusions and references to contemplation have been made. I now wish to consider the possibility that cinema can bear the considerable payload of an analogy to prayer. Indeed, I mentioned above that the slow cinema genre is sometimes called contemplative cinema; it is high time to unpack this term theologically, particularly seeing as Tarkovsky is so often considered to be one of the foremost progenitors of the movement. In this regard, it is particularly fascinating that Gerard Loughlin describes Tarkovsky’s film *Nostalgia* as “a kind of prayer” in an essay titled ‘The Long Take’.³¹⁸ In this section, I will build on Loughlin’s analogy between Tarkovsky’s style of filmmaking and prayer, expanding on the theological significance of the long take and certain filmic renderings of time, aligning them with what I have already said in this chapter about the time-image and its role in priming and performing attentiveness in cinema.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

³¹⁸ Loughlin, “The Long Take,” p. 365.

First, though, I want to develop the connection between attentiveness and prayer through the theology of contemplation. In this endeavour Walter Burghardt's 1989 essay 'Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real' is invaluable. As I will explore, what Loughlin understands with 'the long take' is something remarkably like Burghardt's 'long loving look', which itself is a profoundly attentive act of seeing and which is directed, moreover, towards the flesh of everyday existence in the world; what Burghardt calls 'the real'. Thus, through dialogue with Burghardt, I will develop the line of thought already pursued in this chapter, from the role of the time-image in cinematic attentiveness to the sacramentality of the mundane. In the end, I wish to contend that Burghardt's understanding of contemplation helps to illustrate the cinema's capacity for prayerfulness.

CINEMATIC ATTENTIVENESS AS A 'LONG, LOVING LOOK AT THE REAL': WALTER BURGHARDT

What is contemplation? This is the "substantive issue"³¹⁹ that the Jesuit theologian Walter Burghardt sets out to address at the very beginning of his essay. Finding his answer requires no heavy scrutiny, however, as it is readily available in the subtitle: contemplation is "a long, loving look at the real."³²⁰ Burghardt borrows this phrase from the Carmelite William McNamara, and goes on to develop from it a robust theology of contemplation, from which I wish to draw in this section. To begin with, I will adopt Burghardt's own strategy of breaking down the elements of 'a long, loving look at the real' in the reverse order, since that is the direction in which his essay flows

³¹⁹ Walter Burghardt, "Contemplation: A Long, Loving Look at the Real" in: George W. Traub, *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008) p. 89.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

and since that will follow naturally from what I have said about the sacramentality of the mundane. For Burghardt himself begins with the profound theological significance of everyday reality:

The *real*, reality, is not reducible to some far-off, abstract, intangible God-in-the-sky. Reality is living, pulsing people; reality is fire and ice; reality is the sun setting over the Swiss Alps, a gentle doe streaking through the forest; reality is a ruddy glass of Burgundy, Beethoven's Mass in D, a child lapping a chocolate ice-cream cone; reality is a striding woman with wind-blown hair; reality is the risen Christ [...] What I contemplate is always what is most real.³²¹

There are a number of crucial observations contained in this quotation. The question of transcendence, in the first instance, is dealt with in much the same way as Kearney deals with it via Merleau-Ponty: "reality," says Burghardt, "is not reducible to some far-off, abstract, intangible God-in-the-sky," before listing a plethora of everyday realities which culminate with and which are subsumed by the statement "reality is the risen Christ." In other words, to be truly contemplative is not a matter of meditating on some abstract notion of a celestial and intangible God, but rather a matter of attending to the tangible flesh of worldly existence and the transcendence within creation (or beneath creation, as Merleau-Ponty frames it). This is the only view of transcendence which is sufficiently incarnational, for it recognises the christological aspect of creation itself.³²² Indeed, Burghardt situates "the risen Christ" at the climax of his long list of quotidian realities for precisely that reason; the incarnation calls us to contemplate embodied, enfleshed, and enworlded creation, not some disembodied

³²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

³²² Chapters V and VI will explore creation and the incarnation along these lines, as part of the triptych of doctrines addressed in Part Two.

and otherworldly “God-in-the-sky,” as Burghardt puts it, for “what I contemplate is always what is most real,” and there is nothing more real than the incarnate God. Even the risen Christ, that is to say the ascended Christ, is not reducible to some “God-in-the-sky,” for the ascension instantiates the Church as the body of Christ in the world.

From this understanding of the ‘real’, Burghardt moves in reverse through his famous phrase: “This real I *look* at,”³²³ he writes, succinctly beginning a new section. This ‘look’, of course, is not merely visual. It is a metonym for the whole of attentiveness, and perhaps attentiveness in the sense of a ‘stretching out towards’, which was suggested at the beginning of this chapter. To ‘look’ at the ‘real’, then, in Burghardt’s understanding, is to stretch out towards reality with one’s affective, bodily, and cognitive faculties - in other words, it is to be attentive to the world. Moreover, this attentive ‘look’ is *only* made possible by the embodied, enfleshed nature of human being; “I am not naked spirit; I am spirit incarnate; in a genuine sense, I *am* flesh. And so I am most myself, most human, most contemplative, when my whole person responds to the real.”³²⁴ Thus contemplation, for Burghardt, involves an embodied act of attentive ‘looking’; a ‘look’ which is phenomenal, tactile and haptic, even audible. In his own words: “To ‘look’ wholly means that my whole person reacts. Not only my mind, but my eyes and ears, smelling and touching and tasting.”³²⁵

At this point, it is worth reiterating what has been said in previous chapters about the cinema as an embodied, enfleshed medium of seeing. For the cinema is in its own way an act of ‘looking’ which resembles what Burghardt describes here, in the sense that it involves the whole body, and not just the eyes and the mind. Take, for instance, the

³²³ Burghardt. “Contemplation,” p. 92.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

phenomenological analysis of film theorists like Vivian Sobchack and Steven Shaviro, who were examined in Chapter II; when they explore cinema as a physical, enworlded mode of viewing, they describe an art form which is as carnal as it is cerebral. As Shaviro puts it: “[Cinema] assaults the eye and ear, it touches and it wounds. It foregrounds the body.”³²⁶ The embodied nature of the medium invests cinema with the capacity to ‘look’ at the ‘real’ - the mundane everyday - in the very manner that Burghardt describes; with one’s whole person. In this particular light, film seems a contemplative art, especially when considered alongside the role of the time-image and certain renderings of time, which prime and perform attentiveness in the film experience.

And this temporal aspect of attentiveness leads directly on to the next step in Burghardt’s essay, for, as he says, “this look at the real is a *long* look.”³²⁷ Crucially, Burghardt does not mean ‘long’ in the quantitative sense of time that we can count: “This look at the real is a *long* look. Not in terms of measured time, but wonderfully unhurried, gloriously unhurried.”³²⁸ It is, then, a ‘long’ look in the qualitative sense of Bergson’s *durée*, to recall the analysis of the previous chapter. Attentiveness does indeed possess a temporal quality, but Burghardt argues that its temporality cannot be quantified, much in the same way as Bergson argues that the conscious perception of time is qualitative and not quantitative. As Burghardt observes, “You do not time the Philadelphia Symphony; you do not clock the Last Supper.”³²⁹ So, ‘long’ here refers not to any ‘amount’ of time which passes, but to the quality, the intensity, of time that is experienced by the attentive and contemplative seer.

³²⁶ Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 260.

³²⁷ Burghardt, “Contemplation,” p. 93.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

In light of this, Burghardt's understanding of contemplation as a 'long' look at the real is significantly consonant with the attentive potential of cinema. The time-image, that is, the film image where time appears for itself, according to Deleuze, is 'long' in the same qualitative sense with which Burghardt uses the adjective. Indeed, recalling again the previous chapter, Deleuze's various commentaries on Bergson emphasise his notion of *durée* in precisely this way; time appears as duration to consciousness, constantly and endlessly dividing in two as "the present which passes and the past which is preserved in the present"³³⁰ - both of which coexist in the conscious experience of time as pure 'duration'. In this sense the time-image is 'long' insofar as it is an intensification of experienced time. Burghardt understands contemplation as a 'long' look in a similar way; as an intensification of time rather than any sense of measured, counted, or otherwise quantified time. Perhaps, then, it is this temporal quality of intensification, as expressed by Deleuze in dialogue with Bergson, which opens up the cinema's potential for attentiveness and contemplation.

Burghardt completes the breakdown of his description of contemplation as "a long, loving look at the real" with a focus on the second adjective: "this long look must be a *loving* look."³³¹ The key to understanding the role of love, here, is to realise that Burghardt sees contemplation as a deeply affective act, often articulating it in terms of the beautiful. For Burghardt, contemplation "demands that the real captivate me, at times delight me."³³² There are two points to note here. First, because Burghardt sees contemplation as a 'loving' look, he goes on to use the language of encounter and alterity: "whatever or whoever the real, contemplation calls forth love, oneness with the other."³³³ Such a notion of contemplation as encounter with the other is quickly

³³⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 85.

³³¹ Burghardt, "Contemplation," p. 93.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*

attributed sacramental significance, as Burghardt goes on to argue that “from such contemplation comes communion. I mean the discovery of the Holy in deep, thoughtful encounters - with God’s creation, with God’s people, with God’s self - where love is proven by sacrifice, the wild exchange of all for another, for the Other.”³³⁴ This sacramental language of encounter is drawn directly from McNamara, whom Burghardt quotes earlier in his essay, citing his definition of contemplation as “a pure intuition of being, born of love. It is experiential awareness of reality and a way of entering into immediate communion with reality.”³³⁵ In this way, Burghardt arrives, via McNamara, at a concept of contemplation as “intuitive communion”³³⁶ with people and with other phenomena of reality, in which the idea of sacramental encounter with the other in creation is essential. Here, then, the theological power of film as a contemplative art must be emphasised once again. This is because - as the analysis of previous chapters has made clear - sacramental encounter with the other is at the heart of the medium; the cinema communicates from embodiment, to embodiment, through embodiment, as I argued in Chapter II.

The second point to note is Burghardt’s acknowledgement that the ‘real’ is not always beautiful. In fact, he specifically includes a list which challenges any notion that all of reality will delight the contemplative beholder: “The real includes sin and war, poverty and race, illness and death. The real is AIDS and abortion, apartheid and MS, bloated bellies and stunted minds, respirators and last gasps.”³³⁷ Crucially, though, elements of reality as cruel and lugubrious as these are not to be exempted from a ‘long, loving look’. For Burghardt, the contemplation of these elements of the real must be included, and moreover contemplation of them “must end in compassion,”

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

for “compassion that mimics Christ is a synonym for love.”³³⁸ Cinema also, if it is to be properly contemplative, cannot ignore the unsavoury aspects of reality. Indeed, Tarkovsky expresses this when he writes about the artistic pursuit of beauty:

When I speak of aspiration towards the beautiful, of the ideal as the ultimate aim of art [...] I am not for a moment suggesting that art should shun the ‘dirt’ of the world. On the contrary! The artistic image is always a metonym, where one thing is substituted for another, the smaller for the greater. To tell of what is living, the artist uses something dead; to speak of the infinite, he shows the finite [...] Hideousness and beauty are contained within each other. This prodigious paradox, in all its absurdity, leavens life itself.³³⁹

Tarkovsky, like Burghardt, emphasises that contemplation of the beautiful and the infinite begins with contemplation of finite, worldly existence. Here, again, the outmoded dichotomy of transcendence and immanence, in which the divine is, as Burghardt derides, some “God-in-the-sky,” is dispelled. Tarkovsky, throughout *Sculpting in Time* and throughout his films, suggests that the infinite is manifest in the finite, so that transcendence and immanence interpenetrate and co-substantiate. Consider, for example, the mysterious (and mystical) appearance of the strange woman towards the end of *Mirror*.³⁴⁰ This apparition, though a moment pregnant with the supernatural, is signified not with abstract or extraordinary means, as with an excess of sound, light, or special effect, but with the naturalistic minutiae of the encounter; with the condensation left on the table by her ‘illusory’ coffee cup. After

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 28.

³⁴⁰ This is the scene in the postwar time period of the film. where Ignat, Alexei’s son, is home alone and encounters a mysterious woman who requests that he read a poem by Pushkin. The telephone rings to interrupt the scene as Alexei calls the house. When Ignat picks up the telephone he turns away from the woman. When he looks back, she has vanished.

the woman's vanishing, Tarkovsky deploys a rare close up of the table, where the ring of condensation left by the cup recedes like the memory of the ethereal woman herself. From this most mundane of physical processes a spiritual encounter which borders on a mystical vision is portrayed; within the immanent, the transcendent; within the natural, the supernatural.

Bresson, whom Tarkovsky greatly admired, also spurned abstraction or surrealism when contemplating the infinite and the divine in his filmmaking. Indeed, in an interview with James Blue, Bresson succinctly observed the redundancy of the "God-in-the-sky" model of transcendence, realising the transcendental significance of everyday reality in nearly precisely the same terms that Burghardt would use decades later: "the supernatural in film is only the real rendered more precise."³⁴¹ And to render the real more precisely might well precipitate the filmmaker taking a long, loving look at it. That Bresson sees the transcendent within the immanent, the supernatural within the real and the natural, is never more evident than in *Diary of a Country Priest*, when the priest receives a vision of the Virgin Mary as a child. Bresson refrains from any abstract attempt to depict the divine throughout the entirety of this holy apparition; the imagery of the vision is delivered with voiceover, from the priest's journal, while the camera remains focussed solely on his face. There is no exterior transcendence in this vision, no intrusion or overflowing of transcendence into the everyday as if there were some partition between the two. Rather, it is a radically interior experience, played out in the innermost being of the visionary. Even as the priest collapses at the sight of the Virgin, Bresson only holds on more tightly to a close-up, as if the only way to portray this vision is to see its traces etched across the priest's face, amidst the spatters of mud from his fall to the ground.³⁴² Compare that scene with certain

³⁴¹ Blue, "Excerpts from an Interview with Robert Bresson."

³⁴² Figure 14.

Hollywood 'epics' which contrive to show the divine through blasts of sound and lighting, futilely attempting to depict parousia with special effects.

"A long, loving look at the real." In light of Burghardt's understanding of contemplation, the cinema's potential for attentiveness seems still more significant. Film can prime and perform each element of Burghardt's definition of contemplation. Through particular renderings of time, and through the attentive potential of the time-image, the cinematic gaze is 'long' in the sense that Burghardt expounds. It is also a 'look' which is enfleshed and enworlded in the way that he suggests; a carnal address of the whole person. And it is a 'loving' look at the 'real', for the long take of the cinematic gaze is also a *longing* look, grounded in embodied encounter with the other and in the sacramentality of everyday existence. Just as George Herbert contemplated the divine in the image of a withered and then revenant flower,³⁴³ just as St John of the Cross searched for Christ the bridegroom "through the sheepcots up the hill,"³⁴⁴ the contemplation of the day-to-day, mundane elements of life is essential to the theological power of film. Contemplation begins with an attentiveness to mundane reality. Such is the significance of Tarkovsky's mist-shrouded field in *Nostalghia*, of the maid's kitchen drudgery in *Umberto D*, and of the mud spattered face of Bresson's protagonist in *Diary of a Country Priest*; "the real rendered more precise."

PRAYERFULNESS IN THE FILM EXPERIENCE

Gerard Loughlin, in his essay on time and the long take in Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*,

³⁴³ George Herbert, *The Flower*.

³⁴⁴ St John of the Cross, *Song of the Soul and the Bridegroom*.

describes the film as “a kind of prayer.”³⁴⁵ Indeed, incubated within Tarkovsky’s contemplative frames, the stillness of his compositions, and the silence into which the film so often retreats, an atmosphere of prayerfulness takes hold of the picture just as Loughlin suggests. So far, this chapter has explored the theological power of film through the themes of attentiveness and contemplation, especially when directed towards the mundane reality of quotidian existence. Now, encouraged by Loughlin’s essay, I wish to consider the possibility that cinema, as an art form, can bear the considerable payload of an analogy to prayer. Tarkovsky’s work, including *Nostalghia*, will play an important role in this discussion, but I wish to focus on specific films only in order to answer the broader question: what is the cinema’s formal and stylistic capacity for prayerfulness, as an artistic medium? Just as it is vital to Loughlin’s essay, and just as it has been crucial throughout the analysis of this chapter and the last, time and the temporal fabric of film is integral to understanding prayerfulness in cinematic art.

What is prayer, and how should the concept of prayerfulness be understood? These substantial questions are where this section must begin. Before engaging in any specific filmic analysis, it is necessary to explain what is understood by ‘prayer’ as a theological concept. Of course, the theology of prayer is an enormous subject, and to discuss it comprehensively would require far more space than is available in this thesis (in fact, it would require its own thesis). Because of this, I will draw on the extensive work of other scholars, locating my understanding of prayer within their work, rather than attempting the unwieldy and vain task of expounding an original theology of prayer in one short section. To this end, I will turn first to Hans Urs von Balthasar because of his considerable influence on theologies and practices of prayer

³⁴⁵ Loughlin, “The Long Take,” p. 379.

in the last century, and because of the emphasis he places on contemplation in his treatment of prayer. I will also turn briefly to Bruce Benson's and Norman Wirzba's edited volume *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, because it contains a variety of perspectives from its contributors, and because it employs a similar phenomenological method to that which runs throughout this thesis.

To begin with, a summary of Balthasar's understanding of prayer, albeit a brief and rudimentary one, is necessary in order to illustrate something of the wider theological context at hand. The key starting point when reading Balthasar's theology of prayer is contemplation, which was first considered above in dialogue with Burghardt. Indeed, all three parts of Balthasar's short book *Prayer* include 'contemplation' in their titles,³⁴⁶ while the first few chapters of the book deal explicitly with 'The Necessity of Contemplation' and 'The Possibility of Contemplation'. Balthasar's understanding of contemplation is not vastly dissimilar to Burghardt's. In Balthasar's own words, contemplation is a 'looking' towards God: "This looking to God is contemplation. It is looking into the depths of the soul, and hence beyond the soul toward God."³⁴⁷ Again, observe the notion that transcendence is found through a movement inwards, and that contemplation is directed towards "the 'vision' of divine truth,"³⁴⁸ which is to be found through such a process of 'looking inwards'. Yet crucially, for Balthasar, this 'looking' or 'vision' must be understood not in abstract and intangible terms, but in the concrete and incarnational terms of encounter. As he outlines at the beginning of his second chapter:

Contemplation is not a mere gazing upon the Absolute, excluding, as far as

³⁴⁶ Part One: 'The Act of Contemplation'. Part Two: 'The Object of Contemplation'. Part Three: 'The Tensions of Contemplation'.

³⁴⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986) p. 24.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

possible, all its relation to the world in order to focus upon it in the greatest possible purity and detachment. The encounter with the Absolute - which never takes place with such force and such intensity except in this context - is always an encounter with the God who reveals himself within the setting of the world and its history, the God who is on the lookout for man.³⁴⁹

In this way, Balthasar rejects any idea that contemplation can occur in detachment from the world. Far from seeing contemplation in the colloquial terms of “navel gazing” (a phrase which is so often used to describe contemplation in today’s obsessively ‘productive’ society), the contemplative *gaze* is for Balthasar an enworlded encounter.

This language of encounter becomes crucial within his understanding of prayer, particularly as he evaluates the idea that prayer is conversation. In the first instance, however, Balthasar cautions that “we do not ‘make conversation’ with God”³⁵⁰ in the sense of initiating or controlling that conversation in some way. Rather, he says, “Prayer is dialogue, not man’s monologue before God [...] prayer is a conversation in which God’s word has the initiative and we, for the moment, can be nothing more than listeners.”³⁵¹ So, prayerful contemplation is at once an act of looking and an act of listening. Moreover, the significance that Balthasar attributes to ‘listening’ within prayer is no arbitrary reading of the term ‘conversation’. In fact, it stems from his christology, for he suggests that prayer is only made possible by the incarnation;³⁵² the *word* of God made flesh. In his own words: “Whatever could we say to God if he himself had not taken the first step in communicating and manifesting himself to us

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

³⁵² *Ibid.* See especially Part Two, Chapter One ‘The Word is Made Flesh’.

in his word, so that we have access to him and fellowship with him?"³⁵³ Indeed, for Balthasar prayer and contemplation must be understood in the full context of its christological, and therefore trinitarian operation:

We have indicated the conditions, on God's side, which underlie the possibility of Christian contemplation. There is the Father who predestines and chooses us and adopts us as his children; the Son who interprets the Father to us and gives him to us in his self-surrender unto death and the mystery of the bread; there is the Spirit who implants God's life in our souls and makes it known.³⁵⁴

Balthasar's theology of prayer is thus fundamentally trinitarian; the contemplative soul in conversation and communion with the triune God. Alongside this essential trinitarian and incarnational aspect, though, are two other elements that I think are key to his understanding of prayer: the role of the Church, and the role of Mary. Briefly, the Church represents the locus where the believer shifts from individual 'listener' to participant in a prayerful community. As he articulates it: "In the Christian life the believer is never more an individual than in contemplative prayer. In the liturgy he is entirely a member of the community: all face toward the altar, toward God, and voice the same cry of thanks-giving, petition and worship."³⁵⁵ Yet the Church is also "the original hearer of the word," and in this sense "the Church is the original contemplative, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to him."³⁵⁶ The role of Mary is intimately connected with this ecclesial dimension, according to Balthasar, since "Mary is the 'image of the Church' [...] she is the location of the word's indwelling,

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

both bodily and in terms of being.”³⁵⁷ Mary is also unique among the ‘listeners’ who hear and contemplate the word because “she becomes a mother, the place of the Word’s embodiment.”³⁵⁸ All of this situates Mary at the very centre of contemplative prayer, to the extent that Balthasar even suggests that “all contemplation must take its directions from Mary.”³⁵⁹

The few paragraphs above are a rough-edged and rudimentary summary of Balthasar’s understanding of prayer, intended to identify the principal elements of his thought and to illustrate something of their theological working. For Balthasar, prayer is essentially trinitarian, it is incarnational and therefore ecclesial, grounded in the word of God through the life of Mary and the body of scripture. In short, prayer is the contemplative believer in dialogue with the triune God, who is to be seen and heard as the incarnate word, revealed through scripture, indwelling with the Virgin, and embodied in the Church. And at the foundation of this understanding of prayer is contemplation; the image of the believer as ‘looker’ and ‘listener’ in a truly attentive manner. It is this contemplative and attentive quality that I wish to focus on at present. For to ‘look’ and to ‘listen’ for God’s word, which, as Balthasar says, always “has the initiative,” requires an attentive and contemplative receptivity which manifests almost as a form of waiting.

This attentive waiting does not anticipate any explicit or transactional ‘product’, however; there is no ‘thing’ on which the believer waits when she prays. She waits in contemplation of the word for nothing more than experience itself; she resolves “to rest in the real,”³⁶⁰ as Burghardt puts it. For prayer, in one sense, is the “intensification

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Burghardt, “Contemplation,” p. 91.

of experience,"³⁶¹ a 'long' experience, in the way that Burghardt uses the word, not as measured time but as time intensified through the act of contemplation. St John of the Cross' 'long dark night', for example, along with other descriptions of mystical experience as 'blinding light' or as sudden bursts of vision or pain or feeling, all describe a profound intensification of experience. And although mysticism is prayer "at its extreme,"³⁶² even everyday prayer involves the intensification of time spent in the experience of the exercise. As Benson and Wirzba describe it, "prayer is an 'experience at the limit'. Prayer effectively strips the soul of its pretence and makes it available before an inscrutable God."³⁶³

This understanding of prayer, as an attentive waiting on the intensification of experience, is what Loughlin draws out in his essay on *Nostalgia*:

Prayer is another name for the messianic, for time intensified and given, and given for others. Prayer is itself an answer to prayer, time given for the requesting of time: 'give us this day'. In waiting on the film we wait on that which arrives in our waiting.³⁶⁴

"Time given for the requesting of time," prayer as waiting "on that which arrives in our waiting." There is a kind of doubling, here, a layering of experience on experience, which comes about simply because prayer seeks no precise 'end product' other than its own exercise. The efficacy of prayer is such that, to some extent, it bears its own fruit; "prayer is itself an answer to prayer," experience responding to experience,

³⁶¹ Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) p. 2.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Loughlin, "The Long Take," p. 379.

which is thus intensified, proliferating meaning out of the act itself.

Time, then, as the condition for and substance of this 'waiting' and intensification of experience, shapes prayerfulness. Yet again, this is time not in the quantitative sense but in the qualitative sense; in other words, not a matter of counting time spent (or even considering that time can be 'spent' in the crude terms of currency), but rather a matter of how a certain quality of time can be experienced through attentive and prayerful perception of the world. And it is in this regard that Loughlin's understanding of time in Tarkovsky's cinema resonates particularly with Burghardt's theology of contemplation.

For Loughlin's essay, 'The Long Take', describes a certain style of cinema as attentive and contemplative, very much in the mode of a long, loving look at the real. After all, the long take *is* a long look; more than this, it is a *longing* look at the real, for, as I discussed above and as I have emphasised throughout the preceding chapters, cinema possesses a unique capacity to image and re-present the enfleshed and enworlded reality of everyday existence. Indeed, in viewing cinema the spectator doubles and layers experience on experience in a similar manner to that which Loughlin ascribes to prayer. Recall the words of Vivian Sobchack which were considered in Chapter II: "The moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience. A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard."³⁶⁵ The viewer waits on the film experience, uncertain of what will arrive in her waiting, encountering and attending to the experience of the other on, through, and behind the screen, and layering that experience upon her own embodied experience in the act of viewing, her own enfleshed being in the world.

³⁶⁵ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 3.

There are many variations of the film experience, as diverse as escapism and thought experiment, carnal indulgence and intellectual abstraction. What I am describing here, and what Loughlin identifies in Tarkovsky's work, is the potential for prayerfulness in the film experience. This potential for prayerfulness is an extension of the cinema's capacity for attentiveness and contemplation; the power of the art form to render temporally the minutiae of quotidian existence and to image the everyday flesh of the world. As such, it depends on the unique temporal fabric of film, for time is what invests the cinematic image with this potential in the first place. I have argued that the time-image at once primes the viewer for attentiveness (that it 'activates the viewer', to use Schrader's terminology), and that the time-image also performs attentiveness itself, as the cinematic gaze manifests as "a long, loving look at the real." Now, in light of this section's discussion of Burghardt and of its consideration of prayer, I suggest that the time-image also invests cinema with a potential for contemplation and prayerfulness.

This is a formal and stylistic potential of cinema as a whole, which is essential to the theological power of film as an artistic medium. However, as Loughlin suggests, nowhere is a contemplative and prayerful rendering of time clearer than in the ending of Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia*. First, a quick summary of the plot before analysing this ending: the story is simple, Andrei Gorchakov has come to Italy to write about a Soviet poet who had left the USSR for a period and had spent time in the same Italian town he is visiting. Once there, Gorchakov and his companion Eugenia, encounter the enigmatic Domenico, a local whom the other townspeople say is mad. They learn that Domenico had previously locked himself and his family away for seven whole years, to await the end of the world. Domenico, it seems, has not lost his eschatological and

apocalyptical fervour, although his family has long since departed. As Gorchakov gets closer to him, Domenico reveals that he believes the end is coming and that he has for some time been meaning to complete a task that he believes will “save the world” - to carry a lit candle across the water of the local bathing pool. Every time he attempts this, however, the locals assume that he has gone insane and is trying to drown himself, and so they stop him. In their final meeting, Domenico asks Gorchakov to fulfil this task. Domenico then departs for Rome, where, while preaching to a crowd of fellow fanatics, he dowses himself in fuel and ends his life with a shocking act of self-immolation. Tarkovsky follows this extraordinary and gruesome scene by cutting back to Gorchakov, who stands alone in the now drained bathing pool, unaware of Domenico’s demise and attempting to fulfil his task.

In a remarkable, eight-minute long take, the film climaxes with Gorchakov’s three attempts to cross the pool while keeping the candle lit. On the first attempt the wind snuffs out the flame; Tarkovsky makes the viewer watch and wait as Gorchakov returns all the way to the beginning and relights it. The same thing happens on the second attempt; again Tarkovsky simply allows time to unfold and compels the viewer to wait. Finally, on the third crossing, Gorchakov staggers to the end, shielding the candle from the wind until the last. He makes it, and as he sets the candle on the poolside he collapses. The camera leaves his face and zooms-in inexorably slowly, until all that is contained in the shot is the sputtering flame and Gorchakov’s hands, clasped around the candle, as if in prayer. Finally he collapses completely, and his hands drop out of the picture.³⁶⁶

There is much of note in this ending: Tarkovsky’s parallel use of flame, for one. With

³⁶⁶ Figure 15.

Domenico's suicide, it represents madness, but with the candle, and in the prolonged journey across the pool, it represents faith; specifically Gorchakov's faith that there was a kernel of truth within Domenico's scrambled messages. Moreover, as Loughlin has observed, the candle represents prayer; a prayer which endures on screen even after Gorchakov has collapsed out of the frame. Yet there is still one more shot to end the film. This final long take is of Gorchakov, in monochrome, lying by the lake in the same valley with the same dog from the film's opening credits. With this ending Tarkovsky locates Gorchakov's sense of salvation within his memory of home. This is the film's *nostalgia*, which in Tarkovsky's Russian idiolect is identified as a kind of homesickness and as one's innermost yearning for belonging. The camera slowly zooms out from Gorchakov and the dog, and the looming structure of an Italian cathedral is revealed to encompass the scene. It is a metaphor for his profound dislocation in time and space, and it reveals the innermost spiritual connection to his memory. As Loughlin suggests, in waiting on the duration of that journey across the pool Tarkovsky has composed a kind of prayer, signified by Gorchakov falling out of shot to his knees with his hands clasped around the candle, and realised in that final mnemonic and salvific image, which Tarkovsky holds on to for a full three minutes before fading to black.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Film has a profound theological potential to prime and perform attentiveness, which can manifest as contemplation, and perhaps even as prayer. The key to the cinema's potential for attentiveness is time, and the temporal fabric of the art form; time given for the spectator, which affects her mode of viewing and primes her for attentive

contemplation, and time given for the act of imaging the world, such that the time-image performs attentive contemplation itself, as a long, loving look at the real. It is no coincidence that the movement of 'slow cinema', which is defined by a certain filmic rendering of time, is interchangeably referred to as 'contemplative cinema' by theorists; it is no coincidence either that filmmakers like Ozu and Bresson, De Sica and Malick, all of whose films are celebrated for their contemplative style, are also celebrated for their cinematic renderings of time; and it is certainly no coincidence that Tarkovsky, whose style is uniquely and profoundly contemplative, chose time as the titular subject of his reflections on the cinema. Indeed, in *Sculpting in Time* he writes passionately about this power of film, recognising its artistic potential in terms which now sound familiar here at the end of this chapter:

Why do people go to the cinema? What takes them into a darkened room where, for two hours, they watch the play of shadows on a sheet? [...] I think that what a person normally goes to the cinema for is time: for time lost or spent or not yet had. He goes there for living experience; for cinema, like no other art, widens, enhances and concentrates a person's experience - and not only enhances it but makes it longer, significantly longer. That is the power of cinema.³⁶⁷

Tarkovsky celebrates cinema for the very elements of the art form which invest it with a potential for attentiveness and contemplation: film as time-image; as the intensification of experience; the viewing of film as a long look at the real. And it is here, in Burghardt's concept of 'the real', and in what Tarkovsky refers to above as "living experience," that this cinematic attentiveness becomes most significant

³⁶⁷ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 63.

theologically.

For this attentiveness is sacramental and incarnational in shape, directed towards the everyday reality of our enworlded and enfleshed existence. As such, it is an attentiveness to creation, to the enfleshed other encountered on, through, and behind the screen, and to the mundane phenomena of our quotidian existence. Far from any attempt to portray the overtly theophanic, or any vain and futile attempt to depict divine parousia, this attentiveness in film is facilitated simply by the medium's unique capacity to image the minutiae of everyday life. In this sense, it is what Richard Kearney describes sacramentally as "a retrieval of the extraordinary in the ordinary,"³⁶⁸ an attentive mode of viewing which "makes us strangers to the earth so that we may dwell more sacramentally upon it."³⁶⁹ In short, it is a response to the call to seek the God incarnate; the Word made flesh, who is to be sought in the bread of everyday existence and contemplated through a long, loving look at the real. Part Two of this thesis will push this theology much further, conducting its theological-cinematic analysis through close attention to christology and incarnation, to the theology of creation, participation, and to the significance of eschatology for cinematic art. To this end, the next three chapters will examine cinema through the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and eschatology, which are not to be considered in isolation from each other, but rather as a triptych of doctrines at the heart of Christian theology.

³⁶⁸ Kearney, *Anatheism*, pp. 86-87.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Part Two. Creation, Incarnation, Eschatology

Solaris, Tarkovsky's third film, is composed around two vital motifs which establish the doctrine of creation as the picture's principal theological interest. These are the twin motifs of the ocean and the garden, which Tarkovsky manifestly draws from the first few chapters of Genesis and which he deploys in order to explore the multivalent dimensions of the theology of creation. The reciprocal images of ocean and garden are at once primeval and perennial, in stasis and in flux, and through their interplay they open up a well of significance and meaning. They come to represent chaos and cultivation, the formless and the formed, even concealment and revelation within the corporeal and symbolic order of creation. Indeed, of all Tarkovsky's films, *Solaris* is the one most overtly saturated with the imagery and idiom of the theology of creation. This theme and these twin motifs of chaotic ocean and abundant garden become a scaffolding around which the rest of the film takes shape. In this regard, then, *Solaris* is an ideal starting point for any interpretation of Tarkovsky's treatment of the subject.

The overarching goal of this chapter is to interpret cinematic art through the various themes and dimensions of the doctrine of creation. The theology of creation plays a vital role within Tarkovsky's theological imagination, in the ways intimated above with regard to *Solaris*, but also in his other films and in his reflections on the cinema in *Sculpting in Time*. As such, it will be illuminating to begin this analysis with a focus on Tarkovsky, before exploring further connections between the doctrine of creation and the medium of film itself. In the first part of this chapter, then, I will offer a reading

of *Solaris* that foregrounds the imagery and idiom that the film develops from the theology of creation. Following this opening discussion of the film, it will be invaluable to examine something of Tarkovsky's Eastern Orthodox heritage, since this is the theological tradition which formed so much of his thought and creativity. To this end, I will consider the doctrine of creation from the perspective of some Orthodox theologians, dwelling particularly on the concept of theosis, which, as a keystone for understanding the doctrine, makes particular reference to the *imago dei*, and therefore to Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness"); a verse which Tarkovsky returns to again and again, both in his films and in *Sculpting in Time*.³⁷⁰

Perhaps the most important idea that emerges from Tarkovsky's understanding of the *imago dei* is that of participation, which the second half of this chapter will explore in depth. Here, the work of the French phenomenologist Jean-Louis Chrétien is essential, since he explores participation through the reciprocal terms of 'artist' and 'creator',³⁷¹ asking if human creativity can in some way participate in divine creativity. A similar intuition of participation underlies Tarkovsky's entire philosophy of art, appositely explored in his film *Andrei Rublev* and articulated more concretely in numerous passages of *Sculpting in Time*. Ultimately, Tarkovsky's understanding of the *imago dei* leads him to espouse a theology of participation which foregrounds the artist. This is centred on the idea that the artist's vocation is a spiritual vocation, which in turn stems from Tarkovsky's deep conviction that art is "evidence of man's capacity to recognise in whose image and likeness he is made, and to voice this recognition."³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Most notably in the very final sentence of the book. Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 227.

³⁷¹ "From God the Artist to Man the Creator" in: Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003) pp. 94-129.

³⁷² Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 39.

1. IMAGES AND LIKENESSES

SOLARIS AND TARKOVSKY'S VISION OF CREATION

Tarkovsky's preoccupation with the imagery and idiom of the doctrine of creation is never clearer than in *Solaris*, and especially through the film's twin motifs of the garden and the ocean, which I introduced above. The very first images of the film are of rich and verdant life beneath the pellucid surface of a small lake. Bright green reeds pulse in rhythm with the rippling water, as clear as glass, the image accompanied by the sound of the lake's hidden source, trickling and spilling over somewhere out of shot. Next the image of thick foliage; enormous, tropical leaves shielding a bird from the viewer's sight, its presence reckoned only by the sound of chirping and the beating of wings. Later a wide shot of the lake, now completely still and streaked with uneven patches of algae that break up the reflection of the sky across the surface. The film begins with these compositions, which are revealed to be within the garden of a small Russian country house (a dacha).³⁷³ A series of shots show the story's protagonist, Kris Kelvin, wandering through the overgrown shrubbery, pausing occasionally among the plants and on the banks of the lake. One of these images is unmistakable in its allusion to Genesis: while Kelvin walks through leafy paths in the distant background, Tarkovsky focuses on a large and ancient oak in the foreground, as if it were some tree of life and the centre of the entire garden.

It is no overstatement, either, to say that the whole film is composed around these twin motifs of ocean and garden; the very final images of *Solaris* are also of this dacha,

³⁷³ Figure 16.

though now utterly transformed by the film's remarkable ending. And enclosed within this ring composition is the other central motif of the picture, the ocean, manifest in the vast cosmic sea that covers most of the eponymous planet's surface. With the great ocean-world of *Solaris*, Tarkovsky creates an image parallel to the primordial and creative chaos of Genesis' first verses: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." Indeed, the ocean-planet is endowed with the powers of creation, possessing a miraculous and inexplicable capacity to bring into existence matter, life, and even consciousness. Moreover, as the story progresses, it is suggested that this preternatural cosmic body is itself somehow conscious; that the planet *Solaris* responds to its visitors. These motifs of ocean and garden are essential to the film's overall composition; a scaffolding around which the film takes shape, such that the whole picture is suffused with the imagery and idiom of Genesis' creation myth.

The concept of creation is also fundamentally important to the film's narrative. The story is straightforward, adapted from Stanisław Lem's novel of the same name, and it is worth providing a synopsis here, before discussing it any further. In an undated future, mankind has achieved the means for interstellar travel and discovered the ocean-world *Solaris*, knowledge of which is steeped in mystery and distorted by outlandish rumours. At the beginning of the story, some decades after the initial discovery of *Solaris*, the psychologist Kris Kelvin is approached at his dacha, where he lives with his father. Kelvin is recruited for a mission to the old space station orbiting the planet, in order to evaluate whether study of *Solaris* should be discontinued and the station abandoned. In particular, rumours abound that the scientists aboard the station have begun to experience strange phenomena or

hallucinations, similar to one enigmatic report from a pilot years before, called Berton, who claimed that he saw a four-metre-tall child on the planet's surface, and who was ridiculed and dismissed by the authorities at the time.

When Kelvin arrives at the space station, he finds no one to greet him and the entire base in a state of dereliction. Kelvin learns that a friend of his, who was researching Solaris from the station, had recently killed himself, but not before leaving a cryptic video-message for Kelvin to discover, which hints at strange and terrifying phenomena aboard the station. As Kelvin settles in, despite the unwelcoming presence of the two remaining crew members, Snaut and Sartorius, he is shocked to catch fleeting glimpses of others walking the halls of the station. He pursues one of these others, but she somehow vanishes when he corners her. Between his friend's message of warning and these strange apparitions, Kelvin passes a troubled night. When he wakes, he is shocked and frightened to discover his late wife, Hari, at his bedside, telling him that she doesn't know how she got there. In a fit of horror at the appearance of the impossible phantom, Kelvin ushers the replica into a research capsule and launches her into space. Afterwards, Snaut explains that such phantoms as Kelvin's wife, which the crew call 'the guests', have appeared to everyone on the station. Snaut hypothesises that Solaris creates them from the memories of those on board and that it might be possible to destroy them through a machine he calls 'the annihilator'. After this explanation, Kelvin welcomes Hari when she reappears the next day and the two resume something like a relationship. Meanwhile, Snaut suggests that the crew transmit a reading of Kelvin's brainwaves down to the planet's surface in the hope that Solaris might understand them and cease sending 'the guests' to the station.

Hari becomes unsettled by her own impossible existence, eventually attempting suicide by drinking liquid oxygen. Yet, after only a few moments, she undergoes a remarkable and excruciating resurrection, as the planet Solaris heals and raises her. With the film drawing to a climax, Kelvin falls ill and sleeps. When he wakes, Snaut tells him that he and Sartorius destroyed Hari with the annihilator, after she begged them to do so. Snaut also explains that 'the guests' have stopped appearing since they transmitted Kelvin's brainwaves to the planet's surface. Kelvin debates whether or not to return to earth after all that has happened, and Tarkovsky ends the scene before any decision is reached. The final images of the film show Kelvin back in the garden at his family dacha, overwhelmed to see his father and kneeling at his feet, embracing him like a suppliant. Finally, Tarkovsky uses a crane shot to pull away, skywards, slowly revealing that neither Kelvin, nor his father, nor the garden or the house are actually on earth, but that all of it has been recreated on an island in the middle of Solaris' vast ocean.

From a written synopsis of the plot alone, to say nothing more of the film's imagery and content, it is clear that the idea of creation is at the heart of *Solaris*. Beyond the motifs of the ocean and the garden, the planet's capacity to create 'the guests' and the islands that appear across its surface constitutes nothing less than the power to bring both matter and consciousness into existence. There is much to unpack here, but what is initially most striking is that Tarkovsky portrays the planet's extraordinary potential for creation through conspicuously ordinary images. After all, with the resources available to him in the genre of science-fiction, he could easily have portrayed the planet as completely alien, attempting to engage the viewer through the unfamiliar and the unrecognisable, just as in films like *Forbidden Planet* (1956) or even *The Silent Star* (1960) which, as a Polish film funded by East Germany and also adapted from a

Stanisław Lem novel, Tarkovsky would have surely known.

Indeed, while the landscape of Venus in *The Silent Star* is deliberately otherworldly and fantastical, there is very little that Tarkovsky's viewer encounters on the planet Solaris that would be out of place on Earth. For example, the viewer's first introduction to Solaris comes through the account of the pilot, Berton, whose description of the island he observed on the planet's surface is remarkably familiar; he details "a sort of garden," replete with "shrubs, hedges, acacia trees, little paths." Such earthly, ordinary phenomena are surprising here; Berton can even identify the species of tree populating this supposedly extraterrestrial terrain. The effect of this is to situate the planet's miraculous capacity for creation within a familiar and even mundane setting, while the mention of "little paths" implies an anthropocentrism within Solaris' order of creation. At the same time, it is no accident that Tarkovsky has Berton explicitly identify a garden amidst the chaotic and primordial ocean covering the planet; yet another allusion to Genesis frames the setting and reorients the viewer away from fantasy and the otherworldly, towards culturally familiar images of creation. In this way, Tarkovsky subverts the primordial and the futuristic, transforming the viewer's perception by playing with the expectations of the science-fiction genre.

Indeed, this attention to the familiar concepts and phenomena of creation is surprising, given that the film is nominally concerned with a distant and alien planet. This becomes even more interesting when considered alongside a significant change Tarkovsky made when adapting the novel. For Lem's novel begins with Kelvin arriving at the space station orbiting the planet, without any portrayal of his life on Earth; indeed, in stark contrast to Tarkovsky's film, no part of the novel takes place on

Earth. This difference is even more pronounced in light of the first draft of the screenplay, which Tarkovsky produced with co-writer Friedrich Gorenstein in 1969. In this initial script, Tarkovsky and Gorenstein had set nearly two-thirds of the film on Earth. Lem himself was furious with this extensive reworking of his story, and even Mosfilm (the production studio behind the picture) were sceptical of an adaptation set mostly on Earth.³⁷⁴ In the end, the screenplay was reworked to its extant form, but even still, the first forty-three minutes of the film take place entirely on Earth. Despite the enormous critical and commercial success of Tarkovsky's film, Lem still expressed "fundamental reservations to this adaptation,"³⁷⁵ suggesting that Tarkovsky had "amputated the scientific landscape"³⁷⁶ of his story.³⁷⁷

Yet this 'amputation' is precisely what Tarkovsky intended. By setting so much of the film on Earth, and by making the landscape of Solaris so *earthly*, Tarkovsky eschews any of the fantastical or escapist conventions of science-fiction, so that he centres the film, and its treatment of creation, around imagery and idiom familiar to the viewer. Such a move to undermine the stereotypes of genre is unsurprising from Tarkovsky; as he writes in *Sculpting in Time*, "the true cinema image is built upon the destruction of genre."³⁷⁸ However, this is not a matter of subverting genre simply for the sake of being subversive. In *Solaris*, the subversion of conventional science-fiction tropes contributes wholly to the film's meaning; contrary to appearances, this is not a film about the 'otherworldly', but a film about our own world.

³⁷⁴ Stephen Dalton, "Andrei Tarkovsky, Solaris and Stalker: The Making of Two Inner-Space Odysseys" (BFI Features, December 2014) <https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/tarkovsky/>

³⁷⁵ Stanisław Bereś and Stanisław Lem, *Rozmowy Ze Stanisławem Lemem [Conversations with Stanisław Lem]* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1987), cited and translated on Lem's personal website: <https://english.lem.pl/around-lem/adaptations/solarisq-tarkovsky/176-lem-about-the-tarkovskys-adaptation>

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ In this respect the Steven Soderbergh remake (2002), in which the scenes set on Earth are memories, is far more faithful to Lem's novel.

³⁷⁸ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 150.

This, of course, is patently clear from the most significant of Solaris' creations: 'the guests'. For 'the guests' are not the typical alien entities of mainstream science-fiction; instead they appear, in every meaningful way, human. Moreover, they do not manifest as exterior, alien consciousness, but as consciousness created from the psyche and memories of their 'host'. In other words, they do not appear as the 'Other' from a radical exteriority, but as the 'other' of interior consciousness; they are not 'the thing from outer space', but 'the thing from inner space', as Slavoj Žižek puts it.³⁷⁹

Žižek's essay is an important one for this discussion, as it presents a fruitful interpretation of 'the guests' and their 'creation' by Solaris. Žižek argues that 'the guests' and the planet Solaris are "an exemplary case of the Lacanian Thing,"³⁸⁰ referring to Jacques Lacan's seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*.³⁸¹ In this seminar, Lacan uses the concept of 'the Thing' ('*das Ding*' / '*la Chose*') to describe the space where "the gap between the Symbolic and the Real is closed,"³⁸² such that the distinction between desire and the satisfaction of desire collapses, and desire itself manifests directly in 'the Real'. Žižek's point is a blunt one: in *Solaris*, 'the guests' and the islands which manifest suddenly on the planet's surface represent the collapsing of this symbolic distance between desire and its satisfaction; when 'the guests' appear, and when Kelvin's island appears at the end of the film, it is not as exterior phenomena, but as the sudden manifestation of interior desire, which "directly intervenes in the Real"³⁸³ in the film. Žižek uses a helpful metaphor to illustrate this. He describes the abrupt manifestation of 'the guests' and the islands as a short-circuiting of the dialectic

³⁷⁹ Slavoj Žižek, "The Thing from Inner Space: On Tarkovsky," *Angelaki*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1999) pp. 221–231.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁸¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

³⁸² Žižek, "The Thing from Inner Space," p. 221.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

of desire, which is “the dialectic of question and answer, of demand and its satisfaction.”³⁸⁴ In the film, this dialectic collapses completely, as the satisfaction of desire appears even before the characters have expressed or observed their desire; simply put, the answer is given before (or perhaps at the same time as) the question is asked.

Yet there is another metaphor for this abrupt manifestation of desire, as it appears in the form of ‘the guests’ and Solaris’ islands, and this alternative metaphor seems more pertinent in the wider context of the film’s narrative and visual composition. This is the metaphor of *projection*, which is ultimately subsumed under the metaphor of *reflection*. For, with the facilitation of Solaris, both ‘the guests’ and the islands are projected onto ‘the Real’ by their ‘hosts’, so that they can be retroactively interpreted as reflections of the psychological and spiritual state of those to whom they appear. In other words, they are created in the image and likeness of a ‘host’ consciousness, and therefore serve as a mirror through which the image of their ‘host’ is re-presented, reconfigured, and ultimately transformed. To complicate this further, however, there is a sense in which this mirroring goes on indefinitely, such that the roles of ‘guest’ and ‘host’ become interchangeable, and an unanswerable question appears in the film: who names what in this mirroring? Snaut and Sartorius name the planet’s creations as ‘the guests’ in their dialogue, but Solaris itself surely sees the station and its inhabitants as guests in its orbit.

In this way, the planet Solaris is best understood not as a divine ‘creator’ in any sense analogous to God, but as a mirror, held up to creation. Through the appearance of ‘the guests’ and the islands on the planet’s surface, the symbolic distance between creator

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

and creation collapses and the theological significance of *Solaris* becomes apparent; the doctrine of creation does not mean that humankind is called to discover or conquer the unknown expanse of the cosmos, but that we are called to re-discover ourselves and all that is given to us in the world - or, indeed, *as* the world. As Snaut says during the film's climactic debate, "We don't know what to do with other worlds. We don't need other worlds. We need a mirror. [...] Man needs man!" In many ways, the doctrine of creation can be framed through a simple question: what does it mean to say that God created the universe and is the source of all existence? In *Solaris*, Tarkovsky explores this question by collapsing the symbolic distance between creation and creator, so that the film itself holds up a mirror to the anthropological perspective of creation. The viewer is reoriented away from the mysteries of fantasy and the unknown, towards contemplation of the mysteries of the known and all that is given to us as the world.

This theme of reflection and the device of the mirror runs throughout *Solaris*, and indeed throughout all of Tarkovsky's films. Ingmar Bergman once said that "Tarkovsky for me is the greatest, the one who invented a new language" because his filmmaking "captures life as a reflection, life as a dream."³⁸⁵ The concept of reflection is figuratively and literally vital to *Solaris*, and an essential element in many of the film's compositions; it is not merely a metaphor occurring in a lone instance of Snaut's dialogue.³⁸⁶ Mirrors are ubiquitous in Tarkovsky's sets and environments, recurring

³⁸⁵ This quotation is attributed to Bergman in many articles and as the tagline for the 2003 Tarkovsky Festival Program. It is attributed to one of the Swedish editions of Bergman's autobiography, *The Magic Lantern*, by the Swedish scholar Torsten Källemark, in his essay "Icon and Apocalypse," although no page number is given. Torsten Källemark, "Icon and Apocalypse: Reflections on the Philosophical and Theological Understanding of Andrei Tarkovsky's Work" in: Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson and Þorkell Ágúst Óttarsson, *Through the Mirror: Reflections on the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006) pp. 134-151.

³⁸⁶ When taken in the context of Tarkovsky's entire oeuvre, the theme of reflection and the device of the mirror stands out so prominently in *Solaris* that the film appears to anticipate Tarkovsky's next picture, *Mirror*, which is his most autobiographical and arguably his most revered. Indeed, Tarkovsky's articulations of the projection, reflection, and interrogation of self, for which *Mirror* is so celebrated,

again and again as a crucial element of the picture's mise-en-scène. They line the hallways of the station, expanding the space of a shot and shifting the lighting, distorting faces and bodies, even as they are used to frame certain compositions. Indeed, mirrors are so visually prominent in *Solaris* that it feels entirely fluent when Tarkovsky deploys a mirror-shot to frame one of the film's most important moments; Hari's death and resurrection scene.

This sequence is enclosed within two shots of Solaris' roiling ocean, a mirror itself, which seems to seethe around some uncertain point and which is accompanied by a slow crescendo of electronic sound. Suddenly the building pressure of the first shot of the ocean is released with the sound of glass breaking. When Tarkovsky cuts, the viewer is presented with a close up of a broken liquid oxygen container, the remainder of its contents still evaporating in freezing-cold wisps of gas. Tarkovsky pans left to reveal Hari, lying dead with frost burns around her mouth and face, having drunk the liquid. Then Tarkovsky changes his vector, switching from a horizontal pan to a vertical tilt; the camera moves upwards across Hari's physical face, before passing onto the convex mirrors set against the wall behind her. The reflection of her face that Tarkovsky reveals is a remarkable composition; her features are warped and elongated, blurred at the edges, and as the camera follows their lines across the convex glass the image becomes a double-reflection, the bridge of Hari's nose stretching out and then back again towards her eyes, her face inverted and then righted again in this doubled and then tripled simulacrum.³⁸⁷

Here, contained within this mirror-shot, is a commentary on the creation of 'the guests'. The distortion of Hari's face is a symbol for the distortion of her identity,

finds its nascent expression three years prior, in *Solaris*.

³⁸⁷ Figure 17.

echoed by the first fragmented words she speaks after her excruciating resurrection: "Is it me? No... Why? No, it's not me. It's... I'm not Hari." At the same time, the function of the mirror to double and then triple her image in this shot is wound up inextricably with Kelvin's identity, who holds her in his arms as she regains consciousness. Even the dialogue abruptly transitions from Hari's own existential aporia to Kelvin's; "Maybe your appearance is supposed to be torture," he wonders, "maybe it's a favour from the ocean. What does it matter when you're worth more to me than any science could ever be?" The Hari created by Solaris becomes an idol of memory at this moment, figuratively distorted and refracted through the mirror of Kelvin's recollections to the point where he tells his 'guest', "You looked like her. But now you, and not her, are the real Hari."

Much like the twin motifs of the ocean and the garden, the resurrection sequence of *Solaris* is an inescapable allusion to Christian theology. In the film, however, Hari's resurrection bears little resemblance to the gospel resurrection beyond the occurrence of the event itself. Yet it is undeniable that Tarkovsky felt the full christological weight of the scene, especially in light of *Sculpting in Time*, written fourteen years after *Solaris* was released. This is clear from a two-page spread in the book, where Tarkovsky displays five stills from Hari's resurrection sequence on one side and a quotation from 1 Corinthians 15 on the other. This quotation from Paul's letter affirms the resurrection of the body and the significance of Christ's resurrection for Christians, culminating with the idea that the resurrection is the fulfilment of creation: "For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Here, then, is a crucial dimension of Tarkovsky's theological imagination; the doctrine of creation can never be understood in isolation from the doctrine of the incarnation, which is to say the entire Christ event, including

the resurrection and the ascension. In a film like *Solaris*, which is so imbued with the imagery and idiom of creation, it is only fitting that christological symbolism should play a central role.

Likewise, it is equally important that the film's vision of creation culminates with the soteriological and eschatological images with which Tarkovsky ends *Solaris*. The island which appears for Kelvin on the planet's surface in the film's finale, on which his father and family dacha are recreated, is an eschatological space. It bears a striking resemblance to the final image of *Nostalghia* (see Chapter IV), in which Andrei Gorchakov's memory of home and family becomes his soteriological reality within the ruined edifice of a neo-classical cathedral. In the same way, the eschatological reverberations of *Solaris* climax with the image of Kelvin at home with his father, in the garden of his dacha, but now surrounded by the planet's misty atmosphere and roiling ocean. Desire and the projection or mirroring of desire function again in this image; this is where he wants to rest, this the end that he desires for himself. The film's ending also identifies salvation and the eschaton with creation, as creative acts themselves; the film begins in the garden and it ends in the garden. Visually, Tarkovsky recalls the shot of pulsing reeds beneath the surface of the lake, the sequence of Kelvin walking among the plants and trees, and finally the bond between Kelvin and his father. In the full sense of the apocalyptic (ἀποκάλυψις), which in the Greek is an 'uncovering' or 'revelation', Tarkovsky unveils this salvific image with the film's closing crane shot. The question of belief remains suspended, though, since the question of whether this space is real or illusory is left unanswered. And so Kelvin's act of faith, which is signified as he literally and figuratively embraces the image of his father, becomes absolutely essential to the salvific and eschatological significance of this ending. At the same time, this final image specifically aligns the eschaton with

the act of creation, juxtaposing the salvific space of Kelvin's island with the twin motifs of the doctrine of creation; the garden in which Kelvin stands and the creative, chaotic ocean which encompasses all.³⁸⁸

CREATION AND TARKOVSKY'S EASTERN ORTHODOX HERITAGE

When interpreting any dimension of Tarkovsky's theological imagination, it is only prudent to begin by analysing his cinema. To this end, it is appropriate to begin this chapter's discussion of the doctrine of creation with the above reading of *Solaris*. However, like any artist or indeed any theologian, Tarkovsky was formed in and against certain contexts, which shaped him spiritually, ideologically, and creatively. These are as evident and diverse as Soviet Communism, the fissure between East and West during the Cold War, the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky, and the poetry of his father, Arseny Tarkovsky, which appears throughout Andrei's films. Theologically, of course, the prevailing context in which Tarkovsky was formed is the Russian Orthodox Church, and it is this tradition which has shaped his art more than any other. Eastern Orthodox thinkers and artists influenced Tarkovsky immensely, from the iconographer Andrei Rublev to the polymath Pavel Florensky. (Florensky is even referenced in a diary entry of Tarkovsky's, written in his hospital room just weeks before his death: "I read Florensky with delight.")³⁸⁹ In light of this vital Eastern Orthodox influence, it will be valuable now to contextualise Tarkovsky and his approach to the doctrine of creation within his Eastern Orthodox heritage.

The first observations to make here are foundational: when we talk about the context

³⁸⁸ Figure 18.

³⁸⁹ Andreï Tarkovski, *Journal 1970-1986, Édition définitive* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2004) p. 546.

of Eastern Orthodox theology, we are inevitably drawing on the context of Patristic theology, for modern Orthodox thought is deeply connected with and indebted to Patristic thought (arguably more so than modern Protestant and modern Catholic thought). This is not to say, by any stretch, that Tarkovsky was familiar with the Fathers or well versed in the various schisms, councils, and reconciliations of the early church. Yet the Orthodox thinkers who influenced Tarkovsky so greatly certainly were invested in the extensive thought-world of Patristic theology. Within the parameters of the doctrine of creation, this leads discussion back to the earliest cosmologies of the Church. A further observation to make is that the Orthodox emphasis on these early cosmologies is usually paired with an emphasis on the inseparability of creation from two other doctrines: the doctrine of the incarnation, where Christ is understood both as the Word whose work brings about creation and as the incarnate being who lived within creation; and the doctrine of eschatology, where Christ is understood as saviour. Simply put, creation cannot properly be understood aside from the threefold affirmation that Christ is Creator, Christ is Saviour, and that therefore “the Creator is also the Saviour.”³⁹⁰

Elizabeth Theokritoff traces this affirmation back through Patristic theologians, dwelling first on Irenaeus’ reading of John 1:11 (that “Christ came unto his own”). Irenaeus argued that this verse illustrates “the continuity between the work of the Word in creation and in his incarnate life,”³⁹¹ discussing it in the context of his *Against Heresies* (v.18.3), as a rejection of certain Gnostic cosmologies. In modern Orthodox thought, this continuity is further developed by Vladimir Lossky, who identifies the Logos, the second person of the Trinity, as “the first principle and the last end of all

³⁹⁰ Elizabeth Theokritoff, “Creator and Creation” in: eds. Elizabeth Theokritoff & Mary B. Cunningham, *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 64.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

created things.”³⁹² Building on Irenaeus’ emphasis that Christ came unto his own, Lossky goes on to emphasise that the continuity between the creative Logos and the life of Christ as the incarnate Word continues insofar as it also contains the telos of creation: “All things were created by the Logos who is as it were a divine nexus, the threshold from which flow the creative outpourings, the particular *logoi* of creatures, and the centre towards which in their turn all created beings tend, as to their final end. [...] And their end and final fulfilment lies in union with Him or deification.”³⁹³ So, for Lossky, creation is not only indissolubly tied to Christ and the incarnation, but also to salvation and therefore to eschatology; to the “final end” of all created things, which is to say theosis (deification).

Thus, in this line of Orthodox theology, the doctrine of creation necessarily entails a notion of the purpose or goal of creation. As Theokritoff puts it, “the universe is not created static: it is created to go somewhere”³⁹⁴ - and this ‘somewhere’ is the soteriological question that cannot be separated from the doctrine of creation; it cannot be separated from the primal, basic question, ‘what does it mean to say that God created the universe and is the source of all existence?’ Lossky answers that all things are created for union with God, and humanity for theosis which realises this union. And so one Orthodox response to these inseparable and reciprocal questions is contained in the idea of theosis (which is interchangeably referred to as deification). Lossky describes theosis as an underlying principle of the creative act, writing that “the world, created in order that it might be deified, is dynamic, tending always towards its final end.”³⁹⁵ In this way, theosis becomes the bridge between the doctrines of creation and eschatology, and of course this is just another way of saying that Christ

³⁹² Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1991) p. 98.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁹⁴ Theokritoff, “Creator and Creation,” p. 69.

³⁹⁵ Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 101.

is the bridge between creation and eschaton, for Christ is the ultimate realisation of theosis and the supreme facilitator of (comm)union with God.

A further, essential element of the Orthodox idea of theosis is implicated by the doctrine of the *imago dei*. For the notion that humanity can participate fully in the divine being seems to take as its prerequisite the notion that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God. Indeed, some further attention to Orthodox understandings of the *imago dei* swiftly demonstrates why the doctrine becomes so important to conceptions of theosis. Firstly, it is important to observe that, following the example of the Fathers, Orthodox theologians usually make a distinction between the image and the likeness, even though both are inseparable within the doctrine. The image of God usually refers to existential traits like rationality, free will, and morality, while the likeness of God cannot be expressed through a list of predicates, and instead is best understood as a state of being actualised through communion with the divine. What is important here for the idea of theosis, as the Patristics scholar Nonna Verna Harrison suggests, is that “the image is static and the likeness is dynamic: we can become more and more like God over time.”³⁹⁶ This capacity to become more and more like God is the capacity for theosis.

Lossky, in his book *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, describes this as follows: “the person becomes the perfect image of God by acquiring that likeness which is the perfection of the nature common to all men.”³⁹⁷ This comes from a chapter devoted to the *imago dei*, in which the ultimate end of deification is the hermeneutical key to interpreting the first three chapters of Genesis. In this endeavour, Lossky traces

³⁹⁶ Nonna Verna Harrison, “The Human Person as Image and Likeness of God” in: eds. Elizabeth Theokritoff & Mary B. Cunningham, *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 64.

³⁹⁷ Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 124.

various Patristic understandings of the image and likeness, from Gregory Nazianzus to Maximus to more obscure theologians like Leontius of Byzantium. His attention to the Fathers is essential to his theological method and typical of modern Orthodox theologians, and it is only after a remarkably discursive and thorough account of these early interpretations of the *imago dei* that Lossky returns to two of the earliest Fathers, articulating his theology of deification through the famous maxim “God became man in order that man might become god, to use the words of Irenaeus and Athanasius.”³⁹⁸ That Lossky concludes this chapter on the *imago dei* with a strong focus on theosis demonstrates its central significance within the doctrine of creation.

For Tarkovsky, the idea that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God is most profoundly realised in the creative potential of the artist, for divine creativity becomes the prototype for human artistry. I have already mentioned this on a few occasions in previous chapters, but now it should become clear that this particular position of Tarkovsky’s is inherited and developed from his Orthodox background. For many Orthodox theologians also emphasise that the human capacity for art discloses the image of God - or rather that it discloses the *imaging* of God’s creative act. As a result, the work of the artist can be seen as an embodiment of the striving for deification. Harrison devotes a section to this in her essay on the image and likeness of God in Orthodox theology, writing that “the divine image also includes the practical reason that has enabled humankind to develop creativity,” and that, through this creativity, “human culture can glorify God and assist in his work.”³⁹⁹ Pavel Florensky, the great Orthodox polymath, was particularly radical when discussing how human art might disclose the image of God. In *Khristianstvo i kul’tura* (*Christianity*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³⁹⁹ Here we begin to arrive at the key idea of participation, central both to the doctrine of the *imago dei* and the idea of theosis. Harrison, “The Human Person as Image and Likeness of God,” p. 87.

and Culture), Florensky provocatively writes “there exists the icon of the Holy Trinity by St Andrei Rublev; therefore, God exists.”⁴⁰⁰ Tarkovsky, though far more reserved, draws a similar conclusion about artistic consciousness in the last lines of *Sculpting in Time*: “Perhaps the meaning of all human activity lies in artistic consciousness, in the pointless and selfless creative act? Perhaps our capacity to create is evidence that we ourselves were created in the image and likeness of God?”⁴⁰¹

The artist, then, has an important place within the doctrine of creation and within creation itself. She stands at the intersection of the concept of the *imago dei* and the idea of theosis, as her creativity reflects the divine image and as her craft “can glorify God and assist in his work,”⁴⁰² as Harrison suggests. The idea of theosis, the ultimate end of creation according to Orthodox theology, is the supreme union of creature with creator; a union in which the creature *participates* fully with the creator. As Lossky formulates it, succinctly expounding his theology of creation: “The world was created from nothing by the sole will of God - this is its origin. It was created in order to participate in the fullness of the divine life - this is its vocation.”⁴⁰³ *To participate in the fullness of the divine life*, there is no clearer definition of theosis or deification than this. Participation, of course, is not the rarefied domain of the artist, purely limited to the artistic act; theologically, participation finds its ultimate expression in the Church, which is the body of Christ and therefore the site of theosis to which all of creation is called. Lossky describes the Church precisely in these terms, returning again to his idea that creation is called to participate in the divine life and arguing that the Church is the fulfilment of this vocation: “Created from nothing, the world finds its fulfilment

⁴⁰⁰ This is translated into English and cited in: Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016) p. 165. The quotation is printed again, in English, in *Iconostasis*.

⁴⁰¹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 241.

⁴⁰² Harrison, “The Human Person as Image and Likeness of God,” p. 87.

⁴⁰³ Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 112.

in the Church, where the creation acquires an unshakeable foundation in the accomplishment of its vocation."⁴⁰⁴

Participation in the fullness of the divine life, as Lossky articulates it, is a central principle within the Orthodox doctrine of creation. In the Orthodox tradition, creation is inseparable from this end, which is the *telos* of all creation, and which therefore connects the doctrine of creation with the doctrine of eschatology. This means that the doctrine of creation is invested with a trajectory that can be roughly articulated as follows: revelation teaches that God creates the universe *ex nihilo* and that God creates humanity in his image and likeness; by virtue of this creation in the divine image and likeness, and through the pivotal event of the incarnation, where through the Word God the Creator becomes also God the Saviour, humanity along with all of creation is called to deification and participation in the divine life, as the ultimate end and the supreme vocation of all creatures.

Given this understanding of the *imago dei* and its full context within the doctrine of creation, when Tarkovsky suggests that the human capacity for artistic creation is "evidence that we ourselves are created in the image and likeness of God,"⁴⁰⁵ he suggests that the artistic act is an act of participation; that artistic consciousness is God-consciousness. As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, this notion of participation is probably the most significant aspect of Tarkovsky's thought with regard to the doctrine of creation. And so the second half of this chapter will explore this idea in full, interpreting the role of the film-artist through the theology of participation. Can the artist participate in the fullness of the divine life through human creativity, which is often described as a 'gift'? Does artistic consciousness actualise the

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴⁰⁵ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 241.

image and likeness of God in the way that Tarkovsky contends in *Sculpting in Time*? In short, what does a theology of participation have to say about the role of the artist in the doctrine of creation?

2. THE ARTIST AND THE THEOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

Throughout *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky emphasises that the vocation of the artist is a spiritual vocation, and that the viewer or reader of a work of art is also responding to a spiritual call of some kind. Time and again he commits to paper statements like “art carries within it a hieroglyphic of absolute truth,”⁴⁰⁶ and “art is called to express the absolute freedom of man’s spiritual potential.”⁴⁰⁷ He describes the artist’s role in profoundly vocational terms: “The artist, too, is driven by a kind of instinct, and his work furthers man’s search for what is eternal, transcendent, divine.”⁴⁰⁸ While the viewer’s experience of art is also wound up in this call: “It is therefore possible to talk of an analogy between the impact made by a work of art and that of a purely religious experience. Art acts above all on the soul, shaping its spiritual structure.”⁴⁰⁹ This “spiritual potential,” this “search for what is eternal, transcendent, divine,” must be understood in light of the previous section’s introduction to the Orthodox theology of creation, and especially the reciprocal notions of theosis and participation.

This section, therefore, begins with the recognition that participation is essential to Tarkovsky’s theological imagination. That the artist is in some way able to reflect or manifest the image of God lies at the heart of his filmmaking and his philosophy of

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

art. Whereas the previous section sought to introduce the various themes and dimensions of creation within Tarkovsky's theological imagination, and to contextualise them in light of his Eastern Orthodox tradition, this section seeks to explore how the very concept of a 'theological imagination' relates to the doctrine of creation. In other words, it seeks to explore how the creation of the artistic image participates in creation itself.

In this discussion, it is apt to begin with the theology of Jean-Louis Chrétien and his essay 'From God the Artist to Man the Creator'. By exploring how the concept of creation came to be applied to human art, and by reciprocating the transfer of epithets so as to designate God 'artist', Chrétien argues that all art is ultimately authored by God and that therefore the human process of creating works of art can be seen as an act of participation in God's creative work. Chrétien's essay is invaluable for the present analysis of Tarkovsky, because it provides a cogent theological and phenomenological framework in which to develop Tarkovsky's own raw and inchoate intuitions about the artist's potential to participate in the divine life. These intuitions of Tarkovsky's permeate *Sculpting in Time*, yet they also find expression in one of Tarkovsky's most celebrated and beloved films, *Andrei Rublev*, the subject of which is creativity itself, explored through the artistic work of the eponymous 14th century iconographer. Following an exposition and discussion of Chrétien's essay, then, this section will provide a close reading of *Andrei Rublev* in order to illustrate the beginnings of Tarkovsky's theology of participation, from a film made early in the director's career. Finally, as this section and this chapter draws to a close, I will explore how artistic participation might be expressed through sacramental idiom, for the sacramental theology explored in previous chapters proffers an important and insightful way of understanding the role of the artist in the doctrine of creation.

ART AND CREATIVITY, CREATION AND ARTISTRY: JEAN-LOUIS CHRÉTIEN'S THEOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

Directing in the cinema is literally being able to 'separate light from darkness and dry land from the waters'. The director's power is such that it can create the illusion for him of being a kind of demiurge."⁴¹⁰

Art is thus twice over the site of a divinisation of man: first of all, by the exercise of his arts and the production of his works, man becomes like God [...] Second, man's comprehension of the divine art at work in the world elevates him above this very work, and makes his relationship with God that of one artist to another, each knowing, even to different degrees, the secrets of art.⁴¹¹

In these two quotations, taken from two very different texts, Tarkovsky and Chrétien both emphasise the deep connection between art and creation, artist and God. Participation is the key notion through which both authors do this; Tarkovsky's allusion to Genesis and reference to the artist as demiurge speaks to the participatory nature of artistic creation via analogy, while Chrétien's account of the human relationship with God as "that of one artist to another" designates artistic creation as collaboration with the divine creation. Further comparing Tarkovsky and Chrétien here, it is particularly interesting that the latter describes art as "the site of a divinisation of man," given Tarkovsky's Eastern Orthodox heritage and the central significance of deification in that tradition. It is important to observe, though, that

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 177.

⁴¹¹ Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 119.

Chrétien's essay makes no explicit reference to the Orthodox concept of theosis. Furthermore, curiously, the essay includes only a few direct mentions of 'participation', even though the concept of participation plays a major role in this and in other essays within the volume. Nonetheless, it is patently clear that Chrétien is developing a theology of artistic participation in this essay, or at least the foundations for one which is developed in the later essays of *Hand to Hand*.⁴¹² What else could Chrétien intend to accomplish from the above quotation, espousing a theological anthropology which identifies the image of God with the artist, and which connects artistic "production" with the divine likeness?

Tarkovsky's description of the creative powers of the filmmaker is a striking introduction to the question raised by Chrétien: "How did the artist become a creator?"⁴¹³ Yet this is only half the question for the French phenomenologist, who invites the reciprocal query: "How did the creator become an artist?"⁴¹⁴ For Chrétien, these questions are indissoluble from one another. This is where his essay begins, emphasising that these two questions "form a whole" because, "once God is thought of as the supreme artist, it is inevitable that one would come to place the artist as a being within God's divine order, and make the artist's power to produce new forms a reflection of the power of God."⁴¹⁵ Chrétien traces this "inevitable" line of thought to the earliest identifications of "divine creation itself as art,"⁴¹⁶ finding its beginnings in the influence of Greek philosophy and biblical literature. Here the notion of God as demiurge or craftsman is briefly examined, where Chrétien compares the absence of *creatio ex nihilo* in the Greek tradition with certain biblical passages which describe

⁴¹² In the very next essay of the book, for example, especially on p. 140.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

God as a kind of demiurge, creating out of something and not out of nothing (for example, Isaiah 64:8, which compares God to a potter working with clay, and the Letter to the Hebrews, 11:10, where God is given the name τεχνιτης - meaning 'architect' in the context of the verse).

This discussion introduces the principal term *technē* (τεχνη, which means craft, art, work, or even skill, and which is the etymological root of the English words 'technical' and 'technique'). And it is the term *technē* which leads Chrétien to his first major observation: at some point in Western thought, we separated the concept of manual craft from the concept of art. This, according to Chrétien, has shaped our understanding of creation (both divine creation and human creation) in a way that must be interrogated and reconsidered. Here Chrétien brings his reader directly into contact with the concept of participation, but in the context of Plotinus and his Neoplatonic dualism: "The Platonic term 'participation' clearly indicates that art is above the artist, in the intellectual realm: it must not be confused with the artist himself, or with his projects."⁴¹⁷ In other words, in Plotinus' thought, there is a distinction to be made between the form of art as it is conceived and the crafted form of art as it appears in the flesh; a dualism of the artist's 'idea' and the artist's sensible 'product'. Chrétien, working in the phenomenological tradition, seeks to push back strongly against Plotinus and his dualist metaphysics. In particular, Chrétien is troubled most by the notion that a sense of superiority emerged with the separation of art as 'idea' and art as 'product'; for aligned with this dualist separation is the value judgement that conceptual artistry is in some way superior or prior to physical, bodily craftsmanship.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

At this point Chrétien arrives at the notion of the *ars divina*, the idea that God the creator is the 'supreme artist', and that creation and the natural world is a work of divine art. According to the value judgement outlined above, which Chrétien suggests has been brought to bear on the notion of the *ars divina*, the 'art' of God as creator becomes superior and prior to the 'product' which is sensibly experienced - that is to say, the whole world and the phenomenal works of creation. Chrétien shows the influence of Greek thought on the *ars divina*,⁴¹⁸ but finds the strongest expression of the idea in Augustine, in whose work he recognises "a veritable doctrine of the *ars divina*," which is "not merely a fleeting or circumstantial analogy."⁴¹⁹ Essential to Augustine's *ars divina* is the notion that human artists participate in God through the divine wisdom; Chrétien cites Augustine's *On Eighty-Three Different Questions*, in which Augustine writes: "That supreme art of the omnipotent God through which all things have been made from nothing, which is also called his wisdom, also works through artists to produce things of beauty and proportion, although they do not produce from nothing." (From question 78.) So, for Augustine, human art does indeed participate in the divine art, although creating from nothing remains the unique capacity of God. The question, then, is whether or not human art can legitimately be called a form of 'creation', in the sense of the divine art. Augustine (who in this passage refers specifically to sculpture) names this human activity '*ars*' in his Latin, but does he really mean craft, that is, the *technical* production of manual labour which is dependent entirely on the earthly elements, and which is "able only to transform, and not to create?"⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ There is not sufficient space in this chapter to outline this in full, but it constitutes a lengthy discussion in Chrétien's essay, moving from Neoplatonism to the Stoics (especially through Zeno) and emphasising their contextual importance for Christian theology. pp. 99-102.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

This question is another way of formulating the issue of differentiating between ‘art’ and ‘product’, ‘creation’ and ‘work’ or ‘craft’. In particular, by problematising this differentiation, Chrétien seeks to challenge the suggestion that ‘art’ is to be considered superior or prior to its ‘product’. Such a notion becomes a major aporia for Chrétien, threatening the entire concept of the *ars divina*; for, as Chrétien outlines, if we affirm “the infinite superiority of the artist over the work,” then “God envisaged as artist is always beyond and above his work,” such that there appears to be “an insurmountable fault between the artist and the work, a space of indetermination.”⁴²¹ In the dualist cosmology of the Neoplatonists (and others), this fault line between artist and work poses no problem; in this cosmology, there is indeed an insurmountable gap between the infinite and immaterial reality of the divine, and the material, finite world of phenomenal experience. However, this paradigm poses profound difficulties within Christian theology, where the incarnation, the doctrine that the creator and creation are unified, is essential.⁴²² Chrétien recognises this and suggests that “the incarnation of the Word, and the possibilities that it opens for man, resolve these difficulties.”⁴²³ For Chrétien, the incarnation resolves the central aporia inherent in differentiating ‘art’ and ‘product’ within the *ars divina*:

The union of God and man in a single person is the union of divine art and one of its works in a single being. Nothing can be more perfect, and the principle of indetermination introduced by the superiority of the artist over the work here finds its limit and ceases to play a role. God can make a masterpiece by uniting himself to his work.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴²² Thus the separation of ‘art’ and ‘product’, in the context of the *ars divina*, constitutes a similar false binary to that which I discussed in Chapter I, critiquing Rudolf Otto’s binaries of infinite-finite, transcendent-immanent, natural-supernatural, which emerge from a theology that neglects the incarnation; the doctrine that God is made flesh in Christ.

⁴²³ Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 114.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

And so, via the doctrine of the incarnation, Chrétien offers a new conceptualisation of the *ars divina* as a unity of art and work. Such a unity eschews a traditional dichotomy of creator and creature, where the two are considered mutually exclusive realities, and posits that the divine artist and the divine work of art become one reality in the second person of the Trinity.

In this way, by revitalising a doctrine of the *ars divina*, Chrétien answers the first of his two reciprocal queries: how did the creator come to be called an artist? Following this, he returns to the second query: how did the artist come to be called a creator? In other words, how did human artistry become invested with the potential for participation in the divine creation, in the manner that Tarkovsky suggests? The first point of call in Chrétien's response comes a few pages prior, with the medieval philosopher John Scotus Eriugena, who attributes to humanity the power to create when "pondering man as the image of God."⁴²⁵ Chrétien builds on Eriugena's insight, connecting his thought to that of Augustine's some four centuries earlier, and particularly to the notion (which he finds in Augustine's writings) that "art imitates art, a higher art from which it is derived, and which continues to act through it."⁴²⁶ The vital point Chrétien wishes to make here, by drawing on these two eminent theologians, is that the notion of calling the human artist a 'creator' "does not issue from a profane tradition wherein rebellious man takes the place of the God he rejects," but that such a notion is in fact "born in Christian theology itself, and more precisely in the Augustinian lineage."⁴²⁷ Simply put, contrary to appearances, it is not heterodox to attribute the capacity for creation to human artists.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Following this through, and having established the grounds for a legitimate theology of human creation, Chrétien frames this theology in the terms of participation. The theologian he draws on most in this regard is Nicholas of Cusa, the 15th century Renaissance humanist and cardinal. “What interests Nicholas of Cusa,” Chrétien writes, “is the living relation of our arts to the divine art, and not only the contemplation of the works of this divine art.”⁴²⁸ It is one thing to emphasise participation in the divine art through the contemplation of this art (the works of creation),⁴²⁹ but here Chrétien, through Nicholas of Cusa, attempts another thing entirely: to emphasise participation in the divine art through our own finite, human art. Nicholas of Cusa himself writes that “all human arts are images of the infinite and divine art,”⁴³⁰ and Chrétien expands on this, pointing to a remarkable image Nicholas uses to illustrate this model of participation: the self-portrait. The painter’s self-portrait, Chrétien suggests, is created in the image of the artist in the same way that humanity is created in the image of God, the divine artist. Chrétien goes even further, arguing that a self-portrait which truly “comes alive” will be an image “which has in itself the power to turn itself towards its model,”⁴³¹ that is, towards the artist.⁴³² This lays the foundation for Chrétien to adopt Nicholas of Cusa’s assertion that the creations of human art “are nothing other than likenesses of his intellect, just as God’s creatures are likenesses of the divine intellect. This is how man possesses an intellect that is a likeness to the divine intellect in the creative act (*in creando*).”⁴³³ Thus Chrétien

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴²⁹ Consider Psalm 8, for example.

⁴³⁰ From Nicholas of Cusa’s *Idiota de Mente* (‘Metaphors for Mind’). Cited in Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 121.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁴³² I am reminded, here, of Céline Sciamma’s film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*. In the film, the narrative of which concerns the art of portraiture, one concept stands out: the mutual and reciprocal ‘seeing’ of model and artist; the idea that the sitter will turn herself towards the painter and see the painter with the same intensity of sight with which she herself is seen. Art sees the artist. Figure 19.

⁴³³ From Nicholas of Cusa’s *De Beryllo VI* (‘On the Beryl’), cited in Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 122.

responds to the second of his reciprocal queries. How did the artist come to be called a creator? Because the artist, created in the image and likeness of God, actualises this divine likeness by participating in the creative act.

Finally, having answered these two reciprocal questions, Chrétien concludes by returning yet again to the distinction between 'art' and 'product', framing it now in terms of the body, *techne*, and the manual labour of handiwork. Chrétien begins by affirming a fundamental truth about all artistry: "Every human work is manual."⁴³⁴ He takes up the sign of the human hand in this way, which challenges any notion that conceptual 'art' has priority over physical 'product', and which becomes the point where the difference between 'art' and 'product' seems to collapse in on itself. Chrétien points to Heidegger as an extreme example of this, who suggested that even thought should be considered '*Handwerk*' ('handiwork'). Ultimately, this is how Chrétien is able to maintain the infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity; human creation is always the work of our hands, even when it participates in the *ars divina*, but "divine creation takes place by the spoken word alone, an incommunicable word that makes being spring forth from nothing."⁴³⁵ What is achieved by the deconstruction of the dichotomy between 'art' and 'product', however, is the crucial point that human handiwork can participate in divine creativity despite this infinite difference. Even though, strictly speaking, humanity never 'creates' in the same sense as God, the labour of human hands nonetheless participates in the creative act. Human artistry and human works, then, both in the sense of craft, skill, technique, or technology (*techne*), as well as in the sense of conceptual art, are no less sites for participation in the *ars divina*.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

I want to draw this exposition and analysis of Chrétien's essay to a close by exploring the implications of these conclusions for cinematic art. Indeed, Chrétien's emphasis on human artistry as "the dignity of manual labour"⁴³⁶ is particularly fascinating given the manual and technical nature of cinematic production. Tarkovsky recognises cinema as a fundamentally *technical* enterprise, because "cinema was the first art form to come into being as a result of a technological invention."⁴³⁷ And the technical character of film does not only apply to the art form's inception; if it is true that new directors, actors, and writers change the landscape of filmmaking every decade, then it is equally true that every decade new technology also transforms this landscape. Tarkovsky is right to observe that the inception of cinema was technological, but it does not stop there; from the advent of the talkie to the first use of colour, from the invention of CGI to the rise in use of motion capture, cinema is very much a technical work, the dignity of which is the dignity of manual labour,⁴³⁸ as Chrétien describes.

It is worth observing, too, that Chrétien's phenomenological method emphasises the embodied reality of art in this way (hence *Hand to Hand* as the title of the volume). This thesis shares this phenomenological method, deploying the cinematic theory of film-phenomenology throughout (see Chapter II especially), which emphasises cinema as an embodied, somatic, and haptic artistic medium. Film art thus unites the *techne* of scientists and inventors with the *techne* of human bodies and labouring hands; camera operators collaborate with set designers and carpenters, and the physical movements of actors and models are taken up by the editor's hands at work in the cutting room. Likewise, the cinematic work is itself received in its embodiment

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴³⁷ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 82.

⁴³⁸ I mean this in both ways: first, in the literal sense of handiwork; second, in the sense of physical human labour, for every film set built around multi-millionaire actors is packed with minimum wage workers, the sound of drills and saws and forklifts filling the space between each moment of filming. Cinema is the pairing of actors', writers', and directors' technical artistry with the technical artistry of carpenters, electricians, textile designers, and more; all are united under the principal term *techne*.

by an embodied viewer. If human art participates in the *ars divina* by virtue of its phenomenal, corporeal workmanship, as Chrétien explores, then film art certainly possesses the capacity for participation in this way.

CREATING AND 'FEASTING': ART AND PARTICIPATION IN TARKOVSKY'S *ANDREI RUBLEV*

Why does a film about the relationship between an artist and his faith begin with a hot air balloon, built and piloted by a 14th century peasant? The answer has everything to do with what I have said above, in response to Chrétien's essay, about art, craft, workmanship, and the principal concept of *techné*. The film opens with an image of the contorted, bulging anatomy of this flying machine, tethered to the ground in front of the white stone walls of a large church. Ropes bind and compress the envelope into a strange shape; it is not immediately recognisable as some kind of blimp. At its base, three men busy themselves with the tethers and a crudely constructed basket. One man stokes a fire, funnelling smoke and hot air into the canvas envelope. All of this serves to illustrate the technical complexity of the machine, and therefore the *techné* of those artists who have crafted it. In a hurried escape the machine takes flight, the peasant euphorically crying out "I'm flying, I'm flying," as Tarkovsky portrays this maiden flight with vertiginous shots from a low helicopter or aeroplane. The viewer soars with the camera and with the contraption itself over marshy plains and small townships, the giddy laughter of the peasant artist accompanying the sequence, as he revels in his creation. Ultimately, though, the flight ends in disaster as the balloon careens downwards, crashing violently on the plains. The final shot of the sequence is of the envelope amidst the wreckage, deflating and letting out smoke, the canvas falling limp like a collapsed lung, and the escaping air gurgling in the bank of a stream

like a dying breath.⁴³⁹

In this prologue to *Andrei Rublev*, the film's principal themes of art and human creativity are introduced through a work of technical craftsmanship that is no less a work of art than Rublev's own icons. Though the peasant's flying machine is devoid of those holy images with which Rublev's creations are imbued, its construction is still a creative act which participates in the *ars divina* in the manner that Chrétien sets out, by the virtue of human ingenuity and handiwork. The peasant's flight is significant because it represents, through the mechanics of an *air* balloon, both *inspiration* and *aspiration*; two vital elements of human creativity and artistry. In an interview with the Russian film journal *Iskusstvo kino*, which survived the Soviet era and today remains the equivalent in Russia to *Cahiers du Cinéma* or *Sight and Sound*, Tarkovsky revealed that he and the other filmmakers working on *Andrei Rublev* had originally intended the peasant's flight to be a winged flight: "[We] decided that the wings were the problem. In order to eliminate comparisons with Icarus we invented the balloon. [...] I consider that it did away with the false romance of the sequence, and gave it a fresh and unique quality."⁴⁴⁰ This deviation from the original screenplay is important. If the initial conception of a winged flight had been preferred, the prologue would have situated itself entirely within an allusion to the myth of Daedalus and Icarus; with the balloon, the prologue is able to create a connection of a different character, which Maya Turovskaya describes as "an image of man's potential, and of his spiritual striving to go beyond the ordinary bounds of his life on earth."⁴⁴¹ In fact, the symbolic power of the image of flight in the prologue is even more pronounced; it is an image which identifies technological artistry as the very "spiritual striving" that Turovskaya

⁴³⁹ Figure 20.

⁴⁴⁰ "Interview with Andrei Tarkovsky," *Iskusstvo kino*, vol. 4, (1967) p. 78.

⁴⁴¹ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 78.

describes.

As Turovskaya has observed, though, Tarkovsky despised the term metaphor,⁴⁴² and so it seems likely that he intends to dismiss any metaphorical reading of the prologue when he mentions the “false romance” that he wished to eliminate from the scene. Tarkovsky seems to understand ‘metaphor’ as little more than allegory, and so to call this prologue metaphorical would undermine its full significance in his eyes. Turovskaya recognises this and argues that, “for him, the flight motif represented a deeper and more vital symbol than something merely allegorical.”⁴⁴³ This is, I think, what Tarkovsky intends to emphasise when he talks of the “fresh and unique quality” he hoped the scene would achieve, and why he idiosyncratically resists the designation of ‘metaphor’; more than any self-effacing allegory or obvious allusion, the peasant’s flight is a concrete image of a human being’s inspiration and aspiration, realised technically in a work of mechanical artistry.

Indeed, across its ten episodes (including prologue and epilogue), the film is composed around an ensemble of characters who are all engaged in various forms of technical and artistic craft. First and foremost there is the iconographer himself, Rublev, and then there is the peasant from the prologue, there is also the jester, the apprentice Foma, a group of skilled stonemasons, and the remarkable character of Boriska, the bellmaker, who is the protagonist of the film’s final narrative episode. These ten episodes, which appear chronologically in the film, form a coherent whole. Narratively, they are for the most part united by the life of Andrei Rublev, but this is

⁴⁴² Turovskaya’s analysis of the prologue to *Andrei Rublev* in fact offers a possible explanation for Tarkovsky’s reticence and suspicion of metaphor: “This dislike of the term ‘metaphor’ is understandable; it springs partly from the hackneyed use of ‘heroic’ metaphor in Stalinist cinema; and partly from his wish to avoid the rhetoric of allegory.” *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

not a perfect unity, since Rublev makes no appearance in the prologue, loiters on the periphery of other episodes, and cannot be described as a protagonist of the whole film in any conventional sense. The real unifying element which ties together these ten episodes is in fact theological. For, through its ensemble of artists and craftsmen (or rather, artist-craftsmen), every episode explores a different aspect of the artist's spiritual vocation.

That the film treats the spiritual role of the artist from the perspective of Christian theology is evidenced primarily by the focus on Rublev's iconography, but it is even more pronounced on two further levels. First, the film's working title was *The Passion According to Andrei*, which clearly identifies Rublev as a 'Christ figure'.⁴⁴⁴ Second, the concept of artistic creativity is consistently taken up in the film through trinitarian models and images. The most prominent of these is that of the three monks (Rublev, Kirill, and Daniil), all of whom are iconographers. Turovskaya goes as far as to describe the film's portrayal of Rublev as a portrayal of "not one artist but a 'Trinity'," ⁴⁴⁵ suggesting that this decision of Tarkovsky's is fitting, given Rublev's most famous icon, *The Trinity* (c. 1410). At the very least, the decision to situate the figure of Rublev as one of three monk-artists illustrates the religious and communal dimensions of his artistic vocation. The fictional Rublev's call to deification (which is even more significant given the historical Rublev's canonisation in 1988, twenty-two years after Tarkovsky's film) is a call to participate in the *ars divina* through his immediate social and religious context. Such is the nature of all artistic participation, the film suggests; the artist participates in the fullness of the divine life insofar as she encounters, communicates and collaborates with those around her.

⁴⁴⁴ See the following chapter, Chapter VI, for a discussion of Tarkovsky's various 'Christ figures', including Andrei Rublev.

⁴⁴⁵ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 38.

This is why the final, climactic episode of *Andrei Rublev* tells the story of Boriska's bell making, which is the most collaborative and communal instance of artistry in the film. Boriska, a boy orphaned at the beginning of the episode, must save himself from poverty by taking up his late father's role and forging a bell for the local prince. When he claims that his father has passed on the secret of his craft, he is given authority over some hundred workers, and so begins a vast collaboration of artists, craftsmen and labourers which challenges Boriska logistically and technically, testing his spirit and his skill. Ultimately, it is this immense (co)operation orchestrated by Boriska which leads Rublev to the decisive moment where he breaks his vow of silence and determines at last to return to icon painting. This moment is motivated primarily by the joy Rublev sees moving through the crowd at the bell's consecration ceremony; "You've created such a feast, such a joy for people," he tells the boy, who lies in the mud weeping uncontrollably while his bell rings out amidst the celebrations. It is at this moment, as Rublev realises the affective power of art to touch and to communicate with others, that he seems to fully understand what Kirill's earlier words mean for the artist's vocation: "It is a great sin to reject a God-given gift." If by 'sin' some sense of de-creation is understood here, then conversely it can be understood that the artist only participates in the fullness of creation by exercising her creative gift,⁴⁴⁶ which is shared with those around her in a feast for the senses.

The metaphor of 'feasting' is crucial, here. In *Andrei Rublev*, it is used to describe Boriska's work because of the communal and collaborative power of art. Rublev sees the crowd of townspeople and workers sharing euphorically in the boy's creation, and it motivates him to break his vow of silence and once again to exercise his gift for

⁴⁴⁶ I will say a little more about the notion of artistic talent as 'gift' below, in the context of sacramental theology.

painting; there are feasts now for him to prepare too. Tarkovsky's film is about the artist's theological vocation, and the metaphor of 'feasting' becomes crucial to understanding this vocation. In the first analysis, it is a soteriological metaphor, within which is contained all the themes of participation, fullness of life, and communion that are so vital to Tarkovsky's Eastern Orthodox tradition. Indeed, Lossky concludes *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* with a final chapter titled 'The Feast of the Kingdom', in which he emphasises the goal of theosis, which is full participation in and union with the Trinity, as a heavenly feast; "'a banquet of faith', wherein all may participate."⁴⁴⁷ To use the metaphor of 'feasting' to describe artistic creation, then, is to identify artistic creation with theosis and participation. And Tarkovsky is not alone in doing so; David Ford, for example, in his book *Self and Salvation*, makes extensive use of the metaphor to describe the soteriological significance of art. "Christian vocation can be summed up as being called to the feast of the Kingdom of God," Ford writes, before attempting "to savour the joy of that feast in more vivid ways through a painting, a set of meditations and a poem."⁴⁴⁸

With this short analysis of Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev*, I have sought to build on Chrétien's theology of participation, and especially on the emphasis he gives to manual artistry and craftsmanship, captured by the Greek term *techne*. The very same emphasis recurs in each episode of Tarkovsky's film, from the flying machine of the prologue to the final collage of images depicting Rublev's surviving icons and frescos. Throughout the entire film, there is not one character who could be described as a purely 'conceptual artist' (if such a thing even exists); every artistic character creates

⁴⁴⁷ Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 247.

⁴⁴⁸ David F. Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 272. The painting is Raphael's altarpiece for the church of San Giovanni, in Monte; the meditations are Thomas Traherne's; the poetry is Micheal O'Siadhail's, which introduce a personified 'Lady Jazz' walking the streets of Chicago.

only through the labour of their hands, which become - as Chrétien suggests - the site where any distinction between conceptual art and physical craft collapses. Tarkovsky's focus on artistry like stone making, bell founding, or carpentry is deliberate, designed to interrogate this distinction. Likewise, in the episode 'The Last Judgement', Tarkovsky portrays Rublev's and Daniil's meticulous work as they paint an altarpiece by hand in Vladimir. In an earlier episode, a Passion Play is shown, where the physical demands made of its performers are emphasised. Art, craft and labour are indissolubly connected in the film. The spiritual vocation of the artist is wrapped up in this phenomenality, and therefore in the collaborative and communicative nature of artistry, which moves all those who share in the feast of its creation. As Tarkovsky himself wrote, in a chapter titled 'The Artist's Responsibility', "In all my films it seemed to me important to try to establish the links which connect people. [...] I always felt it important to establish that I myself belong to a particular tradition, culture, circle of people or ideas."⁴⁴⁹ Chrétien's essay provides a framework for a theology of artistic participation, in which the artist's creative act resembles the image and likeness of God; through the motif of 'feasting', this theology is extended to encompass not just the artist, but all those with whom the artist collaborates and communicates.

ART, PARTICIPATION, AND THE SACRAMENTAL IDIOM

The motif of 'feasting', of course, conjures up another theological dimension for consideration: the eucharist and the wider grammar of sacramental theology. It is this dimension that I wish to explore now, as this chapter draws to a close, for the

⁴⁴⁹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, pp. 192-193.

sacramental idiom provides a fascinating lens through which to consider the relationship between art and the doctrine of creation. The sacramental understanding of 'gift', for example, sheds light on the colloquial metaphor of an artist being 'creatively gifted'. Moreover, the concept of participation can be substantially developed by conceptualising art idiomatically as a 'consecration' of experience in the world. I will begin with this particular application of sacramental language, for it is familiar to this thesis.

In Chapter IV, I quoted Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', in which Merleau-Ponty describes the work of a painter through sacramental idiom. Designating the painter's art as "a response" to the corporeal data of his existence, his *être au monde*, Merleau-Ponty lists a range of quotidian phenomena ("the body, the life, the landscapes, the schools, the mistresses, the creditors, the police, and the revolutions") and then describes these phenomena sacramentally, as "the bread his work consecrates."⁴⁵⁰ It is no accident that Merleau-Ponty deploys the sacramental metaphor here, connecting the various 'bodies' of creation on which the painter sets his eye with the bread of the Eucharist.⁴⁵¹ Indeed, the eucharistic metaphor is apt on a number of levels, given Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of art. Fundamentally, he understands art through his principle of the body-subject, set out in his *Phenomenology of Perception* ("The body is the vehicle of being in the world"),⁴⁵² and so the Eucharist, which is experientially centred on the body, appositely expresses his emphasis on the corporeality of art.

⁴⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 64.

⁴⁵¹ Recall Louis-Marie Chauvet's 'symbolic order' of creation, which is mediated corporeally, as a sacramental order of created bodies. See Chapter I.

⁴⁵² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 84. See also Chapter II, for my discussion of Merleau-Ponty's corporeal phenomenology.

Yet the significance of his use of sacramental idiom here goes beyond the foregrounding of the body, foundational though this is. In case there is any doubt about the extent to which Merleau-Ponty commits to sacramental language in his essay, it will be worth examining his choice of words. The English translation of this passage chooses the verb 'consecrate', as I have used in my quotation above. While this word does indeed bear sacramental significance, it is open to a latitude of interpretations, not all of which necessarily capture the full theological significance at play here. The same is true of the French verb '*consacrer*', which is the word the reader would expect to find in the original French given this translation. However, the word Merleau-Ponty actually chooses is nothing less than the noun '*sacrement*': "[...] *le pain dont elle fait son sacrement*."⁴⁵³ Literally, then, this passage describes the various worldly phenomena addressed by the painter not as "the bread his work consecrates," but as "the bread of which *she makes her sacrament*." Given this very deliberate choice of words, the reader must take seriously the sacramental dimension of Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics; the artist creates, consecrating the 'bread of the world' through her work, making a sacrament of the corporeal phenomena she images.

There is hardly a more definitive expression of participation in the *ars divina* than this. Via the sacramental idiom, the artist can be said to celebrate the gift of creation in a role analogous to - although never commensurate with - the celebrant at the Eucharist. The artist's vocation is a response to the gift of the world, and necessarily this includes the ugly as well as the beautiful, in the same way that the Eucharist consecrates the violence of the crucifixion along with the beauty of the incarnation and the resurrection. The notion that creation is 'gift', which is to say gratuitously brought into existence, is indispensable here, since this expression rests on the place of sacramental

⁴⁵³ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 64. French edition: *Signes* (Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1960).

idiom within the doctrine of creation. All of creation is gift, strictly speaking, because God creates *ex nihilo*; that there is something and not nothing is a gratuitous reality. In the doctrine of creation, the theological concept of grace is thus never too far removed, because, as Karl Barth puts it, “in the reality of divine grace is included the truth of the divine creation”.⁴⁵⁴

It is for this reason that Louis-Marie Chauvet concludes his “foundational theology of sacramentality”⁴⁵⁵ by arguing for a theological understanding of creation as ‘gift’,⁴⁵⁶ which I explored in Chapter IV. Any work of sacramental theology operates on some level within the broader sphere of the doctrine of creation; for Chauvet, however, sacramentality is fundamental to the doctrine, because the two together represent a schema of ‘gift’ and ‘return-gift’ which constitutes a notion of sacramental participation. Though I quoted Chauvet in full when discussing this schema in Chapter IV, it will be valuable now to cite him again:

The ‘reception’ of the world as creation, that is, as ‘gift’, implies the ‘return-gift’ of the offering. Thus, the confession of creation is itself charged with sacramentality. [...] Making visible the gesture of presenting the gifts at Mass [...] is the way faith confesses in action that God is creator.⁴⁵⁷

As I said in my earlier analysis of this quotation, for Chauvet, we participate insofar as we receive. The clearest illustration of this is the Eucharist, where the believer participates by receiving the body of Christ through the host, which reciprocally becomes the ‘return-gift’ offered in the ritual of the sacrament.

⁴⁵⁴ Karl Barth, *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928* (London: SCM Press, 1962) p. 342.

⁴⁵⁵ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁶ ‘Gift’ is a primary concern of Chauvet’s ‘Conclusion’. *Ibid.*, pp. 548-555.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

It is telling that Chauvet makes reference to human creativity as he expounds this schema of 'gift'/'return-gift', even suggesting how human creativity might be said to participate in divine creation. He writes that "creation calls upon human creativity," and that, precisely because the divine creation cannot be reduced to human creativity, "it calls humanity to *make a 'world'* out of the universe which it receives."⁴⁵⁸ In other words, according to Chauvet, human creativity is necessary for creation to be received for what it is. It may seem tangential to say so in this analysis, but the colloquial metaphor of describing artistic talent as 'gift' in fact speaks to this same theological understanding of the relationship between creation and human creativity. Simply put, if human beings are called to actualise the image and likeness of God in which they are created, and if this likeness includes the gift of artistic creativity, then practicing, nurturing, and sharing this gift constitutes a form of participation.

Ultimately, Chauvet's schema of 'gift' and 'return-gift' offers a fascinating way of conceptualising Merleau-Ponty's use of sacramental idiom to describe the role of the artist. Fleshed out in the terms of Chauvet's theology, Merleau-Ponty's claim that the artist "makes a sacrament" of the phenomena she images (*"le pain dont elle fait son sacrement"*) suggests that the artist consecrates the gift of the world by offering her art as a 'return-gift'. This is the full significance of describing human artistry through sacramental idiom; the idea that human art consecrates the world, that the artist "makes a sacrament" of her embodied experience in creation, represents a powerful turn in a theology of artistic participation. This turn brings together various threads which run throughout this chapter; it depends on the doctrine of the *imago dei*, from which emerges the possibility for participation in the fullness of the divine life - as

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

well as, from the Eastern Orthodox perspective, the possibility for theosis - and it opens up the terms 'artist' and 'creator' in such a way as to become reciprocally informative within the doctrine of creation, as Chrétien explores. In the final analysis, this sacramental turn offers a systematic framework to interpret the primal, vocational connection between human creativity and the doctrine that God created the universe.

By way of some concluding words on this subject, I wish to return to the image of the garden. In a way this chapter now comes full circle, returning to the opening discussion of *Solaris* and the twin motifs of ocean and garden which lie at the epicentre of that film. In Judeo-Christian theology, the garden represents creation, given gratuitously and in abundance to Adam and Eve in the myth of Genesis. Just as they were called by God to till this garden and to keep it (Genesis 2:15), the theologian may understand the vocation of human participation through the motif of the 'gardener'. Naturally, much has been made of this archetypal gardener in theological discourse, particularly in the context of environmental theology, but I wish now to suggest that the motif of the gardener captures something vital about the participatory role of the artist in creation.

As has been emphasised throughout the second half of this chapter, the work of the artist is indissoluble from the craft and labour of human hands. At the same time, it can never be said that a human artist creates from nothing, as if out of some conceptual *nihil*. Art is always *techne*, as practical as it is cerebral, involving the realisation of creative vision through tools and work and technique; all of which is represented by the motif of 'gardening'. And so the human artist is reflected in the archetype of the gardener, who shapes and transforms the garden given to her, participating in its creation, cultivating its landscape and recreating around her by sowing seeds or

forging pathways. Just so we talk of human ingenuity in the terms of 'making connections', or of creative theory in the terms of forming 'seminal ideas' (from the Latin *semen* meaning 'seed'). The etymological virtues of comparing human artistry with the motif of 'gardening' are obvious; still more obvious is the fact that gardening is itself a codified art form in the world today, complete with formal competitions and prizes. Yet by considering the gardener now, as an archetype of human artistry, I hope to emphasise a theology of artistic participation through biblical and sacramental idiom, drawing on the earliest traditions and the foundational sources for the Christian doctrine of creation. Just as the vocation of the gardener is to tend and attend to the garden, the vocation of the artist is to tend and attend to creation through human creativity.

VI

Incarnation

To understand the work of the filmmaker through the motif of the gardener is to recognise filmmaking as a manual, haptic and somatic craft. In the first instance, as the previous chapter concluded, the archetype of artist as gardener provides a model for human participation in divine creativity, where the artist tends and attends to creation through her craft. Yet, in addition to this model of participation, the motif of the gardener also emphasises a crucial reality of human artistry: that the creation and reception of art depends on our corporeality, on the shared and reciprocal embodiment of artist and seer. Just as the work of the gardener is the work of the body and of the hands, so too the work of the artist is always characterised by its somatic and haptic nature (*manual labour*, to recall Chrétien's focus in *Hand to Hand*).⁴⁵⁹

This is as true for cinematic art as it is for any other medium; indeed, the essentially embodied nature of film has been a principal focus of this thesis. Chapter II, in particular, drew on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as the theory of film-phenomenologists like Vivian Sobchack, in order to conceptualise the film experience as a fundamentally embodied and corporeal mode of encounter, communicating from the embodied filmmaker, to the embodied viewer, through the body of film itself. As I argued in that chapter, a significant extent of the theological power of film is realised through the inherent embodiment of the art form, which

⁴⁵⁹ "Every human work is manual: always and everywhere it is our hands at work, even when they do not labour." Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 124.

renders cinema as a theologically and incarnationally significant encounter *in the flesh*. Indeed, embodied encounter with the other is at the heart of Christian theology; it is epiphanic and sacramental in shape, paradigmatic of the interpersonal relationality revealed in the gospels, and manifest in the primal religious scene of encountering the divine other,⁴⁶⁰ the supreme expression of which is the incarnation.

Now, as this chapter explores the theological concepts which emerge from cinematic art in light of the doctrine of the incarnation, the corporeality of film must be examined further. The first half of this chapter will attempt this task. It is important to say from the outset that this is by no means a superficial equation of human ‘bodily-ness’ with a rudimentary interpretation of the word ‘incarnate’ (from the Latin preposition *in* and the noun *caro*, meaning ‘into-flesh’). Rather, this is an analysis of what it means to encounter the fullness of the divine and human other in the corporeal order of creation, as embodied creatures ourselves; for the Word made flesh, coming into the world, “came to what was his own.” (εἰς τὰ ἰδία ἦλθεν - John 1:11.) Essential to this understanding of the incarnation is the recognition that the doctrine reveals a call to take seriously the corporeal, enfleshed world as a site of divine experience and encounter.

Of course, any analysis of the corporeality of the world, as it is given to us and as this corporeality is taken up by the Word of God, leads inevitably to the concept of time; for to take on an enfleshed existence is to take on a temporal existence. The second half of this chapter, then, will explore time and the incarnation in cinema, developing

⁴⁶⁰ Recall Richard Kearney’s analysis of ‘the divine stranger’ in *Anatheism*, and my discussion of his position in Chapter II. Such encounter runs throughout the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions as a leitmotif, including - to name only a few - Abraham’s meeting with the three strangers (Genesis 18:1-9), Mary Magdalene outside the empty tomb (John 20:1-18), and the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

many of the ideas discussed previously about the temporal dimensions of the art form (especially in Chapter III and Chapter IV). Above all, what emerges at the intersection of corporeality and temporality is the question of representation. How is corporeal encounter with the body of Christ translated and *re-presented* across time? How does cinema *re-present* the corporeal phenomena it witnesses across the period of time that makes up a shot or a sequence? I will argue that the key to understanding these representational processes is the concept of mimesis, and in doing so I will suggest that mimetic representation is essential to the theological movements of discernment and response, which in turn are vital movements within the theology of the incarnation.

1. THE FLESH OF THE IMAGE

This section is concerned with the haptic and somatic sensation of cinema, and the theological concepts which this gives rise to within the film experience. How can we meaningfully describe cinematic art in the terms of haptics and somatics? That is to say, in what way does it make sense to talk of film as a tactile and embodied medium of perception and sensation, rather than as an audio-visual medium only? And what, if anything, does this have to do with the doctrine of the incarnation? The first two questions have received considerable attention from phenomenology and critical theory in the past; the last question leads into uncharted and exciting theological-cinematic territory.

With regard to the first two questions, the work of art theorist Laura U. Marks has been instrumental. As will be examined, Marks formulates a haptic aesthetics,

drawing on the philosophy of Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze, among others, which she applies to film and video. In short, Marks conceptualises the translation of the haptic and somatic perception of the lived world into the audio-visual perception of film as a kind of synaesthesia.⁴⁶¹ Her work has proved field-defining in recent artistic theory, and other theorists, who focus specifically on the medium of film, have deployed Marks' insights in order to understand the tactility of cinematic art in particular.⁴⁶² The work of Marks and of these other film theorists will inform much of the discussion to come in this section, as I explore what it means to talk about the flesh of the cinematic image.

First, however, it is vital to say more about corporeality within the theological parameters of the incarnation. As I mentioned in the introductory paragraphs above, Chapter II closely explored one particular valency of this corporeality; embodied encounter with the other, which lies at the heart of the doctrine. Here, though, I wish to evaluate the significance of corporeality in the doctrine of the incarnation on a more fundamental level; how does the belief that the Word was made flesh inform (and transform) the human condition of fleshly, corporeal being in the world? In essence, what connects our own embodied existence with the body of Christ? It is with these questions that this section must begin.

⁴⁶¹ Synaesthesia is the sense reception by one part of the body in response to the stimulation of another part, which is itself connected with a different bodily sense; for example, the reception of a certain sound as the colour yellow. As a literary device, certain colloquial phrases are examples of synaesthesia: "actions speak louder than words," or "that story touched me." That the translation of haptic and somatic sensation into audio-visual perception represents a kind of synaesthesia has been the defining idea of Marks' research over the last few decades, fully articulated in her book *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002), and applied specifically to cinema before then in her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (1999). I will discuss both of these key texts later in this section.

⁴⁶² Especially Jennifer M. Barker's *The Tactile Eye*, discussed below.

It can be tempting to draw a direct equivalence between the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity and the enfleshed reality of human existence. Such an equivalence appropriates the unique theological vocabulary of the doctrine of the incarnation into the recent philosophical and phenomenological vocabulary of embodiment.⁴⁶³ To be sure, there is an analogy of being that must be asserted, following the Chalcedonian Definition that the Son is truly man as well as truly God, but this *analogia entis* does not constitute synonymy between the word 'incarnate' when it is assigned to the creator and when it is assigned to a creature. To put it simply, humans are not incarnate beings in the same way that Christ is. The word 'incarnation' in fact bears very different connotations in each instance; specifically, 'incarnation' in the creaturely sense can never deliver the materiality of grace or the soteriological and ecclesiological significance that the word 'incarnation' does in the very particular context of doctrine. To talk of human being as incarnate being is to be descriptive of our particular mode of embodied existence in the corporeal world, but to talk of God incarnate is to make theological and metaphysical claims about the reality of grace and the salvific state of all creation, as well as to reference the vast theological edifice that is ecclesiology.

Nonetheless, despite exercising a necessary caution in this discussion, particularly given the extent and magnitude of the subject at hand, the theologian must take seriously the corporeality of Christ's incarnation, and the connection between this

⁴⁶³ As seen, for example, in the way that many theological studies of embodiment assimilate the body of Christ into the 'bodily-ness' of human being in the world. As an incarnational, and indeed an ecclesiological and soteriological, term, the body of Christ cannot be treated in the same way as recent phenomenology has treated human embodiment. See, for example, Ola Sigurdson's ambitious and valuable work *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze and Embodiment in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), in which the critical distance between these terms is not particularly emphasised.

corporeality and our own embodied existence. Nowhere is this connection more mysteriously and powerfully articulated than in the prologue of John's Gospel, where, in taking on the flesh of his full humanity, the Logos "came to his own." (1:11.) What, exactly, is referenced by $\tau\alpha\ \iota\delta\iota\alpha$ here? At once, it is necessary to observe that there is no material possessive in the Greek, which the English translation could seem to imply; $\iota\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (from which we derive English words like 'idiom' and 'idiosyncrasy') contains no sense of ownership other than in the way a person could be said to 'own' one's self or one's privacy ('private' is in fact another meaning of $\iota\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$). At the very least, given the preceding verse, $\iota\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ seems to refer to a general worldliness; for the idea that "the world came into being *through* [$\delta\iota\alpha$] him" (1:10) seems to suggest the same sense of self-identification contained in the word $\iota\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$. As the creative and divine Word, then, the Logos is to be identified with his creation, such that the corporeal order of the created world is *his own* order. To put it in somewhat speculative terms, the Logos that comes into his own by taking on the corporeality of his creation is like the spoken word that comes in to its own by taking on the idiolect with which it is already - and necessarily - identified.

This linguistic analogy anticipates a well-known difficulty posed by John's prologue: if verse 14 delineates the moment where the Logos takes on flesh, and if all previous verses refer to the Logos in a state of incorporeality, then how might the corporeal world be described as $\tau\alpha\ \iota\delta\iota\alpha$? Rudolf Bultmann presents this problem succinctly in his commentary on the fourth gospel: "Since verse 14 reports the incarnation of the Logos, the subject of what has preceded must be the pre-existing Logos. But can it be said of the latter that $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\ \iota\delta\iota\alpha\ \eta\lambda\theta\epsilon\nu$ (v. 11)?"⁴⁶⁴ In other words, how is the corporeal world in some sense 'the same' ($\acute{o}\ \iota\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$) as the incorporeal Logos? This problem,

⁴⁶⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971) p. 16.

Bultmann outlines, “gave rise to the old dispute of the exegetes: how far does the Prologue speak of the pre-existent Logos, and from which verse does it begin to speak of his appearance in the flesh?”⁴⁶⁵

There have been a variety of different approaches to resolving this question. Bultmann’s approach is to identify verses 6-8, together with verse 16, as authorial comments similar to a footnote, which allows him to maintain the ontological continuity of the prologue by setting aside these comments so that they don’t interfere with the temporal continuity.⁴⁶⁶ My linguistic analogy above suggests that corporeality already and necessarily pertains to the Logos (through whom the corporeal is created from the very beginning), just as idiolect already and necessarily pertains to an individual’s unspoken speech. Another avenue of resolution, which is particularly appealing given its simplicity, is to eschew the temporal continuity of the passage entirely. Such an approach might recognise the genre of the prologue as myth (which, incidentally, Bultmann himself acknowledges),⁴⁶⁷ and argue that it is only the narrative form of the myth which gives the impression of a linear temporal continuity; in reality, human temporal limits cannot be applied to the Trinity, and the Logos’ entering into flesh (and therefore into time) cannot be thought of in the crude terms of ‘before the incarnation’ and ‘after the incarnation’. I will say much more about time and the incarnation in the second half of this chapter, but for now this brief discussion suffices to outline the shape of the problematic apparent in John’s prologue.

The corporeality of the incarnation, then, and the connection between the incarnate Logos and the corporeal world, is crucial from the first articulations of the doctrine.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14 and then again on p. 19.

But what does this mean for the corporeal nature of human being in the world? To put it another way, why is the corporeality of the incarnation important for the embodiment of human being, given the distinction made at the very start of this section between the divine and creaturely uses of the word? Of course, to answer these questions in full would amount to something like the final word on christology; a task far beyond the possibilities of this thesis, let alone of this chapter. However, in offering one initial response, some interesting concepts begin to emerge from the doctrine of the incarnation.

To take on flesh is to exist under the conditions of a certain *être au monde*. It is to be embodied, and therefore to be a body-subject in the Merleau-Pontian sense, facing out *towards* the world - which is why I return once more to his interpretation of 'being in the world' as *être au monde*, where the preposition *au* is preferred to the preposition *dans* or 'in' in the English (see Chapter II for my analysis of this). To take on flesh, then, is to encounter the corporeal world, and this means that it is also to take on the various postures of the flesh; to take on suffering, desire, temporality, affect and emotion, perception and sensuality. In the incarnation, Christ takes on these postures of the flesh, the reality of being in the world. In doing so, he becomes the paradigm for embodied existence; an example and therefore a lesson in how to be and live in this corporeal world. Christ's body, as living pedagogy, forms and transforms us as bodies, through our encounter with him. If the fulfilment of Christianity is for creatures to be transformed in the image of God (recall the discussion of theosis in the previous chapter), then the incarnation can be understood in this way as a pedagogy of how to *be* a body; a pedagogy of being in and towards the world.

Such an understanding is not completely dissimilar to the 'exemplar' models of

christology, which also approach the life of the incarnate Logos as paradigmatic of human being; a pedagogy of life learned from the life of Christ.⁴⁶⁸ However, whereas exemplar christologies focus on the moral example of Christ, an understanding of the incarnation as a pedagogy of embodied being in the world will focus instead on the articulations and postures of Christ's body: we learn from the kneeling body of Christ as he washes the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17); from the willingness to reach out and lovingly touch a man suffering from leprosy (Matthew 8:2-4); from the righteous body that overturned the tables of the money-changers in the temple (Mark 11:15-17). Just as believers take on the postures and articulations of Christ's body during the Stations of the Cross, we are called to take on the postures and articulations of his body as a pedagogy for our embodied being in the world.

The cornerstone of this pedagogy is the cross and all that is contained within its sign. That the cross bears pedagogical significance is suggested in Matthew 16:24: "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" Yet where the cross becomes most evocative is, of course, in the theology of passion and suffering, often termed as a *theologia crucis*. It is the articulation of Christ's body as a wounded body which characterises the cross, by nails and by thorns and by side-piercing spear. But the cross is no pornography of pain or fetishisation of suffering; the sign of the cross is the sign of love. This is why Jürgen Moltmann can simultaneously recognise these bodily wounds to the godhead as an altogether different kind of wound, one borne from love: "the believer understands the crucifixion as an event of the love of the Son and the grief of the

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, the 12th century theologian Peter Abelard, especially his commentary on Romans. In the 20th century, exemplar christologies have been articulated by Rosemary Radford Ruether, Carter Heyward, and Mark Lewis Taylor, among others. Don Schweitzer provides a satisfactory overview of exemplar christology in chapter two of his introductory volume *Contemporary Christologies: A Fortress Introduction* (Fortress Press, 2010) pp. 30-45.

Father."⁴⁶⁹ Grief is a wound to the loving soul, and in the embodied sign of the cross this wound is articulated as compassion; as a 'suffering-with' creation. The incarnation, then, calls us to compassion. To take on the articulations and postures of Christ's wounded body is not to make an idol of pain or suffering, but rather to live compassionately; to suffer-with others in love.

The cross, via the resurrection, culminates with the ascension of Christ's body. Both the resurrected body and the event of the ascension are central to the corporeality of the incarnation, for both determine how (or even whether) the believer might encounter, receive, and be transformed by the body of Christ now. Often the resurrection and ascension are thought of as a movement away from corporeality and into incorporeality, but to encounter the risen Christ is a corporeal event; the body of the risen Christ is a body that Thomas can touch, for example, the wounds so physical he can reach inside them with his finger (John 20:24-27). That encountering Christ is a carnal experience is not only true for Thomas' encounter with him, either. As Graham Ward has written, specifically in response to this episode and to Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Christ outside the empty tomb, "this topography of bodies in both passages focuses on Jesus' body, coming to understand, coming to an identification of who he is through engaging with this body. The knowledge then that issues in identification is both carnal and theological."⁴⁷⁰ Indeed, the scriptural episodes of encounters with the risen Christ are characterised by their corporeality. Perhaps this is why such an emphasis is placed on the failure to physically recognise Christ in these encounters (as with Mary outside the tomb and with the disciples on the road to Emmaus).

⁴⁶⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015). pp. 367-368.

⁴⁷⁰ Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p. 122.

The crucial aspect of these episodes, and of the knowledge emerging from them, which Ward recognises to be “both carnal and theological,” is that they leave in their wake a certain somatic contact with the incarnate Christ; a somatic presence residing in absence. In the same passage of *Christ and Culture*, Ward traces the converging and inverting patterns of presence and absence in dialogue with Merleau-Ponty,⁴⁷¹ suggesting that touch endures beyond presence. Returning to the episode outside the tomb, Ward cites Gerard Loughlin’s “‘carnal’ and theological reading of this moment.”⁴⁷² In his analysis of John 20, Loughlin emphasises what I am describing as the somatic contact that the risen and ascended Christ leaves in his wake. Responding directly to this episode, Loughlin writes:

Jesus tells Mary not to cling on to him because he has not yet ascended, *as if she might hold him once he has ascended* [...] Thus it is that Mary can touch him once he has ascended, once he is with his disciples in their following of him, in their forgiving and feeding of others. It is in their caring for one another, and for others, that they touch the Lord, and he embraces them, holding them in his arms; his touch being their embrace.⁴⁷³

This is the pedagogy of embodied being in and towards the world that I argue is revealed in the incarnation. It is a pedagogy of how to *be* a body, surrounded by other bodies;⁴⁷⁴ it is learned from embodied encounter with Christ and from the somatic traces of this encounter which endure in absence, sustained by absence. What

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁷³ Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) p. 266.

⁴⁷⁴ The fundamental nature of Christian embodiment as being surrounded by other bodies is discussed insightfully by Ola Sigurdson. Sigurdson deploys Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘grotesque body’ in order to convey the transcorporeal (and transformative) reality of Christian embodiment. Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, pp. 492-576.

Loughlin describes in the nature of discipleship are the articulations and postures of the body which are learned from the incarnation; the feeding, forgiving, and caring of others, all of which is encapsulated in the com-passion of the sign of the cross. This pedagogy is given and learned through somatic contact with the risen Christ, for, as Loughlin says, their embrace is Christ's own touch.

This presents some summary thoughts which lead back to the incarnational significance of film. The incarnation, as a corporeal and somatic 'touching' of Logos and creation, represents a call to live and love in the flesh of the world. Film, as an embodied, sensuous, and enfleshed mode of perceiving the world, can respond to this call. In Chapter II, I identified embodied encounter with the other at the heart of this call, and I argued that an important element of the incarnational significance of cinematic art lies within its capacity to prime and facilitate this encounter. Now, in light of what has been said so far in this section about the corporeality of the incarnation, it will be valuable to return to the phenomenological and somatic analysis of cinema, and to explore my claim that film can respond to the doctrine of the incarnation in this way.

THE FILM IMAGE AS HAPTIC AND SOMATIC CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

Too often in today's culture, the senses of sight and sound are implicitly and explicitly misunderstood as incorporeal forms of perception and sensation. But to say that vision and hearing are somehow disembodied is as nonsensical as saying that touch and taste are disembodied. What must be restored is the fundamental idea that vision and hearing are forms of contact, and specifically embodied contact with the corporeal,

phenomenal world; to borrow Laura Marks' phrase, it is high time to "rematerialise our objects of perception."⁴⁷⁵ Cinematic art, as an audio-visual medium, has been particularly susceptible to the fallacy of disembodied perception, and so it is vital to rematerialise our conceptualisation of the film experience, discerning the cinematic image as a form of haptic and somatic contact with the world that it witnesses.

In giving section one of this chapter the title 'The Flesh of the Image', I aim to capture the particular mode of embodied perception and sensation which characterises the film experience. Much of this has already been introduced,⁴⁷⁶ or anticipated in the previous chapter's discussion of Jean-Louis Chrétien and his designation of art as manual and corporeal craftsmanship. In the discussion that follows, though, I wish to pay close attention to recent scholarship which specifically explores film through the concept of 'touch'. By interpreting the medium of cinema haptically in this way, as the play of tactile images and tangible sounds, filmic perception and sensation of the corporeal world takes on a deeper incarnational and theological significance.

That film is a manual and corporeal product is evident at face value from the technical material of the medium; the film image is composed from sheets of celluloid, chemically developed and surgically spliced together before they are passed through a projector and cast onto the embodied space of the screen. At every level cinema is, to put it in Chrétien's terms, the work of the hands, for "every human work is manual: always and everywhere it is our hands at work, even when they do not labour."⁴⁷⁷ On an immediate level, it is the hands of the filmmaker that position and operate the camera, the hands of the editor that cut and splice a reel of celluloid, the hands of the

⁴⁷⁵ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) p. xiii.

⁴⁷⁶ Primarily in Chapter II, especially through the film-phenomenology of Vivian Sobchack.

⁴⁷⁷ Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 124.

projectionist that bring the image to the screen. Even the digitalisation of these processes remains the work of the hands, across keyboards and touchpads, but also on the deeper levels that Chrétien recognises; for the hands are *at work* even when they are not physically labouring. The hands are often the focal point of the whole body; the point of contact between one body and another, such that tactility and haptics becomes the threshold of experience in the world, even when it is the other senses that are actually in operation. In a very real sense, the eyes grasp for sights and the ears catch hold of sounds. Thus, the immediately audio-visual medium of film expands radically to mediate the corporeal perception and sensation of our embodied being in the world.

Marks has described this mediation of corporeal and haptic sensation through other modes of sensation as a kind of synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is the sense reception by one part of the body in response to the stimulation of another part, which is itself connected with a different bodily sense; for example, the reception of a certain sound as a colour, or the reception of light as taste.⁴⁷⁸ The first and most foundational example of this mediation or translation concerns Marks' own work as an art theorist: "Writing about artists' media, I must translate something about their audiovisual, sensuous materiality into words."⁴⁷⁹ If words cannot bear some corporeal payload of the sense-perception they are mediating, then all art criticism, which aims to translate into words the corporeal sense-perception of an artefact like a painting or a sculpture, will be a vain enterprise. Thus, art criticism will only be successful if it can convey via translation the corporeality of the sense-perception which the critic experienced when

⁴⁷⁸ There are a diverse array of types of synaesthesia recognised within psychology, such as chromesthesia (seeing various colours when hearing certain sounds), lexical-gustatory synaesthesia (experiencing different taste sensations when hearing certain words), or auditory-tactile synaesthesia (feeling a tactile sensation when hearing particular sounds).

⁴⁷⁹ Marks, *Touch*, p. ix.

encountering the artefact themselves. As Marks' writes, "My writing will be successful if you, the reader, can reconstitute in your own body the experience I had."⁴⁸⁰

Just as art criticism mediates the sense-perception of an artefact by translating it into words, film mediates the sense-perception of other embodied experience via translation into the audio-visual. This is precisely why film is to be discerned as haptic and somatic contact with the world; far from some implausible 'disembodying' of corporeal sense-perception, cinematic mediation *reincorporates* its phenomenal subjects. This is the synaesthesia that Marks identifies; the film experience is not a reduction of sense-perception, but a reconstitution of sense-perception across different sensoria, namely the human and cinematic bodies. In this way, film ceases to be solely audio-visual: "synaesthesia, as well as haptic visuality, enables the viewer to experience cinema as multisensory."⁴⁸¹

This multisensuality is made possible in part because film *fossilises* the phenomena it witnesses. Just as the diplodocus fossil that used to reside in London's Museum of Natural History is a corporeal witness to the vast organism which decomposed millennia ago, the film image is a witness to its corporeal subjects. Marks argues that cinematic art "is a material artefact of the object it has witnessed,"⁴⁸² and goes on to explore cinema through William Pietz's concept of fetishism, suggesting that "cinema functions like a fetish [...] an object whose power to represent something comes by virtue of a prior contact with it."⁴⁸³ Likewise, the power of a fossil to represent something resides in the fossil's prior contact with that object, which effects a somatic

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000) p. 23.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

mimesis catalysed by the geothermal pressures at work within the Earth. The mimetic impression of a fossil thus occurs through intimate and overlapping somatic contact. In *The Skin of the Film*, Marks also takes up the motif of 'fossil', but specifically through Gilles Deleuze's use of the word in the context of memory and time, which I will discuss later when this chapter turns to explore time and the incarnation. For the moment, though, the characterisation of the film image as fossilised image is designed to emphasise the corporeality of cinema from all points of contact; from the point of conception and inception by the filmmaker(s), through to the point of reception by the viewer. Like the process of fossilisation, the corporeality of cinema is the translation of one kind of haptic and somatic sense-perception into another kind.

The synaesthetic experience of film, which enables such a multisensory conception of the medium, gives rise to interesting theories of cinematic tactility. Chrétien is not far from such thinking when he emphasises the manual nature of all art; it is the hands which become the threshold of creative contact with the world. Moreover, in Chrétien's phenomenology, the hands become a metonym for the whole body, such that tactility manifests across the various attitudes and postures of the body. Jennifer Barker, whose doctoral thesis was in fact supervised by Vivian Sobchack, has theorised an account of cinematic tactility which connects the haptic and the somatic in a similar way within the film experience. Drawing heavily on Merleau-Ponty (who continues to be at the epicentre of this discourse), Barker argues that "tactility is a mode of perception and expression wherein all parts of the body commit themselves to, or are drawn into, a relationship with the world that is at once a mutual and intimate relation of contact."⁴⁸⁴ Cinematic tactility, it follows, describes the somatic and haptic contact between the body of the viewer, the body of the film, and the corporeal

⁴⁸⁴ Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009) p. 3.

world. In Barker's own words:

Cinematic tactility, then, is a general attitude toward the cinema that the human body enacts in particular ways: haptically, at the tender surface of the body; kinaesthetically and muscularly, in the middle dimension of muscles, tendons, and bones that reach toward and through cinematic space; and viscerally, in the murky recesses of the body, where heart, lungs, pulsing fluids, and firing synapses receive, respond to, and reenact the rhythms of cinema.⁴⁸⁵

The value of Barker's account of cinematic tactility is that it attempts to restore the idea that vision and hearing are forms of embodied contact with the world. Her film theory rejects the implicit notion that audio-visual experience is somehow disembodied experience, and it turns this fallacy on its head to argue that the whole body and all the physical senses play an active role in the sense-perception of audio-visual experience. In this way, it reminds us that the film experience - like any experience in and of the world - is an experience perceived through the body-subject, sensuous (and sensible) only in the flesh.

In following the likes of Barker and Marks, and emphasising the fundamentally embodied nature of cinematic art, the theologian can begin to see that film may respond to the call of the incarnation; that is, the call to live and love in the flesh of the world. The film experience is by no means detached or disembodied, as if audio-visual sense-perception eschews corporeality; on the contrary, to experience film is to be thrown into the flesh of the world, to touch the corporeal phenomena of creation and *to be touched* by the filmmaker(s), by other viewers, and by the body of film itself. The

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

haptic and somatic medium of film, which is to say the filmic translation of sense-perception from one embodied sensorium to another, attends to creation without reducing or diminishing it; rather, it reconstitutes embodied experience of the world as a different kind of embodied experience, condensing and re-exploding it in the way that Marks describes. It has the power, in this way, to receive and celebrate the embodied, enfleshed world for what it is; the gift of creation, given and consecrated by Christ, the Word made flesh.

Before this section draws to a close, I wish to examine one particular, idiosyncratic feature of Tarkovsky's filmmaking as a case study of cinematic tactility. This is his use of colour, monochrome, and sepia tone, the fluid and interchangeable movements of which have fascinated and perplexed viewers in equal measure over the seven feature films of his oeuvre. Crucially, the interchangeability of these tones does not follow any hard and fast logic or set of rules. In *Mirror*, for example, the various uses of colour and monochrome seem at first to delineate the film's different time periods, but then Tarkovsky breaks this apparent structure in the famous levitation scene. Similarly, in *Stalker*, the use of sepia tone seems to mark the boundary between the Zone and the outside world, but then Tarkovsky breaks this apparent rule too, deploying colour for the picture's esoteric coda, of the Stalker's daughter and her telekinetic powers. It is equally inexplicable that the Stalker's dream sequence is lensed in sepia tone, except for the final image of this dream, that of a dog, which is again framed in colour. In *Solaris*, Tarkovsky jumps from colour to monochrome at Kelvin's home, without even changing location or chronology. Later, in the middle of a sequence depicting a memory (or perhaps a dream) of Kelvin's mother, Tarkovsky suddenly shifts from sepia to monochrome without ever breaking continuity; there is only a cut to a reverse-shot of the previous image and the abrupt, inexplicable change of tone mid-

conversation.

It is notable that the perplexities of Tarkovsky's use of colour did not escape the man himself, who, in a passage of *Sculpting in Time*, asks: "Why is it, when all that the camera is doing is recording real life on film, that a coloured shot should seem so unbelievably, monstrously false?"⁴⁸⁶ In a somewhat roundabout answer, which speaks more to his own discomfort with contemporary colour grading technology, Tarkovsky suggests that colour cinematography detracts from the director's capacity "to select and reappraise the colour elements in the world around him."⁴⁸⁷ In other words, he feels that it hinders his capacity as a filmmaker to translate and reconstitute his sense-perception of the world into the film image. Tarkovsky is interested in creating an *impression* of the world in his films (recall the Russian word *pechat* discussed in Chapter III), and this entails the synaesthetic mediation of one kind of embodied experience into another kind, including that of colour in the world into the mechanically coloured reels of celluloid that are his films.

Sepia, colour, monochrome - these are *fabrics* in Tarkovsky's cinematic inventory, which he uses to create that haptic impression of the world. Each tone changes the way a shot *feels*. This is not merely a metaphor. Like the synaesthesia that Marks describes, the haptic and tactile sense-perception of the world is translated into a colour tone in such a way that it is physically felt by the viewer. Tarkovsky's use of these colour tones is just one surprising manifestation of cinematic tactility, yet it is one of the most prominent and ubiquitous techniques he employs to create and mediate an impression of the world in his films. These colour tones are something like the fabrics used to clothe the flesh of the image; each renders a different texture to the

⁴⁸⁶ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 138.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

shot or sequence, translating one kind of haptic and somatic experience of the world into another kind of haptic and somatic experience.

2. TIME AND THE INCARNATION: MIMESIS IN THE ECONOMIES OF DISCERNMENT AND RESPONSE

Theologically, the doctrine of the incarnation is inextricably tied to questions of temporality, ontology, and history. The incarnation refers both to an event within time and space, and to the ontology of the Trinity, which cannot be limited by time and space. In other words, the doctrine of the incarnation presents a central aporia in the second person of the Trinity, who invests himself in time at a specific moment in history, and transcends that relative moment so that he can be encountered absolutely in the presently experienced life of faith. It is crucial, therefore, not to draw rigid lines between relative and absolute time when it comes to the incarnation. As Ward observes, commenting on the quest for the historical Jesus within broader christological discourse, over-emphasising this difference “opens the ugly ditch between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.”⁴⁸⁸ In actuality, the distance between these two is not severe enough to warrant any ditch-digging, for both the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith must be understood together through the aporetic relationship of relative and absolute time. Questions of historicity and the contextuality of Jesus of Nazareth are one valency of this relationship, while the notion of the Christ of faith, which raises the vital possibility that believers might encounter Christ in their present lives, is another valency of this relationship.

⁴⁸⁸ Ward, *Christ and Culture*, p. 3.

The particular temporal challenge of this relationship is that the incarnation is at once determinate of time and dependent on time; Christ must be understood all at once as “both Alpha and Omega - the potentate of time,”⁴⁸⁹ and as a human life lived under the contingencies of time. Hence the central aporia within the doctrine of the incarnation; Christ - the eternal Word made mortal flesh - at once governs time and is governed by time. This aporia lies at the heart of all Christian theology, as another articulation of the fundamental tension between finitude and infinitude, between the relative and the absolute. What is revealed in the second person of the Trinity is that these binaries collapse in the incarnation, such that absolute time and relative time cannot be conceived of independently. As Lissa McCullough writes, “in creation and incarnation, then, the infinite *invests* itself in time, in finitude. The absolute continues to be absolute *qua* the will that wills the relative, the temporal.”⁴⁹⁰ Fittingly, there is a kind of chiasmus in McCullough’s writing here, which reflects the chiastic unwinding of these binaries and the inseparability of relative and absolute time within christology, as the absolute Logos wills the relative that is created through him (John 1:10).

The temporality of the incarnation, as an event relative in history and as an absolute reality of the Trinity, is further nuanced by the significance of the doctrine for quotidian belief and the life of faith. For, if the theologian wishes to maintain that the believer can encounter Christ in the life of faith and through the Church today, then in some sense the incarnation - as an event in history and as the anticipation of some soteriological reality - is being realised now and continually in the present. To adapt Augustine’s famous temporal formula to christology, in the doctrine of the incarnation

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁰ Lissa McCullough, “Prayer and Incarnation: A Homiletical Reflection” in: Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba [eds.], *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005) p. 211.

the believer encounters “a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.” (*Confessions* XI. 20. 26.) As Ward puts it, “if today is not some further realisation of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and an intimation of a consummating fulfilment at the end of time, then all our figurations are no more than consolations for a body that is lost.”⁴⁹¹ Here Ward also emphasises the inextricable connection between christology and eschatology, to which the doctrine of creation is also intimately tied. The incarnation thus reverberates from the beginning of time through to the end of time, and the Christian theologian lives somewhere in between, encountering these reverberations from moment to moment, discerning within them a call and responding to that call in and through time.

This chapter has already emphasised that the incarnation constitutes a call to live and love in the flesh of the world; a call to take seriously the corporeal world as a locus of divine experience. As was observed at the start of this chapter, though, to take on an enfleshed existence is to take on a temporal existence, and so it is necessary to explore how this call is discerned and responded to in and through time. McCullough recognises what the temporality of the incarnation means for this call, maintaining the irreducible connection between time and embodied, enfleshed existence in creation:

Our task or calling in life is not to ‘suffer’ the temporal in patience, waiting it out in our quest for the eternal at the end of time, but to inhabit it and love it as the manifest and living will of God in the flesh. We must not only be prepared for the grace that carries us into eternity, or death, but we must be prepared for the grace that delivers us - in a heartbeat - back into our very flesh, into the task of life, regaining the finite in faith, such that the ‘city of God’ or ‘kingdom of

⁴⁹¹ Ward, *Christ and Culture*, p. 20.

God' is actively incarnate in us, here and now, in the very midst of the 'city of man.' [...] Our existential task is not to live disincarnationally toward God but to live into the world incarnationally in faith.⁴⁹²

In other words, because the incarnation calls the believer to live and love in the flesh of the world, it also represents a call to live and love in the rhythmic and fleeting present of human being in the world. Our enfleshed existence is a temporal existence, and to live incarnationally is to inhabit this temporality in such a way that we are, as McCullough writes, delivered "back into our very flesh, into the task of life." Crucially, McCullough is writing in the theological context of prayer, conceptualising it as the "means to effect this incarnational task"⁴⁹³ through day to day acts of contemplation, hopefulness, and spiritual exercise. Yet prayer is also deeply involved in the reciprocal schema of call and response, and this leads to the next questions that this chapter must address. For, if the incarnation does constitute a call to live and love in the flesh of the world, how is this call discerned and responded to in and through time? And how might film act as a site for these twin economies of discernment and response, in the way that I have suggested throughout this chapter? In order to address these questions, I will turn to a form of representation that plays a vital role both in the theology of the incarnation and in the haptic and somatic medium of film: mimesis.

MIMESIS AS REINCORPORATION

Discernment and response always involve, on some level, an act of interpretation. In

⁴⁹² McCullough, "Prayer and Incarnation," p. 211.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

encountering the incarnation of God through the gospel literature, the believer who hears, reads, re-creates and re-lives the gospel narrative necessarily engages in hermeneutics, and it is this basic hermeneutic act that enables the believer to discern and respond to the Christian vocation. Yet hermeneutics, in the twin economies of discernment and response, is not merely an act of interpretation from the outside looking in. Rather, it is an act of interpretation from within a text or tradition; an act of interpretation through participation. In this light, discernment and response are not only concerned with the presentation of the gospel narrative, but also with its *representation* and *re-presentation* in the tradition and in the Church. It is valuable, therefore, to understand the processes of discernment and response through the concept of mimesis, because mimesis is concerned with representation through forms of participation and imitation (from the Greek μιμησις, *mimēsis*, literally meaning ‘imitation’).

Before going any further, some preliminary clarification will be helpful, for the concept of mimesis can feel slippery at times, even appearing nebulous to the point of abstraction, especially given that it has been developed and deployed in a variety of ways across a variety of critical disciplines. Mimesis traces its history to Ancient Greece, and particularly to Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Poetics*. As such, it has played a central role in the interpretation of literature over many centuries, while it has also been a perennially important concept within Western philosophy. Over the last few decades, mimesis has also played a vital role in the work of some major theological thinkers, notably René Girard and Paul Ricoeur. While it is beyond the scope of this section to completely anatomise the concept and its history, in this discussion I will explore mimesis insofar as it assumes a major role in the theology of Graham Ward and in the film theory of Laura Marks. By way of a working definition

of mimesis, then, I suggest the following, as a synthesis of Ward's and Marks' positions: mimesis is a form of representation which presses together the phenomenon that is presented, with the way in which it is presented, and then reconstituted by the participating reader, viewer, or listener (the 'audience'). In other words, mimetic representation renders phenomena through three inseparable layers of presentation, representation and re-presentation: i) the appearance of the phenomenon itself, ii) the mediation of the phenomenon, and iii) the concomitant reconstitution of the phenomenon by the audience.

Approaching the doctrine of the incarnation through the concept of mimesis is by no means new territory. In recent years, one of the most productive studies to take this approach is Ward's essay 'Christology and Mimesis', which is the first essay in a section of *Christ and Culture* that deals explicitly with "The Economies of Response."⁴⁹⁴ Ward begins this essay by conceptualising mimetic representation as the "measure" of the enigmatic verse 4:24 in Mark's gospel. In the full context of this verse and chapter, which addresses the interpretation and discernment of parables, Christ's saying "the measure you give will be the measure you get" seems applicable to the representational processes of discernment and response. As Ward puts it:

Mimesis is the measure. [...] We are all caught up in the representational process, within a mimetic schema that calls forth and calls for interpretation and reinterpretation. Mimesis, I suggest, is the nature of revelation itself (a revelation inseparable from its mediation).⁴⁹⁵

Here is the layering and over-layering of presentation and representation that I

⁴⁹⁴ Ward, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 27-110.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

sketched above. The mimetic schema that Ward describes is a schema of representation where the appearance of something (the revelation of Christ) is indissolubly connected with its mediation (for example the gospel texts) and with its reconstitution in the body of the audience (in the tradition or in the Church, as the body of Christ). What emerges from this, given the corporeal significance of the incarnation established in the previous section, is a form of representation that can be understood as *reincorporation*.

If something is re-presented mimetically, through the inseparable cooperation of its appearance, mediation, and reconstitution, then it is not just represented as in the sense of a portrayal or an illustration; it is, in a very real sense, reincorporated. Laura Marks goes even further in her description of mimesis: "Mimesis is a form of representation based on getting close enough to the other thing to become it."⁴⁹⁶ In the dual contexts of the doctrine of the incarnation and film-phenomenology, where embodiment is crucial, I suggest that the 'becoming' Marks identifies is also best understood as a form of reincorporation. This seems especially apt for Marks' theory of haptic criticism, which specifically deals with representation through the embodied sense-perception of touch. Framing haptic criticism through mimesis, Marks does in fact suggest that her theory involves some form of reincorporation, which she expresses with deliberately somatic and embodied imagery: "Haptic criticism is mimetic: it presses up to the object and takes its shape."⁴⁹⁷ These words become hugely significant for the theologian when considered incarnationally alongside the concepts of theosis and the *imago dei*. If the twin economies of discernment and response form a mimetic schema - if, as Ward suggests, mimesis is indeed the "measure" of Mark 4:24 - then to respond to the call of the incarnation must be something like what Marks

⁴⁹⁶ Marks, *Touch*, p. xiii.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

describes, something like pressing up to the body of Christ and taking his shape.

TIME AND MIMESIS

From this it is also clear that mimesis has profound implications for understanding the relationship between time and representation. How is it that mimesis realises a kind of contact that seems in some way to translate or reincorporate phenomena across time? On a basic level, time is itself a kind of mediator; after the initial appearance of a phenomenon the passage of time transforms its subsequent appearances. The gospels are an apposite example of this, for they are transformed culturally over the passage of time as they are received and reconstituted in the minds, imaginations, and lives of their readers. The believer who engages the gospels is always 'pressing up' to the figure of Christ as mediated by these texts and the time that has elapsed since their inscription. The vocation is to represent Christ mimetically in one's own life; 'to take his shape', as it were. Mimesis thus facilitates contact between the believer and God, and contact that stretches across time to hold together in the present the memory of Christ's incarnation in history, the ongoing encounter with the body of Christ, and the anticipation of a future consummation with this body.

Mimetic representation, then, relates to time in the mode of Augustine's formula: "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future." (*Confessions* XI. 20. 26.) In this way it also functions in the mode of Henri Bergson's designation of time as *durée*; as an interpenetrating continuity felt in the present as duration, rather than as a continuity of discrete intervals, like an amount of time to be quantified or 'counted' (see Chapter III for a detailed discussion of Bergson). In other

words, mimesis layers past and present representations on top of one another, compressing them until they become inextricably merged, re-presenting something by reincorporating it in and through time.

Cinematic art embodies this process. The film experience compresses together the initial appearance of phenomena in the world, with the mediation of phenomena by the camera (including the processes of lighting, set design, colour grading, editing, and so on), and with the reconstitution of phenomena in the embodied viewer as they experience the film. Through this compression, this layering of representations, cinema reincorporates the phenomena it witnesses into the body of film. The film image never quite becomes the thing that it images, but it *brushes* this thing, pressing up against it and taking its shape as an impression of light on photo-sensitive celluloid. It re-presents phenomena mimetically, by virtue of the haptic and somatic contact of the camera's witness, realised materially by photons that fire through the aperture of the lens and explode against the strip of film where they leave their impression.

The film image reincorporates phenomena across time. The impression left by light on celluloid (and the impression left via vibration on the capacitor of a microphone) is at once a past impression of things present and a present impression of things past. As such, what we really have in a film is interpenetrating duration; Bergson's *durée*, where past and present coexist in the conscious experience of time. And, particularly in light of the capacity to replay film, we have also the potential for anticipation; a present of things future. The layering of these interpenetrating 'presents' is the same layering as that of mimesis; the same compression of representations that culminates with reincorporation. To this cinematic layering and compression of interpenetrating

past-presents and present-pasts, Deleuze offers the description “peaks of present and sheets of past.”⁴⁹⁸ With this phrase he aligns the material product of film with the temporality of human consciousness. What Deleuze seeks to describe here is “the present as infinitely contracted past,”⁴⁹⁹ and he expounds this through the same temporal formula of Augustine’s that was discussed above: “there is *a present of the future, a present of the present, and a present of the past*, all implicated in the event, rolled up in the event, and thus simultaneous and inexplicable.”⁵⁰⁰ It is no coincidence, either, that Deleuze employs haptic and somatic imagery to express time in the sense that it is “rolled up,” and that it appears in “peaks” and “sheets.” Though he never explicitly acknowledges it, the corporeality of our conscious experience of time is inescapable, especially given the way that film mimetically reincorporates the temporally bound phenomena that it images.

The motif that Deleuze uses which comes closest to expressing this mimetic and corporeal time-sense is that of the fossil. I discussed the fossil earlier, in order to emphasise the embodiment of cinematic representation. Given the present discussion of mimesis, the fossil, which is a material representation formed by somatic contact with that which it witnesses, can now be seen as a powerful expression of the mimetic processes of cinema. In fossilisation, rock and mineral *press up against an object and take its shape*, in the very manner that Marks describes mimesis. What is more, fossilisation is the layering of sheets of sediment which collect around the thing that is fossilised; sediment which collects in, around, and through the fossil, like the infinitely contracted sheets of past that collect in the peaks of the present. The fossil is a material artefact of reincorporated time; reincorporated in the body of rock which mimetically

⁴⁹⁸ See chapter five of *The Time-Image*, “Peaks of Present and Sheets of Past: Fourth Commentary on Bergson.” Especially p. 116. Deleuze, *Cinema II*, pp. 103-130.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

represents the organism or phenomenon that it images. Such is the nature of filmic representation and reincorporation.

For Deleuze, these cinematic fossils are “strangely active fossils, radioactive, inexplicable in the present where they surface.”⁵⁰¹ Radioactive not necessarily because they decay in substance, but because they emit substance; they continually emit particles which emerge from the fossil-image as if from some latent and pressurised temporality contained within its form. As such, “fossils are not cold, stone objects, but rather live, dangerous things.”⁵⁰² Deleuze’s concept of the cinematic time-image appears in this way; the shot or sequence of a film fossilises the phenomena it witnesses, reconstituting it mimetically as a direct, living time-image experienced in the present, and it is through this mimesis that the art form reincorporates phenomena materially and temporally in the body of film.

The radioactivity of the fossil also describes its relationship with memory. Memory emits images and concepts in the same volatile way as radioactivity emits particles. Like a radioactive substance, memory can distort and decay, it can create new images and new connections between images and concepts. In this sense, the condition of the fossil has two aspects: the external appearance of time layered and “rolled up” in its form; and the internal temporalisation which operates in relation to memory. Crucially, the fossil remains - mimetically - a corporeal point of contact; an object that realises its power by virtue of a prior physical contact and “by awakening memories of touch,”⁵⁰³ as Marks puts it. Perhaps it is for this reason that the image of the fossil, which Deleuze uses only passingly in that one passage of *The Time-Image*, becomes for

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁵⁰² Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 84.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Marks a leitmotif in *The Skin of the Film*, recurring whenever she addresses the temporality of filmic art. For Marks, memory is the faculty where haptic and somatic experience of the world is translated into another kind of embodied experience; memory, in this way, becomes the faculty which facilitates the synaesthesia Marks identifies with the film experience.

Memory is a close corollary of representation, a kind of mental and imaginative mimesis, which tries to imitate and reincorporate past experience in the present. This occurs voluntarily, as with recollection, and involuntarily, as with trauma. While memory certainly plays a vital role in the film experience, as Marks outlines, it also plays a crucial role in the theology of the incarnation. After all, what does contemplating the incarnation accomplish if not *the awakening of memories of touch*? That is, the memory of Mary grasping at Jesus outside the tomb; the memory of Thomas pressing his finger into Christ's wounds;⁵⁰⁴ the memory of Christ's hands washing the feet of the disciples. And how does the eucharist facilitate an encounter with Christ in the flesh, if not by awakening and participating in the haptic and somatic memory of the Last Supper? Can it be said, too, that the memory of the incarnation is 'radioactive' in the sense that Deleuze uses the word? Certainly concepts like Johann Baptist Metz's 'dangerous memory' (*gefährliche Erinnerung*)⁵⁰⁵ capture the formative and transformative power of the gospel memory in our culture; it is a living memory, a memory which primes and facilitates contact with the incarnate Logos, the Word made flesh, and which reverberates across time to transform our present culturally, politically, and spiritually.

⁵⁰⁴ It is noteworthy that, although Christ invites Thomas to touch his wounds, we are not told explicitly if he does so or not.

⁵⁰⁵ Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1980) pp. 88-98.

In emphasising the gospel memory as a living, formative and transformative memory, the present discussion returns to the vocation at the heart of the doctrine of the incarnation, and therefore to the twin economies of discernment and response. So far, the aim of this section has been to trace the processes of interpretation and representation that are essential to these reciprocal economies. I have argued that mimesis is the key to understanding the schema of call and response, because it captures the inseparable layers of presentation, representation and re-presentation on which these theological acts depend. The vocation is to represent Christ mimetically in one's own life; to press up against him and take his shape, and so to live and love in the temporal and material flesh of the world. I have also argued that cinematic representation is best understood as a form of mimesis, and in doing so I have sought to open up the possibility that the medium of film can become a site for discernment and response; a way in which human creativity and artistry can answer the call of the incarnation.

Now, as this chapter draws towards a close, I wish to expand on this possibility by exploring one particular potential of art to engage with the doctrine of the incarnation. This is the artistic figuring of Christ, the mimetic representation of a 'Christ figure', which has rich precedents across all of the arts, but which is realised distinctly in film. In cinematic art, Christ has been figured across various guises and in a variety of modes, which imitate and represent different christological positions and orientations. After considering this particular incarnational dimension of film, which is one manifestation of the wider incarnational significance of the art form, this chapter will be in a position to consolidate the theological-cinematic territory it has investigated, and to draw some conclusions about the cinematic concepts which emerge from the doctrine of the incarnation.

In the beginning was the Word. Why is that, Papa?

So asks 'Little Man' in the final moments of Tarkovsky's seventh and last film, *The Sacrifice* (1986).⁵⁰⁶ 'Little Man', the young son of the film's protagonist, has been mute up until the picture's final shot. This closing image shows him as he lies beneath a barren tree, following its thin branches with his eyes as they wind skywards. His lips move but at first he says nothing, yet in that instant the viewer is suddenly aware that the boy is about to speak. A few more moments of silence endure as Tarkovsky holds on to his quintessential long take. Then, at last, the boy quotes the first line of John's gospel, and simply asks "why." These, the only words he ever speaks in the picture, are also the final word on Tarkovsky's oeuvre. Like Shakespeare speaking through the mouthpiece of Prospero, Tarkovsky seems to speak through 'Little Man' in order to situate the doctrine of the incarnation at the heart of his filmmaking, as an essential principle of his art. Retrospectively, from the pages of *Sculpting in Time* and from his seven feature films, it is not hard to see the vital role that the doctrine of the incarnation plays in his work. This is particularly clear from the way that Tarkovsky figures Christ in his characters. From his first protagonists, Ivan and the great iconographer Andrei Rublev, through the Stalker and eventually to figures like Gorchakov and Domenico in *Nostalgia*, Tarkovsky re-presents different christological perspectives through the human characters that inhabit his cinema.

⁵⁰⁶ Figure 21.

The portrayal of Christ figures is, of course, ubiquitous across all the arts, and not only a feature of cinema. In painting, direct representations of Christ, such as del Verrocchio's and da Vinci's *Baptism of Christ*, or Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, re-present certain moments of the gospel memory, while abstract portrayals (such as Dali's *Corpus Hypercubus*) figure Christ in a way that compresses various christological concepts into the perspective of a single still image. In literature, portrayals of Christ can also be accomplished through direct representation, as in Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* (later adapted for the screen by Paul Schrader and Martin Scorsese), but more commonly they are accomplished through analogical or symbolic representations, like the character of Santiago in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, or even like the crude and direct figure of Aslan in C. S. Lewis' *Narnia* novels. Likewise, sculpture, photography, poetry, music, and numerous other arts have, at some point, fostered practitioners who have figured Christ directly or indirectly through the medium.

Cinematic art is no exception, with a number of films figuring Christ in some way or other. Aside from direct representations of Christ, as in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), filmmakers have used human characters and narratives to re-present Christ and the gospel story in various ways; in *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), Robert Bresson reconfigures the Passion narrative in the life of the eponymous priest of Ambricourt, while in mainstream American cinema films like *The Matrix* (1999) have centred around redemption figures, who are often portrayed through the christological movements of sacrifice, death, and resurrection. The ubiquitousness of such Christ figures in cinema has precipitated a plethora of research and books on christology in film, from academic volumes like Christopher Deacy's *Screen Christologies*, to general audience and pastoral releases like Joel Mayward's *Jesus*

Goes to the Movies. All such volumes tend to describe what Deacy recognises as “cinema’s predilection to delineate an authentically human Jesus - and thus to portray a figure capable of imparting the possibility of redemption.”⁵⁰⁷ Thus the theologian might characterise such portrayals as a form of ‘low christology’, or christology ‘from below’, to borrow Pannenberg’s designation.⁵⁰⁸

Tarkovsky’s Christ figures function similarly, beginning with the humanity of Christ and portraying what he describes in *Sculpting in Time* as the struggle for “spiritual perfection.”⁵⁰⁹ In this way, Tarkovsky seems to describe the idea of theosis, or deification, as it is inherited from his Eastern Orthodox tradition. His Christ figures represent various articulations of this struggle; but what is crucial is that the viewer reconstitutes this struggle themselves, in the watching of the film. For, as was discussed in Chapter II in dialogue with Vivian Sobchack, in the film experience the viewer performs the action given to her through the body of the film - through the ‘perceived-performed’ other that is characterised by the eye/I of the camera. To frame it in the theoretical context of this chapter, the viewer re-presents and reincorporates this spiritual ‘struggle’ in *response* to the way that it is represented through Tarkovsky’s Christ figures. Just as these Christ figures are intended to respond to and to imitate Christ in some way (‘to press up against him and take his shape’ mimetically), the viewer in turn presses up against these figures on the screen and performs their role through the film experience.

This is the great insight of Deacy’s *Screen Christologies*, although he does not engage with Sobchack, Marks, or any work of film-phenomenology. Deacy recognises that the

⁵⁰⁷ Christopher Deacy, *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001) p. 92.

⁵⁰⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968).

⁵⁰⁹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 209.

potential for redemption in the medium of film is not limited to the analogical or symbolic portrayal of redemption; there is an extent to which cinema can facilitate the performance of redemptive movements and actions by the viewer. As he puts it, referring specifically to what he identifies as the archetypal ‘redeemer’ character of film noir, the redemption figure (the Christ figure) “has the potential to enable the *film audience*, in a manner akin to the influence of the person of Christ upon the *Christian community*, to confront their human inadequacies and weaknesses and to undergo a subsequent personal and/or moral development.”⁵¹⁰ In short, the filmic Christ figure can respond to the gospel representation of Christ by imitating and re-presenting him in such a way as to elicit a similar schema of call and response in the viewer. Here, again, it is clear that the twin economies of discernment and response are wrapped up in the inseparable layers of presentation, representation and re-presentation which constitute mimesis.

In Tarkovsky’s films, one of the most prominent examples of this imitative and performative figuring of Christ is that of *Andrei Rublev*. The film, which was Tarkovsky’s second feature, was originally made under the working title *The Passion According to Andrei*,⁵¹¹ which immediately reveals Tarkovsky’s intentions with the protagonist. Rublev is a figure that is supposed to mimetically re-present Christ’s struggle in imitation of the gospels’ mode of representation; the passion “according to” Andrei. What is most interesting, though, is that Rublev’s nature as a figure of Christ is deliberately augmented and compounded by the nature of his work as an iconographer; as an artist whose craft also figures and represents Christ for sacred purposes. This meta level of christological representation is vital to the film’s meaning, for it renders the film itself as a kind of iconography, or at least as a form of image-

⁵¹⁰ Deacy, *Screen Christologies*, p. 76.

⁵¹¹ It is also the title of the third episode of the film. Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 34.

making that depends on the dynamics of iconography.

There is, then, an important doubling in the way the figure of Rublev represents Christ in the film. In the previous chapter's discussion of *Andrei Rublev*, within the context of the theology of participation, I considered Tarkovsky's argument that the human capacity for art discloses the image of God. Yet, as the meta structure of the film demonstrates, human art and creativity also discloses the act of this imaging itself. The process of spiritual striving to realise the image of God, and the artistic imaging of God, are therefore inextricably linked. To put it another way, through their artistic craft the artist simultaneously identifies *and identifies with* the one in whom we are imaged as creatures. In the film, the artist Rublev and the filmmaker Tarkovsky both perceive and perform this imaging. These two levels of filmic and christological representation function like parallel vectors, one being the core level of cinematic representation and the other the meta, self-referential level of this representation.

The metaphor of this doubling as parallel vectors is not intended as an abstract or speculative image; in fact, it crystallises in the film's esoteric ending. For, like the terminus at infinity where two parallel lines intersect, *Andrei Rublev* ends with the intersection of Rublev's and Tarkovsky's christological representation. The film's narrative comes to a close some eight minutes before the picture actually finishes, with the boy Boriska weeping in the mud and the painter Andrei breaking his vow of silence to console him. But then, overlapping with a final image of a smouldering fire, which speaks of divine and creative embers, Tarkovsky dissolves into a sequence of images showing the real Andrei Rublev's icons. For more than eight minutes, close-ups and focused zooms track across his meticulous strokes of paint. Often these shots are so close to the wood of the icon that the overall resemblance of the image is lost.

Some are notably recognisable, though, like one of the final images shown - the icon for which Andrei Rublev is probably best known: *Trinity*. By letting the film give way to these images, Tarkovsky allows his fictional representation to dissolve and merge with the appearance of Rublev's own art as historical artefacts. The effect is to fuse Tarkovsky's representation of Andrei Rublev as a Christ figure, with Rublev's own representations of Christ and the saints. Thus, the film does not end with the merely analogical or symbolic figuring of Christ in the character of Rublev, though this is deeply important to the film. Rather, as Turovskaya puts it, "*Andrei Rublev* ended after the story proper, in the calm light of the *Trinity*."⁵¹² In the extreme close-ups of this final sequence, in the inflections of paint against the vivid texture of wood, the film screen seems to brush against the icons, as if the camera might touch them. Through this visual and haptic intimacy, the distance between appearance, representation and re-presentation is challenged, perhaps even closed, and the icons themselves are reincorporated into Tarkovsky's film image.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is concerned with the theological power of film; that is to say, the perceptive and affective potentials of the medium for theology. While an exhaustive account of Tarkovsky's Christ figures would require far more attention, the discussion above is intended not just as an analysis of particular examples of Christ figures in his films, but as an analysis of the representational - and therefore christological - function that they have in his art. This function, which depends on the cinema's capacity for mimesis, is one manifestation of the wider incarnational significance of cinema.

⁵¹² Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 79.

Crucially, the incarnational significance of the art form is not limited to the content of what is represented. It is not only what is reconstituted and reincorporated in the film image that can bear theological significance, but the nature of cinematic imaging itself. To put it in practical terms, the theological power of film relies on far more than simply filming a religious story. In many ways, this chapter has been concerned with what this 'more' means, and it has argued that the answer lies in the twin economies of discernment and response.

For, ultimately, the doctrine of the incarnation constitutes a call to live and love in the flesh of the world. The first half of this chapter sought to outline the theological context of this call, focussing on some of the earliest articulations of the doctrine; especially that the Word made flesh "came to what was his own" (John 1:11). From this point, in dialogue with contemporary christology and taking recourse from the phenomenological method that underlies this thesis, I argued that the gospel representation reveals Christ as a pedagogy for embodied being in the world (*être au monde*); a pedagogy of how to *be* a body, surrounded by other bodies. The heart of this pedagogy is the vocation to take the corporeal world seriously as a site of divine experience and encounter, much in the way that Loughlin suggests in his description of discipleship following the ascension: "his [Christ's] touch is their [the disciples'] embrace."⁵¹³ At the same time, through film-phenomenology and Laura Marks' haptic criticism, I conceptualised cinema as somatic and haptic contact with the corporeal world. In doing so, I sought to open up the possibility that film can become a way of discerning and responding to this vocation; that is, a way of living incarnationally in(to) the world.

⁵¹³ Loughlin, *Alien Sex*, p. 266.

The second half of this chapter focused on how the twin economies of discernment and response are inextricably connected with representation, and especially representation across time. Drawing on the christology of Graham Ward, I argued that mimesis is the key to understanding the role of representation in these economies, for the theological movements of call and response depend on the inseparable layers of presentation, representation and re-presentation which are contained and compressed within the mimetic schema. The same processes of mimesis are vital to the medium of film. As Marks suggests, filmic representation depends on a certain haptic contact with the world, where the film image 'presses up against' the phenomena it witnesses and 'takes their shape'. In this way, to experience film is to be thrown into the flesh of the world, materially and temporally, as objects are translated not only across sensoria but also across time; as such, they are *fossilised*, in a similar sense to Deleuze's use of the word in *Cinema II: The Time-Image*.

The vocation revealed in the doctrine of the incarnation is to represent Christ mimetically in one's own life; to press up against him and take his shape, and so to live and love in the temporal and material flesh of the world. Recalling Lissa McCullough's words, "our existential task is not to live disincarnationally toward God but to live into the world incarnationally in faith."⁵¹⁴ Film, as an embodied and enfleshed medium of perceiving the world, as a form of representation facilitated by haptic and somatic contact with the phenomena it witnesses, is an art form through which we can discern and respond to this call. This response will be loving in character, insofar as it will focus on the embodied encounter with the other that manifests in the film experience, which was the subject of Chapter II. It will be attentive and contemplative in character, insofar as it will cherish the corporeality of

⁵¹⁴ McCullough, "Prayer and Incarnation," p. 211.

creation, which was the subject of Chapter IV. And the entirety of this response will depend on the materiality of the medium, on 'the flesh of the cinematic image', which is a surprising condition for a loving response to the incarnation. As Marks writes, not necessarily realising the theological or incarnational significance of her words:

If every object and event is irreducible in its materiality, then part of learning to touch it is to come to love its particularity, its strangeness, its precious and inimitable place in the world. [...] Part of materialism, then, is celebrating the uniqueness of the other. Things, people, and moments pass, they age and die and can never be duplicated; so materialism's close corollary is cherishing.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Marks, *Touch*, p. xii.

VII

Eschatology

The doctrine of the incarnation hums with the rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment. When theology foregrounds the incarnation, when theological expression orients itself around the epicentre of the body of Christ, it discerns promise and fulfilment, and in the space between it incubates hope and anticipation of a further fulfilment to come.⁵¹⁶ The twin economies of discernment and response are infused with this anticipation; the Christian theologian acutely perceives the contours of promise and pre-donation in the body, life and resurrection of Christ, sharpening these contours by expressing a response of hope and desire, culminating with the ultimate anticipation of some future consummation with this body. Without this hopeful anticipation, the doctrine of the incarnation will be delivered stillborn, devoid of a life beyond some petrification in the history of thought and unable to shape the life of faith in the world now. The effects of this would not be merely abstract: without these rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, the sacraments would lose the integrity of their significance; the Church would lose the integrity of her mission. Yet, within the Christian faith, the Church remains a body of incarnational hope, and the sacraments continue to prefigure communion with God. Hope and anticipation, then, remain vital to the theological tradition, and it is in this way that the doctrine of the

⁵¹⁶ This is the basic schema of Christian eschatology: Christ, who comes in the gospel narrative, comes in fulfilment of promises in the Hebrew Bible (such as Isaiah 7:14, or 2 Samuel 7:12-13, or indeed the servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah). After his life and resurrection, the disciples can discern more promises; of the resurrection of the body, of mission, and of the Church. The disciples then believe and teach in the light of Christ's fulfilment, at the same time living in hope and anticipation of fulfilment to come.

incarnation is indissolubly connected with the doctrine of eschatology.

This chapter, therefore, progresses the preceding discussion of the incarnation in order to address the inseparable subject of eschatology; the third doctrine in Part Two's triptych of theological-cinematic reflection. What theological concepts emerge from cinematic art in light of the doctrine of eschatology? What could theological ideas about 'the last things' possibly have to do with the making and viewing of film, and what might the art form teach us about the eschatological dimensions of human existence? In answering these questions, this chapter will need to trace some of the key theological arcs within the history of the doctrine.⁵¹⁷ It will be important to examine the primary ways in which the concept of the eschaton has been interpreted, and it will be important to examine how these interpretations, which inform so much of our culture, have shaped the way that filmmakers and other artists depict or configure the 'end times' in their narrative and visual content.

At the same time, this chapter must ask why such portrayals of the 'end times' are so ubiquitous in the medium; what is it about the art form which leads filmmakers to envision the eschaton, conceiving of it as apocalypse or apotheosis, utopia or dystopia, recapitulation or even annihilation (as with the ending of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*)? Ultimately, this chapter will argue that the eschatological significance of cinema extends beyond allegorical and symbolic renderings of the eschaton, for film has the capacity to encapsulate and perform the eschatological movements which characterise human being in the world. In other words, the eschatological significance of cinema is not limited to films whose story envisions the 'end times' narratively or

⁵¹⁷ A comprehensive account of the doctrine of eschatology is beyond the scope of just one chapter. Instead, I aim to curate some of the work which has already excavated the key aspects of eschatology in recent years. In this way, I will add my own emphasis and nuance to the present discourse, rather than attempting any kind of exhaustive analysis, which would be overly ambitious here.

thematically. Rather, the eschatological significance of cinema is experiential and performative; the film experience is shaped by the most familiar rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, such that film art can, by virtue of the medium itself, uncover the eschatological dimensions of our being in the world.

Three sections follow. The first contextualises this thesis' understanding of eschatology within recent systematic theology, identifying 'hope' as a crucial principle of the doctrine and remarking on some of the key ways in which eschatology manifests in narrative and visual art. The second section engages Tarkovsky in close theological-cinematic analysis, focussing on the concept of the apocalyptic in the director's eschatology and examining this in dialogue with two of his films. Finally, in the third section, I will progress from the 'textual' analysis of individual films and undertake an experiential analysis of cinema and the filmic medium itself. Following the phenomenological methodology of this thesis, I once again adopt the Merleau-Pontian language of 'being in (and towards) the world' (*être au monde*) in order to explore the eschatological significance of the film experience to its fullest extent.

1. ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS ARTISTIC MANIFESTATIONS

ESCHATOLOGY AFTER THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Since the earliest days of the Church, the doctrine of eschatology has shaped the lives of Christians with urgency. Whether through various forms of millenarianism,⁵¹⁸ or the acutely felt eschatological 'coming' of the early Church, or even through the

⁵¹⁸ The belief of an imminent thousand year period of blessedness which begins or climaxes with the second coming of Christ.

simplest existential and eschatological pressure of one's own death, believers have always lived in the shadow and hopeful anticipation of the doctrine of the 'last things'. The sources for eschatology are biblical and traditional, developing out of certain discernable 'promises' in the New Testament and patristic literature: such as the promise of the resurrection of the body, or the promise of final judgement. As such, the doctrine of eschatology is necessarily dependent on the concept of revelation (which should be unsurprising, given the significance of The Book of Revelation as a source of the doctrine). Ultimately, beyond any individual or specific actuality of the end times, what is revealed in the doctrine of eschatology is a Christian meta-narrative;⁵¹⁹ that is, a comprehensive narrative encompassing scripture and history which illustrates the meaning of all reality according to the Christian worldview.

This meta-narrative retroactively gives meaning to the doctrines of creation and incarnation, as well as other aspects of Christian thought. By projecting backwards from eschatological hope and anticipation, the theological understanding of biblical narratives is transformed. One prominent example of this comes in the form of theodicy, through the concept of *felix culpa* (literally a 'fortunate fault', and extrapolated in the context of Genesis and the philosophical problem of evil to become a notion of 'fortunate Fall'). *Felix culpa* refers to a fortunate sin in the sense that this sin leads directly to the gospel (good news) of Christ. After all (so the argument runs), if the Fall had not occurred, there would have been no need for Christ's saving act and therefore no incarnation. Articulated as early as the 4th century, in the work of St Ambrose of Milan and even in liturgy such as the Exsultet in the Paschal Mass, the idea of *felix culpa* has been reiterated across the centuries. In 1384, for example, John

⁵¹⁹ I borrow this phrase from Richard Bauckham, among others. See, by way of introduction: Richard Bauckham and Trevor A. Hart, *Hope against Hope: Christian Eschatology in Contemporary Context* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1999).

Wycliffe preached in a sermon that “it was a fortunate sin that Adam sinned [...] as a result of this the world was made better.”⁵²⁰ This (re)interpretation of the Fall and the doctrine of original sin depends entirely on eschatology, and the idea that the Fall will be made worthwhile in the eschaton. This demonstrates the extensive reach of the meta-narrative facilitated by the doctrine, which has the potential to transform theology beyond the parameters of the ‘end times’ themselves.

Through this meta-narrative, eschatology has shaped the quotidian lives of believers in various ways over the centuries. Examining this, Judith Wolfe identifies two main dimensions through which the doctrine has guided believers’ understanding of Christian life: the moral dimension, and the historical; “Morally, [eschatology] set all actions within the purview of an omniscient judgement to come [...] Historically, the promise ordered all events within a divine drama leading through anguish to triumph.”⁵²¹ The first of these has always been present in any theology of the ‘last things’, including in traditions beyond Christianity, such as in the Buddhist cycle of Samsara (beginning-less rebirth). Yet it is the second of these dimensions, the historical, which became particularly important within the Christian theology of recent centuries. This was, in large part, due to Western theology’s response to the Enlightenment, as one conventional model of eschatology began to give way to another.

Broadly speaking, before the Enlightenment the dominant eschatological model was one drawn from a literal interpretation of the biblical tradition. This precipitated an

⁵²⁰ John Wycliffe, *Select English Works of John Wyclif; Edited from Original Mss. by Thomas Arnold* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896) sermon XC, I, pp. 320-321.

⁵²¹ Judith Wolfe, “Hope (Eschatology in the 20th Century)” in the forthcoming volume: Philip Ziegler [ed.] *The Edinburgh Critical History of Christian Theology*, vol 6. *The Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). Chapter available unpaginated on Wolfe’s academia.edu page.

eschatology where the transcendent God would, at the end of earthly time, come to judge all of his creation in the manner similar to that depicted in The Book of Revelation. However, as Wolfe succinctly puts it, the Enlightenment brought with it a “crisis of revelation”⁵²² which challenged this model. With the Enlightenment and its corresponding emphasis on rationality over authority, Christian appeals to revelation were cast under a growing scepticism; everything from the scholastic ‘proofs’ for God’s existence to the literalist interpretations of the eschaton were scrutinised with new intensity.

Kant stands at the precipice of this shift in the tectonics of Western thought, particularly on account of his epistemological ‘roadblock’, as it appears in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. While a conclusive exposition of Kant’s critique and the vast doctrine (or doctrines) of transcendental idealism is far beyond the scope of this chapter,⁵²³ I wish to use this phrase (‘epistemological roadblock’) in order to indicate the way that Kant’s philosophy precludes the acquisition of what he terms noumenal knowledge. For Kant, ‘things themselves’ (*Dinge an sich*, that is, suprasensible noumena, rather than their perceptible, phenomenal appearance) remain ultimately unknowable. This would include the contents of revelation, given the form of knowledge that revelation purports to confer. As far as eschatology is concerned, the effect of this was transformative; Wolfe even describes this as a shift in the very method of theology as an enterprise: “From Kant and Schleiermacher onwards, theologians no longer felt able to rely solely on biblical testimony for their assessment of moral action or their expectation of the direction and end of history.”⁵²⁴ And so theologians needed to move

⁵²² *Ibid.*

⁵²³ For a comprehensive introduction to Kant’s metaphysics, which includes a detailed discussion of these epistemological challenges, see Adrian Moore’s lengthy chapter on Kant in his book *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics: Making Sense of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 107-142.

⁵²⁴ Wolfe, “Hope (Eschatology in the 20th Century).”

away from previous understandings of revelation in order to develop the doctrine of eschatology in new ways.

The major eschatological model which emerged from this shift emphasised historical progressivism. Teleological in its worldview, this model perceived an interior movement of creation whereby God guided all things towards union with him (this union being the eschaton). The greatest implication of this model was the historicisation of eschatology; the notion that the historical narrative could be assimilated into the meta-narrative of Christian eschatology, becoming a kind of dramatic and temporal progression towards utopia. The Jesuit palaeontologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was an intriguing exponent of this eschatological model, whose work drew on evolutionary science in order to argue for a progressionist theology of all creation.⁵²⁵ Human history, according to this model, was to be viewed as a kind of evolution over time towards the divine perfection that creation was always intended to realise. The notion of an eschatological progression inherent to creation is far from original, however, and it features prominently in Augustine's theology, among others. In fact, Augustine's eschatology offers significant insight that should not be neglected in the post-Enlightenment context. He anticipates much of the discourse which responds to Kant, and - especially given his invaluable contributions to the philosophy of time (particularly in *Confessions* XI) - he offers an important treatment of the relationship between history and eschatology. I will say much more about Augustine's eschatology later, in the third section of this chapter.

After the Enlightenment, however, by far the biggest challenge to the progressionist

⁵²⁵ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

eschatological model came in the 20th century, when the West was confronted with the profound suffering of the World Wars and the abhorrent reality of the Holocaust. How could theologians still maintain that human history was moving incrementally and inexorably towards utopia, when so much suffering had revealed the worst of human action? More disturbingly, how could any eschatological reality ever make right the horrors of the 20th century? It quickly became clear that human history cannot bear the eschatological burden which the progressionist model puts upon it. And so, after the events of the Second World War, the question of how to conceive of the eschaton was cast in a new light, and scholars returned to New Testament and early Church traditions with the hope of retrieving some understanding of the doctrine that might have been lost.

Crucially, it was an experiential focus which these post-war scholars recovered. The experience of the early Christians, “afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, carrying in the body the death of Jesus,”⁵²⁶ suddenly became a resource for making sense of the recent suffering that had overturned Western theology in the 20th century. Out of this *ressourcement*, the theme of hope re-emerged as “the dominant mood of eschatology.”⁵²⁷ There was, however, an important difference between the hope that had characterised the lives of the early Christians and the hope that now became the focus of modern theological thought. This can be condensed simply as anticlimax, for the apocalyptic and urgent hope of the early Church had seemed to anticipate an imminent second coming of Christ. This climax never arrived, however, and the hope which re-emerged in the post-war theologies of the West was always going to differ from that which characterised eschatology in the early Church, insofar as the pressure of an imminent ‘End’ now

⁵²⁶ Wolfe, “Hope (Eschatology in the 20th Century).”

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

seemed irrecoverable.

It is for this reason that Jürgen Moltmann adopted the category of Advent in his eschatology. Moltmann stands at the forefront of this post-war emphasis on hope, famously writing *Theology of Hope* in 1967. Crucially, Moltmann's theology is intimately connected with personal experience, and particularly with his conversion experience as a prisoner of war. Wolfe sums up Moltmann's distinct contribution to eschatology succinctly, observing the key theological move he makes relative to the trajectory of the doctrine in Christian thought: what Moltmann did, Wolfe suggests, was to "reverse the causal relationship between past and future, arguing that the future is not determined by past actions and happenings, but rather comes to determine the meaning of the past from its end."⁵²⁸ Once again, it is important to note that the reversal of this causal relationship is not original to Moltmann's theology, even though he certainly shaped post-war eschatology in new ways.

What is original in Moltmann's work, however, is his use of "Advent as eschatological category."⁵²⁹ In a section titled 'The Eschatology of the Coming God', Moltmann distinguishes between 'future' and 'Advent': "*Futurum* means what will be; *adventus* means what is coming."⁵³⁰ This distinction, according to Moltmann, is essential because of the implications it has for hope as the focus of eschatology. To summarise Moltmann's argument, the category of 'future' can never prime or facilitate hope simply by virtue of looking ahead in time, while the category of 'advent' - as the theological perspective oriented towards that which is 'coming' - does open up the eschatological hope that theology needs to pursue. As he puts it himself, "The future

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004) p. 6.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

offers no special reason for hope, for the past predominates, inasmuch as that which is not yet, will one day no longer be [...] Only the idea of the coming God, and the advent concept of time which is in accord with him, open up categories for eschatology."⁵³¹ So, in the category of Advent, Moltmann finds a present-future that facilitates hope far more urgently and realistically than a futurist perspective can ever do. To put roundly: eschatological hope is founded on that which *is coming*, and not that which *will come*.

Moltmann's contribution to eschatology, and his emphasis on hope as a fundamental principle of the doctrine, should not be underestimated, particularly given its context in 20th century theology. His category of Advent mediates between a removed, transcendent eschatology and the over-historicisation of the doctrine. Appealing to Christian experience (especially in the early Church) as well as biblical revelation, this can be seen as an attempt to navigate a way between the epistemological 'roadblock' raised by Kant and the limitations of the historical progressionism which emerged in response to the enlightenment. Whether Moltmann is entirely successful is a question to be resolved through further analysis another time. For now, though, his place in 20th century eschatology and the broader developments of the doctrine in post-Enlightenment thought are vital contexts for this chapter to build on. Above all else, Advent in Moltmann's theology of hope is constituted by the incarnational rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, which provide the framework for understanding the eschatological dimensions of human existence, and which will be explored in the later sections of this chapter.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

There is one other vital context which needs to be addressed before this chapter engages Tarkovsky in close textual analysis: the relationship between art and eschatology. This relationship runs profoundly deep, and artists have envisioned or configured the 'last things' of Christian theology for hundreds of years. At least as much as any other aspect of theological thought, if not more, the doctrine of eschatology has always been open to the power of the human imagination. Medieval and Renaissance painters frequently imaged the eschaton, both within churches and on the canvas. Frescos depicting *The Last Judgement* are common, including Giotto's 13th century fresco in Padua, and of course Michaelangelo's famous *Il Giudizio Universale* in the Sistine Chapel. Beyond church walls, hundreds of medieval manuscripts are illuminated with eschatological images, for example of the Hellmouth, which was a popular trope for centuries.⁵³² And the eschatological, of course, has never been limited to the domain of visual art; from Virgil's *Aeneid* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, literary artists have also represented the 'last things' of religious mythology in their craft.

Notably, the above examples are explicit representations of eschatological reality, often conceived of via scriptural and apostolic revelation. Not all eschatological art is so explicit or unequivocal in its focus, however. Towards the end of the renaissance period, some artists (and mostly literary artists) began to treat eschatological themes through political theory and even through satire. One intriguing example of this approach, which probes the boundaries between art, eschatology, and politics, is Sir Thomas More's book *Utopia*, published in Latin in 1516 and then again in English in

⁵³² For one particularly popular example of an illumination of the Hellmouth, see: New York, Morgan Library, MS M.917/945, p. 180–f. 97r in *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*.

1551, sixteen years after More's execution. This is the first time we see the word 'utopia' in the Anglosphere, the etymology of which is Greek: οὐ τοπος (literally, 'not-a-place' or 'nowhere').⁵³³ More's book details the socio-political and religious life of the fictional island 'Utopia', with the character of Hythloday presenting life on the island as the best possible form of human society (it is unclear what More's own view is, however). The island therefore represents the paradisiacal through the political; as an ideal end of human society and culture.

Given the hybrid of religious and political concern in the book, and given that More supposedly lectured on *De Civitate Dei* in 1501,⁵³⁴ some scholars have suggested that *Utopia* configures the ideal earthly union of Augustine's two cities.⁵³⁵ While much of Utopia's society is Christian, living a lifestyle which resembles the structure of 15th and 16th century monasticism, many of Utopia's inhabitants are pagan and some are atheist, and yet all religions live in humble tolerance of each other.⁵³⁶ Politically, More's vision appears to be proto-socialist: Utopia has a welfare state with free hospitals; meals are shared in communal halls and every household on the island takes turns preparing food; divorce is permitted among the island's Christians; and, perhaps most surprisingly of all given More's 16th century Catholicism, women are ordained in the Church.⁵³⁷ The distinct contribution of *Utopia*, then, is to inscribe eschatological themes like salvation, harmony, communion, and fair judgement into the political and

⁵³³ In the original Latin version, More observed the proximity of οὐ τοπος with εὖ τοπος (the latter meaning 'good-place'). Perhaps this play on words reveals an underlying critique of the society More presents, which a number of readers have suggested More sees as impractical, even if ideal.

⁵³⁴ Martin N. Raitiere, "More's Utopia and The City of God," *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 20, no. 20 (1973): pp. 144.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.* The influence of *De Civitate Dei* on More's *Utopia* is the principle investigation of Raitiere's article.

⁵³⁶ More even writes that every Utopian engages in a daily ritual during which they pray that they "are of a religion which they hope is the truest of all others; but, if they are mistaken, and if there is either a better government, or a religion more acceptable to God, they implore His goodness to let them know it." Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1551. (Text prepared by David Price.)

⁵³⁷ Despite these elements of liberalism, the limitations of More's historical context are apparent in the book, particularly in the fact that slavery exists as a punishment for a variety of crimes on the island.

worldly structures of earthly existence.

Since More, it has become common for artists to configure eschatological themes within worldly and political life. Of course, More can by no means take credit for this entirely; Plato's *Republic*, for example, has had a vast impact on Western thought and literature. In fact, More seems to have derived the structure of his book from Plato, first critiquing current political structures and then imagining a new, ideal structure, just as Plato does; after all, More's island of Utopia enacts a similar literary function to Plato's city of Kallipolis. At the same time, Augustine's influence on this convergence between the eschatological and the political should not be overlooked either. Indeed, his two cities come together in the world, such that his eschatology cannot be treated aside from the concept of worldliness. As Michael J. Scanlon suggests, in Augustine's eschatology "history is the commingling of two cities, the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei*," and, "while it is true that the two cities have two very different destinies, they are both in the world."⁵³⁸ Over time, and also in response to political-religious utopianism, dystopian fiction also emerged, offering another valency to the proliferation and critique of eschatological themes in literature. Eventually, of course, the popularity of utopian and dystopian storytelling exploded in the 20th and 21st centuries, with novels like H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* paving the way for fiction like Huxley's *Brave New World*, as well as other politically minded work like that of Orwell and, more recently, Margaret Atwood.

Whether through the utopian conceptualisation of an ideal future or through critical dystopian warning, literature such as this participates in the hopeful pursuit of a 'heavenly' reality in the world now. 'Hope' (both in the form of hopefulness and

⁵³⁸ Michael J. Scanlon, "Eschatology " in: Allan Fitzgerald [ed.] *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 1999) p. 317.

hopelessness) is the interpretive key to such literature, especially - and perhaps counterintuitively - to dystopian literature, where characters become conduits for the hope that they might shatter the dystopian structures of their worlds, which are also the dystopian undertones of our world. The theological significance of this hope is soteriological; it becomes a matter of redemption insofar as such characters work to redeem their societies from their fall into dystopia. Crucially, this is 'hope' in the same present-future sense which led Moltmann to deploy Advent as an eschatological category; it is not hope directed towards a distant future but to an already-coming present. For example, Orwell wrote *1984* because he feared that the novel's reality was fast approaching; he did not see that dystopian world as a discrete and intangible future, but as an already-coming reality. Utopian-dystopian literature is a prime example of one way that eschatology manifests in narrative art; it depends on the principle of hope and often becomes a cipher for soteriological themes like redemption, allowing artists to conceptualise the 'last things' while inscribing eschatological concerns into our politics and culture.

Many works of 20th and 21st century cinema engage eschatology in similar ways. Although a vast number of films do tell utopian or dystopian stories, eschatology has also manifested more directly in film. Through the medium's distinct narrative and audio-visual form, filmmakers have represented biblical or traditional visions of the eschaton allegorically and figuratively, and not only through political or cultural rubric. Peter Groves, for example, identifies the scene in *The Godfather* where Michael rushes through the hospital to protect Vito Corleone as a re-imaging of the Harrowing of Hell.⁵³⁹ Indeed, within recent studies of theology and film, much has been made of the eschatological preoccupations of mainstream cinema. Scholars like Christopher

⁵³⁹ From Groves' forthcoming book on *The Godfather* series of films.

Deacy and Gaye Ortiz have engaged film and eschatology in a “two-way dialogical conversation,”⁵⁴⁰ deploying theological hermeneutics alongside narrative and thematic readings of certain films in order to explore various eschatological ideas. These ideas are often widely accessible; available to the viewer via narrative allegory, such as with *Field of Dreams*, or substantiated by a clear visual allusion, like the paradisaical beach at the end of *The Shawshank Redemption*. I will expand briefly on these two examples now. In doing so, the cinematic modes of engaging eschatology will become clearer, and this will open up the analyses of Tarkovsky to come in the following section.

Field of Dreams (1989) tells the story of Ray Kinsella, who hears a mysterious (and mystical) voice tell him, “Build it, and he will come.” Kinsella discerns that the voice wants him to build a baseball field, and this field becomes a distinctly eschatological space in the film. It hosts long dead baseball players, who seem to pass through from the afterlife via the threshold of the surrounding cornfield. These ghosts appear to Kinsella while remaining imperceptible to most other characters. As the narrative progresses, Kinsella emerges as a deliverer of other lost souls, bringing several troubled characters to rest at the field, where they find peace and eventually pass on through the line of the cornfield as if through a veil. In the end, the baseball field configures a redemptive union and reconciliation between Kinsella and his late father, while countless more souls are drawn to the farm, arriving in an endless line of cars, the headlights shining in the night like the lights of souls seeking some deliverance.⁵⁴¹ The film, then, is an allegory of death and afterlife, mythologising the eschaton as an endless game of baseball, culminating with a story of personal redemption and

⁵⁴⁰ Christopher Deacy, *Screening the Afterlife: Theology, Eschatology, and Film* (London: Routledge, 2012) p. ix.

⁵⁴¹ Figure 22.

reconciliation.

Similarly, much has been made of the eschatological significance of *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994).⁵⁴² Importantly, hope is the vital theme of the film, realised in its strongest eschatological form when Red reads Andy's letter towards the end of the film: "Remember, Red, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. And no good thing ever dies." This letter, and the hope that it conveys, calls Red to the Mexican beach on which the film ends. There, on a paradisiacal shore, with golden sands and the brightest blue of the Pacific, the film concludes with a vision of the eschaton.⁵⁴³ It is a heavenly image, accomplished with a crane shot that zooms out until the beach, Andy and Red are held in the bottom right ninth of the frame, while the entire top third of the frame is marked by the infinity of the ocean horizon. What is more, the last line of the film, a voiceover from Red just before he makes this final journey, reiterates hope as the crucial theme of this eschatological vision: "I hope I can make it across the border. I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope."

Cinema, both mainstream and otherwise, is rich with eschatological visions such as these. Tarkovsky's work is no exception. He treats eschatology across the various genres of his oeuvre, and always in relation to the doctrines of creation and incarnation. We have already seen, for example, that the eschatological space at the end of *Solaris* must be understood through the theology of creation (Chapter V), and it will become clear in the discussion below that the eschatology of *Stalker* is inseparable from the christological allegory manifest in the film's protagonist. The next section will engage Tarkovsky in close theological-cinematic analysis, exploring

⁵⁴² See especially Deacy's *Screening the Afterlife*, throughout which the film features heavily.

⁵⁴³ Figure 23.

the eschatological significance of his films *Stalker* and *The Sacrifice* through an important theological concept which is embodied very differently in each of these pictures: the apocalyptic. Following the textual analysis of these films, the third and final section of this chapter will interpret the medium of cinema itself, exploring the wider eschatological significance of filmic expression and experience. Ultimately, I will argue that this significance is experiential and performative; it extends beyond allegorical or symbolic representations of the eschaton, as cinema encapsulates and performs the eschatological movements of our being in the world.

2. TARKOVSKY'S APOCALYPTIC VISIONS: *STALKER* AND *THE SACRIFICE*

It is plain to see that eschatology is a clear theological focus in Tarkovsky's oeuvre. Through the dead tree in the final image of *Ivan's Childhood*, or the recreated garden on the surface of the planet Solaris, or through *Nostalghia's* remarkable 'afterlife' vision of Gorchakov, sat by his childhood home and yet within the ruins of an enormous cathedral, Tarkovsky envisions and re-envisions the eschaton throughout his work. At first glance, it may seem that there is little to connect his treatment of eschatology from film to film. I argue, however, that the eschatological visions of Tarkovsky's seven films are united by the concept of the apocalyptic. I mean this in the clearest sense of the first word in the Book of Revelation: ἀποκαλυψις (*apokalypsis*), which comes from the verb ἀποκαλυπτειν (*apokaluptein*), meaning 'to uncover'. This word, which of course is rendered as 'revelation', connotes a movement of uncovering or unveiling, such that we might understand John's initial vision in 1:9-20 as an "unveiling [ἀποκαλυψις] of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place" (Revelation 1:1). Theologically, the appearance of God,

which is to say divine presence and revelation, is to be understood through such movements of veiling and unveiling; for God must be understood - at least insofar as theologians can make sense of the divine presence - as “a hidden God” (Isaiah 45:15).⁵⁴⁴ By understanding the apocalyptic as a kind of unveiling, Tarkovsky’s eschatological concerns come in to focus. This section engages *Stalker* and *The Sacrifice*, both of which foreground the apocalyptic, but which treat the concept in very different ways.

THE VEILING AND UNVEILING OF DESIRE: *STALKER*

Tarkovsky’s fifth film, *Stalker*, is shaped by the recursive gestures of veiling and unveiling desire. The film’s genre is science-fiction and, more precisely, post-apocalyptic science-fiction. It is set in some near but dateless future, following an unclear apocalyptic event, which the opening scroll-text speculates might have been “a meteorite” or “a visit from inhabitants of the cosmic abyss.” In the wake of this event, this opening text tells us, the world has seen “the birth of a miracle - the Zone.” The Zone becomes a profoundly eschatological motif. It is a mystical and mythologised landscape, at the heart of which lies a paranormal space referred to only as the Room. Whoever makes it across the Zone and enters the Room will see their innermost desires become reality - desires which characters are not always aware they possess. Through this conceptual device, Tarkovsky aligns the Room with the veiled interiority of desire: this is not a space where one can perform desire, articulating it as

⁵⁴⁴ The hiddenness of God has influenced theologians for centuries, both in the apophatic tradition and beyond. Luther, for example, articulated the hiddenness of God through his dialectic of the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus*. For a good summary, see: Marius Timmann Mjaaland, *The Hidden God: Luther, Philosophy, and Political Theology* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016). Before Luther, Nicholas de Cusa celebrated the hiddenness of God in his 1442 dialogue *On the Hiddenness of God*. See: Nicholas de Cusa [trans. H. L. Bond], *Selected Spiritual Writings* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1997) pp. 207-214.

if ‘making a wish’;⁵⁴⁵ rather, this is a space which draws out and *unveils* hidden desire from the depths of the soul. And so, the Room inspires pilgrims; those who would risk the passage across the military perimeter and venture into the Zone to pursue the realisation and fulfilment of their innermost desires. The Zone and the Room, then, also become categories of that vital eschatological principle identified in the previous section: hope. In this way, the lines between desire and hope are interrogated, and the two operate in parallel throughout the film, drawing together threads of narrative, characterisation and thematic content.

In the first instance, hope and desire drive the film’s narrative. The plot is set in motion when two characters, known only as ‘the Writer’ and ‘the Professor’, come to the Zone seeking the Room and the fulfilment of desire as a cipher for the resolution of their own personal crises. The Writer, suffering from something like writer’s block, has come in search of inspiration; the Professor, who is initially reticent about his purposes, has come to destroy the Room in order to save the world from the chaos he believes it would unleash. They enlist the help of the eponymous ‘Stalker’, one of the pseudo-alien individuals who guide pilgrims through the dangers of the Zone. The Stalker, who appears at least as some kind of Christ figure,⁵⁴⁶ and who undergoes a journey of messianic passion in the film (see the discussion of Christ figures in the previous chapter), is also in the throes of his own spiritual crisis, losing faith in those whom he wishes to help find their salvation at the threshold of the Room. As Turovskaya describes him, “he stands forth as an apostle and a martyr for hope [...] there is a painful, unfinished quality about him, a feeling of great human potential

⁵⁴⁵ Tarkovsky in fact abandoned the working title ‘The Wish Machine’ for this very reason. Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁴⁶ The Stalker is a complex character and to categorise him directly as a Christ figure is probably too ‘neat’. Rather, like many of Tarkovsky’s characters, he *figures* certain christological concepts subtly and does not map neatly on to the conventional image of the Christ figure.

unable to find realisation and therefore doomed to wretched uselessness. He is an embodiment of the search for meaning, a supplication that remains unanswered at the end of the journey.”⁵⁴⁷ Here, even from the outset of the film’s narrative, the motifs of ‘boundary’ and the crossing over both of literal and metaphorical thresholds emerge as the key interpretative schema to the film; characters cross over physically into the Zone from the outside world, before making their way to the threshold of the Room, where the boundary between conscious and subconscious desire is also transgressed.

Tarkovsky marks the significance of boundaries and their transgression in the film through one of his favourite stylistic devices: the shifting tones of colour, sepia, and monochrome. The first part of the film, for example, which takes place outside of the Zone as the Stalker and the other characters prepare for their journey, is treated entirely with sepia tone. The subsequent transition into colour, which occurs abruptly as the three protagonists cross into the Zone, represents the transgression of some invisible (yet somehow perceptual) boundary as a transformation of perspective itself; the sudden saturation of the image signifies the sudden saturation of meaning for the characters - this is what they have risked so much to reach, this is “home at last” for the Stalker. Throughout the film Tarkovsky marks other perceptual and affective boundaries through a similar use of colour tone; the Stalker’s prayer triggers a rare shift to monochrome, for instance, while both of the Stalker’s dream sequences are lensed in sepia. Crucially, though, the use of these tones is not always consistent; even after the expected shift back to sepia once the characters have departed the Zone, Tarkovsky deploys two unexpected sequences in colour (both of the Stalker’s enigmatic daughter). Regardless of any consistent rubric which might underlie Tarkovsky’s use of these interchanging tones, their essential function as ‘colour’

⁵⁴⁷ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 112.

(including the lack of colour) necessarily involves the veiling and unveiling of the film image. Indeed, in the previous chapter I described Tarkovsky's use of colour tones as that of *fabrics* which clothe the cinematic image; the changing of these fabrics transforms the viewer's perception of the image, veiling and unveiling different aspects of reality within the film.

Probably the most conspicuous example of the way shifting colour tones operate as 'veils' can be seen in the film's use of dream. Dream is itself an unveiling of a sort, and, building on the overarching motif of boundaries in *Stalker*, Tarkovsky uses dream to probe the liminal spaces that surround the central character of the Stalker. Crucially, this is not some kind of psychological unveiling, as might be expected of a film made at a time when psychoanalysis was so popular in cinema.⁵⁴⁸ As Turovskaya observes in her analysis of *Stalker*, "Psychology, too, is banished. The actor's ability to create an autonomous character on screen was never a concern of Tarkovsky's, for whom actors were more of a medium."⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, rather than a psychological unveiling, dreams in the film appear to facilitate a symbolic unveiling; Turovskaya's suggestion that actors are a 'medium' for Tarkovsky refers to the symbolic capacity of certain characters in his films. A good example of this use of dream is the Stalker's dream sequence, where a single tracking shot traces the flowing detritus of a small stream until the eye of the camera comes to rest upon a fragment of the Ghent altarpiece.⁵⁵⁰ More than any other in the film, this dream sequence unveils the Stalker as a symbolic Christ figure, while the accompanying voiceover, of Revelation 6:13-17, picks up on the eschatological tremors reverberating throughout the film. This sequence is 'apocalyptic' in the clearest theological sense; the eschatological significance of the Zone and the Room is

⁵⁴⁸ Consider, for example, Tarkovsky's admiration for Bergman, whose work is famous for its engagement with psychoanalysis (especially in a film like *Persona*, for instance).

⁵⁴⁹ Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky*, p. 110.

⁵⁵⁰ Figure 24.

made inescapable through the voiceover and the christological imagery in the frame, while the dream also unveils the Stalker as a certain articulation of the 'Christ figure', still hidden from his companions but suddenly present to the viewer.

Ultimately, though, the apocalyptic is as much a measure of that which remains veiled as that which is unveiled, and the ending of *Stalker* is fascinating in this regard. Narratively, the journey into the Zone and in search of the Room is formed by the gesture of unveiling desire, yet, in the end, when the characters reach the threshold of the Room, they have been so transformed by their journey that none of them choose to enter after all. Uncertain of the outcome of entering the Room - which is to say, uncertain and untrusting of their innermost desires - the Writer and the Professor choose not to enter; they choose to preserve their desire in its veiled state. In this moment, as the diegetic soundtrack of an inexplicable, rattling train signals a transition to the world outside the Zone (and into sepia tone once again), it appears that the film will end in irreconcilable anticlimax; the characters' journey rendered as a vain circling of some endlessly deferred 'destination'. Yet Tarkovsky does not end the film with this mood of unfulfilment and hopelessness. In the film's ending, a coda to the events within the Zone that focuses on the Stalker, his wife, and his daughter, Tarkovsky unveils love as a counterpoint to the film's treatment of desire.

In fact, it is precisely because of the characters' choice to preserve their desire in its veiled state that the significance of love is unveiled. Once out of the Zone, the apparent hopelessness and anticlimax of the three protagonists' journey gives way to the presence of interpersonal, loving encounter. And, notably, one 'trinity' of characters gives way to another, as the focus on the Writer, Professor, and Stalker is replaced by a focus on the Stalker, his daughter, and above all his wife. Indeed, the Stalker's

nameless wife is the key to this ending and the unveiling of love in the film. As Tarkovsky describes her in a passage of *Sculpting in Time* which reflects on *Stalker*, she represents “a puzzling, to them [the Writer and Professor] incomprehensible, phenomenon.”⁵⁵¹ Equally puzzling and enigmatic is her remarkable soliloquy, where, in the penultimate scene of the entire film, she looks directly into the camera and delivers a monologue which sees the Stalker and all his faults through loving eyes.⁵⁵² The effect of this soliloquy is to stand as a counterpoint against the apparent anticlimax of the film; it stands as a hopeful ending to the film, against the hopelessness of an apparently failed journey. The scene can only accomplish this through the tender encounter between the Stalker and his wife which precedes her speech, as she comforts him while he weeps, undressing him and putting him to bed. It is love, then, which Tarkovsky unveils at the end of the film, positioning it as a counterpoint to the faithlessness and hopelessness that resulted in anticlimax and unfulfilment on the threshold of the Room. Almost seven years after *Stalker* was released, Tarkovsky emphasised exactly this in his reading of the film’s ending:

Her [the Stalker’s wife] love and her devotion are that final miracle which can be set against the unbelief, cynicism, moral vacuum, poisoning the modern world, of which both the Writer and the Scientist [the Professor] are victims [...] In *Stalker* I make some sort of complete statement: namely that human love alone is - miraculously - proof against the blunt assertion that there is no hope for the world.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵¹ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 198.

⁵⁵² Figure 25.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

If *Stalker* is in some sense post-apocalyptic, then the genre of *The Sacrifice* is aptly labelled apocalyptic, particularly given the film's various theological currents. *The Sacrifice* was the final film Tarkovsky made, before his death in December of 1986 (the film was released in May of that same year). It was also the only film that Tarkovsky made in Swedish, and which was shot in Sweden - a country with some significance for him given his admiration for Ingmar Bergman. In contrast to *Stalker*, which is set in a future after an apocalyptic event, *The Sacrifice* is set in the shadow of a coming apocalyptic event - or at least, in the shadow of a dream of such an event - namely, the nuclear annihilation of Europe in a third World War. The eschatological significance of hope, which in *Stalker* manifests first around belief in the power of the Room and then in the appearance of love, manifests in *The Sacrifice* through fear and hopelessness in the face of 'the end' and then in the hope for salvation from that end - whatever that salvation might look like.

Narratively, the film is straightforward. Alexander, a former actor and now a critic, lives with his wife, daughter, and young son (who is only ever called 'Little Man' in the film) in their rural house far in the Swedish countryside. On his birthday, Alexander returns home after planting a tree with Little Man and sharing an important conversation with the esoteric character of the postman, Otto. After this preamble, a jump from Little Man shocks Alexander and triggers the first in a series of apocalyptic dreams, in which he sees some unknown street strewn with rubble and an overturned, smoking husk of a car. That evening, with the family, their servants, the postman Otto, and the character of the doctor all gathered at Alexander's family home to celebrate his birthday, a news broadcast announces the imminent onset of

nuclear war, mentioning warheads and missiles which will be turned against their country at any moment. Despite having told Otto earlier that his relationship with God is nonexistent, Alexander suddenly and desperately turns to prayer. He pleads with God, asking him to undo the oncoming annihilation and promising that, if this apocalyptic end is avoided, he will give up everything that he loves in the world, his family, his home, and even Little Man, whom he loves dearly.

A long stretch of the film then follows Alexander and his family over the course of that night, which they believe is the last they will see before nuclear war consumes them. During this long, dark night of the film, with the viewer and characters suspended in the unknown, Otto tells Alexander that he might save them all if he sleeps with Maria, his housekeeper, whom Otto preposterously tells him is a witch, "in the best sense." Despite this bizarre and unimaginable proposal, and with nothing more left to lose, Alexander sets off into the night to Maria's house. There, after putting a gun to his head and begging "Don't kill us, Maria," the two lie together and Tarkovsky shows them levitating above her bed, wrapped in white sheets and revolving slowly in their mystical embrace.

The next morning Alexander wakes in his own room, in his own house. Everything appears normal and there is no sign of war. The whole dark night suddenly seems to have been a dream or hallucination. And yet Alexander nonetheless begins the grim task of fulfilling his vow to God. He tricks his family to go for a walk without him, before piling up furniture in the kitchen to form a bonfire. He sets the stack of his family possessions alight, starting with a bed sheet, and then he stumbles outside as the blaze takes hold, falling in one of the puddles which punctuate the surrounding field. Seeing the blaze from afar, his family come running back, but they can only

watch as the house is razed to the ground and Alexander runs madly around, trying to avoid paramedics who have appeared out of nowhere. Finally they seize him and throw him in the back of an ambulance, which drives off across the island. Some way down the road, away from the fire, Little Man watches the ambulance drive past before lying down beneath the barren tree that he and Alexander had planted at the beginning of the film. He looks up through its dead branches and repeats what Alexander had told him earlier, "In the beginning was the Word." And then he asks, "Why is that, Papa?" Tarkovsky pans skywards through the withered branches and pauses to hold them in one final frame against the shimmering backdrop of light playing on the ocean's surface. The film ends with a dedication to Tarkovsky's own son, "with hope and confidence."

The narrative drama of the film is intended as a parable of sacrifice and salvation, Tarkovsky tells us in an essay he wrote just before his death and which was added to a later edition of *Sculpting in Time*.⁵⁵⁴ In this essay the director revealed the original plot he had conceived for this film, which was simply to be called *The Witch*, and which was a far more esoteric and fantastical scenario. In this version, Tarkovsky reveals, there would have been no apocalyptic threat of nuclear war, but only the personal eschatological pressure of the protagonist's imminent death from cancer. When a soothsayer knocks on his door ("a forerunner of Otto in the final version,"⁵⁵⁵) he tells the protagonist to spend the night with a local woman "reputed to be a witch and possessed of magical powers."⁵⁵⁶ He obeys and, "through God's mercy,"⁵⁵⁷ is cured. Until this point, the similarities between this early conception and the final version of

⁵⁵⁴ This later edition of *Sculpting in Time* was reprinted in 2003: Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003) pp. 218-219.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The Sacrifice are apparent, but the ending would have differed radically: “one wretched, stormy night, the witch was to appear at Alexander's house, and at her bidding he happily left his splendid mansion and respected life and went off with her with nothing but the old coat on his back.”⁵⁵⁸

Despite the differences in these two stories, Tarkovsky believed that both represented a parable of sacrifice leading to some kind of salvation and spiritual healing. In Tarkovsky's eyes, both stories see the protagonist commit an act of self-sacrifice through which “he makes an offering of himself”⁵⁵⁹ to God. In this sense, Tarkovsky understands self-sacrifice literally; the ‘making sacred’ of oneself (*sacer facere*). What seems to interest Tarkovsky most about this kind of self-sacrifice is the relationship between the individual who seeks spiritual healing and the healing of society as a whole. He describes this as a choice to seek “not only [one's] personal salvation but also the saving of society at large: in other words, to turn to God.”⁵⁶⁰ Indeed, it is the idea that individual self-sacrifice also consecrates and heals society which is theologically important for Tarkovsky; in discovering personal spiritual healing, he suggests, an individual moves “closer to the state in which he can be responsible for society. That is the step which becomes a sacrifice, in the Christian sense of self-sacrifice.”⁵⁶¹ For Tarkovsky, then, sacrifice is a soteriological and political category; it is an act necessary for personal salvation and for the wider eschatological realisation of God's kingdom in the world now. This is why the eschatological pressure of nuclear war ultimately proved more fitting to Tarkovsky than the interior anxiety of one man's death; nuclear apocalypse becomes a symbol for a wider crisis facing society, which Tarkovsky perceived as “the threat posed by the relentless march of

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

technology."⁵⁶²

The nature of the film's eponymous sacrifice plays deliberately with biblical conventions and tropes. Alexander's offering is a literal burnt offering at the altar of 'home', that great, personal motif for Tarkovsky, who made the film while living itinerantly and 'nostalghically' after his exile from Russia. Yet it extends beyond the character's personal situation too; it is an offering and a sacrifice made for society, ostensibly to repay God for averting nuclear annihilation, as Alexander vowed he would in prayer, but metaphorically for the healing of society as a whole. Of course, it is a sacrifice cast in the mould of insanity, much like Domenico's sacrifice in *Nostalghia*; both films climax with a shocking moment of self-immolation that can only be explained by other characters as abject madness. In *Nostalghia*, Domenico shocks the crowd as he makes a burnt offering of himself, while Gorchakov struggles to take the candle across the drained pool in a parallel sacrifice, appearing a mad fool to onlookers. Similarly, Alexander's 'offering' in *The Sacrifice* seems so insane that it conjures paramedics out of thin air, who whisk him away, no doubt to a psychological care unit. In both examples, Tarkovsky's characters become strange prophets, driven mad by their apocalyptic visions and circumstance, and whose decisive actions are expressed through a prominent biblical image for divine speech and sacrifice - fire.

This apocalyptic madness also aligns characters like Alexander and Domenico with the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. Their behaviour seems as bizarre and as esoterically significant as in episodes like Ezekiel eating the scroll given by God (Ezekiel 3:3), or Isaiah's nude rambling (Isaiah 20). Indeed, the cries of the onlookers in Hosea 9:7 are often levelled at both protagonists: "The prophet is a fool, the man of

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

the spirit is mad!" And, like the prophets, the strange actions of Domenico and Alexander are driven by a call they perceive from God. What is more, in *The Sacrifice*, this prophetic call is received in part via the medium of dream. The film is punctuated by these dreams and, in a similar fashion to *Stalker*, each dream sequence is signified through a shift to monochrome. One again, then, Tarkovsky's shifting colour tones represent an unveiling of some interior truth or purpose in his protagonist.

Additionally, though (and this is where the use of dream in the film departs from that in *Stalker*), there is the strong suggestion that the entirety of the long, dark night which follows the announcement of nuclear war is itself a dream. This ambiguity is expressed cinematographically, too, as Tarkovsky leaves the images of this long night mostly unsaturated, so pale in colour that they are not dissimilar from the monochrome that has been used to signify dreams and other visions in the film. This ambiguity of image and veiled narrative is deliberate (as Tarkovsky reveals in his essay on the film),⁵⁶³ and it contrasts with and exaggerates the mad certainty of Alexander. By leaving the viewer uncertain of the film's reality, of the facts of the narrative, Alexander's absolute conviction in his course of action is rendered utterly alien. And, in the apocalyptic conflagration with which the film ends, as fire at once consumes and consecrates Alexander's offering of himself, the viewer - like the onlookers in Hosea 9:7 - can only wonder, despairingly, if his good intentions have descended madly into an absurd tragedy.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁵⁶⁴ Figure 26.

3. ESCHATOLOGY AND BEING IN THE WORLD

Eschatology is profoundly connected with the doctrine of the incarnation. The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ will always be at the conceptual and experiential centre of Christian eschatology. Indeed, while the 'End' towards which the doctrine is oriented has been articulated in various ways over the history of Christian thought, it can only be interpreted through the appearance of the body of Christ in the world and in history; in short, eschatology responds to the incarnation. The theologian discerns the contours of promise and pre-donation in the incarnate body of Christ, articulating a response of hope and anticipation of the fulfilment of this promise and of the consummation of this gift. In this way, and precisely because it responds to the incarnation, eschatology is concerned with human being in the world. This is evident from the various threads of this chapter's discussion; for example, categories like hope, promise, anticipation, fulfilment and unfulfilment are all vital to the doctrine of eschatology, and yet - crucially - they are also existential categories. This is because eschatology is not a matter of some removed and discontinuous future; eschatology weighs on the present, and the eschaton is powerful precisely because it can be perceived, promised, and anticipated in the present. This is why, as was outlined above, Moltmann adopts the category of Advent in his eschatology; eschatological hope is primed and facilitated by that which *is coming now*, and not merely that which *will come*.

In order to explain this more fully, it is necessary to draw on some of the insights which emerged in the previous chapter. For, if the incarnation is indeed a pedagogy of being in the world, if the task of the Christian believer is to mimetically re-present Christ in her quotidian life, then it follows that eschatology is also inescapably part of

the existential rhythms of the life of faith. If eschatology is indeed engaged through the twin economies of discernment and response, then it must be a dynamic aspect of the theologian's being in the world. Several crucial questions remain, however. What connects eschatology with our existential present? In what sense does *the* 'End' shape human being in the world, which seems to be made up of various cycles and rhythms of smaller, 'local' *ends*? And how, in the critical context of the present discourse, might my claim be justified - that cinema encapsulates and performs the eschatological movements of our being in the world? Pursuing these questions will lead this chapter towards some important conclusions regarding eschatology and the theological power of film.

THE LOGIC OF ESCHATOLOGY AS EXISTENTIAL FRAMEWORK: AUGUSTINE AND JEAN-YVES LACOSTE'S 'LOCAL ESCHATOLOGIES'

Eschatology, as a hopeful response to the incarnation, manifests in and shapes the reality of quotidian life in the world. The rhythms of eschatology that I have mentioned several times already, of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, are the most familiar rhythms of being in the world, as mundane and ubiquitous as the rhythms of sunrise and sunset, of day and night. And, just as the rhythms of sunrise and sunset are indissoluble from our conception of time, the eschatological movements which characterise human existence are bound to our distinct temporality. In every sense, eschatology anticipates our *passing*; through time, through the world, through death. It is telling that the pressure of death, the anxiety of nothingness, is all at once an existential and eschatological pressure, weighing on every present we experience. Phenomenologically, the appearance of phenomena in the world is always

appearance-in-time, because the self is consciousness-in-time. Indeed, in a passage elaborating on his concept of *thrownness*, Heidegger explores the essential temporality of Dasein (as '*within-time-ness*') through this same image of day and night, of sunrise and sunset: "In its thrownness Dasein has been surrendered to the changes of day and night."⁵⁶⁵ Thus it is Dasein's fundamental temporality which allows for talk about such 'rhythms' in the first place; the logic which underpins promise, anticipation, and fulfilment is the same logic of our temporal existence in the world.

Appearance, along with its corollaries of reappearance and disappearance, provides the best way of understanding this logic. Every appearance allows for the anticipation of future appearance and of re-appearance, but the latter depends on the prior condition of disappearance; the appearance of the sunrise is the grounds on which we anticipate another sunrise, but to anticipate the re-appearance of the sun without first experiencing its disappearance at sunset would be illogical. And, at the same time, that anticipated re-appearance is nothing less than fulfilment; this is inferred *a fortiori* from the prior realisation that the absence of such a re-appearance would be unfulfilment. It follows, then, that these rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, which are so fundamental to quotidian existence (we might replace the example of sunrise/sunset with the drama of seasonal weather cycles, or even simply the coming and going of a friend), are both inter-dependent and dependent on the temporality of human being in the world.

These rhythms are at the heart of Christian theology, too, for the drama of the incarnation, which is also the drama of eschatology, manifests as the drama of appearance, disappearance, and re-appearance: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ

⁵⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962) p. 465.

will come again. From this, and from the observations made in the paragraphs above, it is clear that the appearance of God in the world must be perceived through the temporal logic which underpins the rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment. Here, of course, is a point which is hardly original. For one thing, it is the reason why many theologians talk about God's appearance in history. Yet it is also a matter of enormous consequence in Augustine's theological anthropology. In *Confessions* XI, Augustine explores our interior perception of time as 'a distention of the soul' (*distentio animi*),⁵⁶⁶ going as far as to say, "it seems to me that time is nothing other than distention" (*mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem*).⁵⁶⁷ In the very next line, Augustine admits that he is unsure exactly what form this distention might take, but it seems that he uses the word to capture the meaning of his famous threefold conception of time as "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future."⁵⁶⁸ His concept of time as a distention of the soul (or 'mind', as *anima* is often rendered), therefore refers to the way that our being in time holds together in the present memory, attention, and anticipation, such that the present is always 'swollen' with past and future multiplicities.⁵⁶⁹

For Augustine, however, this conceptualisation of time only makes sense because God is the temporal and ontological 'end' of all things. This is the only way in which Augustine can overcome his struggle with the concept of time, and *Confessions* XI climaxes with Augustine's effort to draw the fragmented temporality of human being in the world into the singular form of an eschatological union with God:

⁵⁶⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, XI. 23. 30 and XI. 26. 33.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, XI. 26. 33.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, XI. 20. 26.

⁵⁶⁹ It should be noted how similar Bergson's understanding of time as interpenetrating duration - *durée* - is to Augustine's here (see Chapter III for my analysis of Bergson's treatment of time).

Leaving behind my former times, I recollect myself and follow the One. I forget what is past, and instead of being distracted I reach out, not for what is in the future and so transitory, but for those things which are before me: I press forward, going in the right direction, rather than being distracted, to the prize of my highest calling. There I shall hear the voice of praise and shall contemplate your delight which neither comes into being nor passes away.⁵⁷⁰

What Augustine shows is that the logic of eschatology unlocks a way of understanding our being in time. The concept of eternity, which properly belongs to God as an entity which “neither comes into being nor passes away,” is the key to apprehending our conscious experience of time as a ‘distention of the soul’, for Augustine says there is no such distention in the eternal mind of God (XI. 31. 41). All the prior examples Augustine uses to explore the perception of time by human consciousness are, on their own, insufficient to the task of explaining the temporality of our existence, though each remains insightful to a degree. Despite the virtues, for instance, of his example of ‘measuring’ the time extended or protracted in long or short syllables of poetry (XI. 22. 28), Augustine remains partly dissatisfied and moves on to the example of ‘the motion of a body’ in time (XI. 24. 31), before moving on again to the perplexity of measuring periods of silence (XI. 27. 34). In the end, he takes refuge in the idea of eternity and of eschatological union with God, conceptualising the eschaton as “leaving behind my former times” and contemplating the eternal “delight” of God. Eternity, then, becomes the concept which throws the aporias of our being in time into relief, contrasting our transitory perception of time with an abstract constant. By way of analogy, eternity is the horizon, endlessly deferred by the curvature of the earth, against which the undulating waves of past, present, and future

⁵⁷⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, XI. 29. 39.

moments are cast into relief, even as they crest and break in the present.

This relationship between the eternal time of the eschaton and the transitory, existential time of human being in the world is taken up by Jean Yves-Lacoste, who draws extensively on Augustine's theological anthropology. Eschatology, in fact, is so important to Lacoste's phenomenology that it is treated substantially in four of the nine essays in *The Appearing of God*.⁵⁷¹ In one of these essays, following Augustine, Lacoste takes recourse from eschatology in order to resolve the issue of self-identity over time, which can be put simply as the question 'in what sense am I the same person today as I was yesterday?' Or, to use Lacoste's own, more striking example, 'how do we make sense of identity and difference over time without "making the embryo radically identical to the dying man?"'⁵⁷² For Lacoste, a notion of an ahistorical self which ignores the existential reality of time is avoided by appealing to the logic of eschatology:

Recourse to an absolute future such as we have presented hypothetically with the support of theology allows us to think of the present tense of the self, myself as I am, without resorting to the metaphysical stratagem of an ahistorical substance to secure unbroken continuity. The self is not the 'same' from beginning to end, yet the present is not cut off from the past by an unbridgeable chasm.⁵⁷³

In other words, the logic of eschatology provides an existential framework for understanding the self and our being in the world. Moreover, for Lacoste, eschatology

⁵⁷¹ Eschatology plays major roles in the essays "Anticipation," "Giving and Promising," "From Present Self to Future Self," and "Resurrectio Carnis." Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

not only offers a way of resolving the inherent aporias of self, time, and identity, but it also offers a way in which we can make sense of anticipating the everyday phenomenal appearances which constitute our existence in the world. As he says in the abstract to a different essay, which also deploys eschatology in a crucial role, “We may receive anticipations of what cannot be given definitively within world-time, and ‘the’ end may be the only key we have to the status of nearer ends.”⁵⁷⁴ By this, Lacoste suggests that the eschatological concept of a final, ultimate ‘End’ is the key to interpreting the mundane, quotidian cycles of expectation and end which characterise the everyday appearances of phenomena in the world. Such cycles and ‘smaller’ ends are ubiquitous; they belong to that most familiar drama of appearance, disappearance, and re-appearance. As Lacoste puts it, “ends are legion, and there is no more commonplace experience than expectancy giving place to fulfilment,”⁵⁷⁵ (or, conversely, to unfulfilment - “it does not require a fulfilment to ‘put an end to’ something”).⁵⁷⁶

To these legions of quotidian, “nearer ends,” Lacoste applies the fascinating term of “local eschatologies.”⁵⁷⁷ He describes these as “last words or last experiences of this or that, which are still last words.”⁵⁷⁸ He uses a variety of examples to explain what he means by this. Some of these examples are of ‘ends’ which play out straightforwardly within time, like the promise of a friend’s visit, the anticipation of this visit, and the fulfilment (or unfulfilment) of the friend’s arrival (or non-arrival). Others, though they are still underpinned by the temporal logic of appearance, do not play out so straightforwardly within time, but rather become ‘ends’ in the qualitative sense of

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

final, ultimate ideals. The chief example Lacoste uses in this regard is the artistic example, like the performance of a musical piece, which we interpret while having in mind the hypothetical of its ideal, 'ultimate' performance by the musician.⁵⁷⁹ Local eschatologies, then, as Lacoste uses the term, refer to those most ordinary and familiar cycles of anticipation and fulfilment which constitute our existence in the world.

Eschatology is the key to interpreting these familiar cycles and to making sense of these quotidian 'local eschatologies'. Lacoste describes conceiving of the eschaton as a kind of 'dreaming', for the properly eschatological end - 'the End' - is only open to us via the theological imagination. Yet this 'dream', which is to say Christian theology of the eschaton, is vital to understanding our being in the world:

Nothing could be more commonplace than dreaming of 'the' end, an end to realize all expectancy and anticipation. Yet it is 'ends' in the plural, little local eschatologies, that our dream allows us to understand. [...] The logic of 'the' end is the only way we can take stock of local eschatologies.⁵⁸⁰

This is how the theological concept of the eschaton informs our being in the world now. Our experience is constituted by the drama of the appearance, disappearance, and re-appearance of phenomena in the world, and therefore by the rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment. The logic of eschatology provides a way of understanding these dramatic rhythms, while the concepts of eternity and the eschaton provide a way of setting our transitory, worldly and temporal existence into relief against an abstract constant. This is why Augustine takes refuge in eschatology towards the end of his discussion of time and the soul in *Confessions* XI, and it is why

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

eschatology plays such an important role in many of Lacoste's essays. To return to my previous analogy, the eschaton is that continually deferred ocean horizon, without which we cannot hope to perceive and reckon with the smaller, nearer lines of waves cresting and breaking around us. The logic of experience is the logic of the horizon. After all, consciousness is defined by that great phenomenological term 'intentionality', and so consciousness always has something 'on the horizon', be it the visit of a friend or the coming of Spring, the next participation in the Eucharist, or even the fulfilment of eschatological promise that the sacrament prefigures.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FILM

So far, this chapter has pursued the eschatological significance of cinema through textual analysis. It has engaged filmic representations of the eschaton structurally, symbolically, and thematically, for example through the soteriological and eschatological tropes of utopia and dystopia, or through cinematic allegories like *Field of Dreams* and *The Shawshank Redemption*, and most notably through Tarkovsky's various ciphers for 'the End', like the Room or nuclear annihilation. However, as I have maintained at a number of stages in this chapter, the eschatological significance of cinema extends beyond allegorical or symbolic renderings of the eschaton, important though these are. Rather, this significance is experiential and performative, and I argue that film can encapsulate and perform the eschatological movements of our being in the world. It is fitting now to draw together the crucial ideas of this chapter in order to justify this claim, which pertains to the experiential analysis of cinema as an artistic medium, rather than the textual analysis of individual films.

Like any art form with the capacity for narrative, cinema can effect the rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment (or unfulfilment) through the rubrics of storytelling. Yet it is cinema's distinct visual and temporal medium which opens up other eschatological significance. The drama of cinema is that same, ordinary and familiar drama of the appearance, disappearance, and re-appearance of phenomena in the world - only more localised, more accentuated by the temporal distention of the film image. To recall the discussion of Chapter III, and Tarkovsky's powerful idea that cinematic art is 'time printed on celluloid', the shot is contingent on the time given to it. By the techniques of protraction and contraction, including the long take and montage, the composition of film manifests the same temporal logic which underlies human being in the world as 'thrownness' within time. And so, just as Augustine conceives of our time-sense as a distention of the soul, each cinematic shot is temporally distended; each shot is 'swollen' by the viewer's memory of past images and frames, and by the viewer's anticipation of future images.

In this way, the 'cut' can be conceived of as an eschatological event - not in the properly eschatological sense belonging to God, of course, but in the 'nearer', microcosmic sense of Lacoste's 'local eschatologies'. I say 'event' because it is an appearance in the clearest phenomenological sense, manifest corporeally and temporally as an object of conscious experience. As an event, the 'cut' corresponds with the existential and eschatological rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, which is why it is used by filmmakers to facilitate expectation or tension, anti-climax or resolution. However, every cut is only *an* end, never *the* end. Similarly, the passing of a film's final image is never truly that film's 'End'; it can be replayed, rewound, and even if the last extant copy of that film were somehow destroyed, it could still in some sense be replayed within one's memory, like Augustine's psalm.

The cinematic 'cut', then, is eschatological in that sense of a local eschatology, deriving its entire significance as *an* end from the overriding logic of *the* 'End'.

This is how cinema can encapsulate and perform the eschatological movements of our being in the world. While the eschatological significance of cinema can certainly be realised textually, through allegory, analogy, or symbolic renderings of the eschaton, it can also be realised more substantially, via the medium of film itself. In this sense it can be realised experientially, in the making and viewing of film, for the film experience is shaped by the drama of appearance; by the eschatological rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment. These rhythms are not only expressed narratively, but also formally, according to the rubrics of the medium. By encapsulating and performing these most familiar rhythms, the film experience can uncover the eschatological dimensions of human being in the world. Like every experience in and of the world, this experience can never be properly eschatological in the sense belonging to God, that is, in the sense of *parousia*, but it can reveal something of the eschatological logic which characterises our existence, adumbrating 'the End' in its own localised 'ends'.

Conclusions

What theology and theological practice does cinematic art give rise to? What are the perceptual and affective potentials of film for theology, and what, if anything, is theological about the cinematic medium itself? In short, what is the theological power of film as an art form? This is the central question to which this thesis has responded, not seeking to 'apply' theological concepts to cinema, but rather to explore the theological concepts which arise from film as an artistic medium. The previous seven chapters have explored the various valencies of this interdisciplinary encounter, bringing together cinematic theory and theological inquiry through reciprocal analysis. Now, this conclusion will draw together the insights of the preceding discussions on the way to summarising the contributions this project has made to the study of theology and film. In doing so, I will avoid simply restating the arguments made in previous chapters, focussing instead on clarifying the most important ideas to emerge from these investigations, and on illustrating some of the ways in which truly interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis has underpinned these discussions. First, though, it is important to revisit some of the methodological considerations that were emphasised in the early chapters of this thesis, since methodology has been one of this project's central motivations: how, in the first place, should theologians approach cinematic art as an object of interpretation?

As was observed in the Introduction, the vast majority of studies in theology and film are driven by the analysis of narrative and thematic content. In other words, such studies usually adopt a *textual* approach to cinema, preoccupying themselves with questions of theological imagery or allegory, or of certain religious tropes and the ways in which their artistic expression can feed back into the academic study of theology and religion. Such studies are indeed valuable, and textual analysis is an integral pillar of theology as an academic discipline. However, in order to articulate a properly theological understanding of the power of film, a different extension of theological-cinematic analysis is required. In order to understand the theological significance of film as an art form, the theologian must move beyond the textual analysis of particular films and directors, and engage in the experiential and performative analysis of the cinematic medium itself. She must investigate cinematic art formally and stylistically, tracing the theological contours of the film experience from all angles of encounter.

While this approach to cinematic art has often been overlooked, it is by no means unprecedented. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, several commentators - both theologians and film theorists - have interpreted cinematic art in a similar manner. In Chapter VI, I observed that Christopher Deacy's *Screen Christologies* contributes a valuable analysis of the way that film can prime the viewer to perform the redemptive arc themselves. In Chapter IV, I considered Gerard Loughlin's interpretation of *Nostalgia* as "a kind of prayer,"⁵⁸¹ which recognises a particular capacity of cinema for attentiveness and contemplation. And at the beginning of this

⁵⁸¹ Loughlin, "The Long Take," p. 379.

thesis, in Chapter I, I examined Paul Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film* closely, because it attempts to consider the theological power of film formally and stylistically, rather than purely through narrative and thematic analysis. This thesis is constructed in the same vein as these approaches, driven by the same methodological concerns about the form and style of cinema as an artistic medium, and focussing on the film experience itself as the primary object of interpretation.

Given this experiential focus, this thesis has constructed a critical framework grounded in phenomenology, and specifically in the film-phenomenology of theorists like Vivian Sobchack and Laura U. Marks. Often tracing their roots to the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological approaches to cinema have become a major trend in the film theory of recent decades.⁵⁸² Here, at the intersection of theology and cinematic art, film-phenomenology provides invaluable resources for the experiential analysis of cinema, and therefore for a properly theological interpretation of the power of film. It is worth reflecting on two particular theoretical insights which have played vital roles in this thesis: the challenge levelled at conventional subject-object dichotomies, and the foregrounding of the body in the film experience.

While both of these are explored in slightly different ways by various theorists, the first is most readily drawn from the work of Vivian Sobchack. In Chapter II, as I conceptualised the film experience through the movements of encounter, Sobchack's theory became vital to my understanding of 'the other on, through, and behind the screen'.⁵⁸³ The key to this, as the exposition in Chapter II made clear, is a radical

⁵⁸² I discussed the development of film-phenomenology in depth in Chapter II. Merleau-Ponty's essay 'Film and the New Psychology' (in *Sense and Nonsense*) is a seminal text among phenomenological approaches to film, but, as we have seen, Merleau-Ponty's influence on film theory extends far beyond this one essay, as theorists pick up on different aspects of his philosophy, like the 'body-subject' or the collapse of the subject-object dichotomy.

⁵⁸³ I use this particular phrase to call back to the final section of Chapter II, where I discuss the particular contributions of film-phenomenology in depth.

overhaul of the conventional subject-object dichotomy in the viewing of film. Conventionally, the theoretical paradigm for interpreting cinematic art invests the viewer-subject with absolute interpretive authority; the viewer's gaze acts upon the object of the film image in just the same way that it might act upon and interpret any passive artefact in the world. The reception of the cinematic, however, is not a passive event, and Sobchack's distinct achievement was to subvert this convention, re-conceiving cinematic subjectivity through her phrase "all viewers viewing."⁵⁸⁴ With these three words, Sobchack sought to capture "the mutual possession of this experience of perception and its expression by filmmaker, film, and spectator."⁵⁸⁵ In other words, 'all viewers viewing' identifies a radical reciprocity at the heart of the film experience, which must therefore be understood as a dynamically *intersubjective* experience. Conventional interpretative models of perception and expression fail to capture the reality of this intersubjectivity, since cinematic art is experienced all at once as "the *perception of expression* and the *expression of perception*."⁵⁸⁶

One of the primary ways in which Sobchack interrogates the modes of filmic subjectivity is through the second theoretical insight mentioned above: she foregrounds the body in the film experience. Sobchack is clear from the outset of her project that her theory is philosophically indebted to Merleau-Ponty (the epigraph to *The Address of the Eye* is taken from Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*), and her film theory is most clearly Merleau-Pontian in the way that it emphasises the centrality of the body-subject. Sobchack is committed to Merleau-Ponty's maxim that "the body is the vehicle of being in the world,"⁵⁸⁷ and therefore that subjectivity must be understood via embodiment: "my body is the unperceived term at the centre of the

⁵⁸⁴ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 84.

world toward which every object turns its face.”⁵⁸⁸ Just as Merleau-Ponty emphasised the embodied nature of perception in order “to leave behind, once and for all, the classical subject-object dichotomy,”⁵⁸⁹ Sobchack conceptualises cinematic expression and perception as a fundamentally embodied mode of experience.

There are multiple ways in which Sobchack and other theorists conceptualise film as an embodied medium. In the first instance, there is the rudimental analogy of the cinematic body: camera and microphone as eyes and ears; dolly, crane, or tracking rig as the musculoskeletal system which moves the sensory apparatus. More pertinent to the question of subjectivity, though, is the possibility of the film’s body itself, which Sobchack understands concretely as ‘the I/Eye’ of a film, an ‘invisible other’ whose ‘I/eye’ “belongs neither solely to the filmmaker, the camera, or the spectator,”⁵⁹⁰ but which is nonetheless represented through the camera’s particular spatio-temporal position in the world. This invisible ‘I/Eye’ is at once *viewer*, *view*, and *viewed*; as such, it collapses the conventional subject-object dichotomy, and it opens up a genuinely experiential interpretation of cinematic art as an embodied mode of perception-cum-expression.

Cinematic embodiment is developed even more substantially by phenomenological analysis of the sensuality of the film experience. Such analysis has been invaluable to this thesis, especially in Chapter VI, where I explored the theological significance of cinema in light of the doctrine of the incarnation. The embodied reality of the film experience renders cinema as a carnal medium of encounter with the world; the film experience - like any experience in and of the world - is an experience perceived

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵⁹⁰ Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 203.

through the body-subject, sensuous (and sensible) only in the flesh. As has been discussed in detail throughout the various chapters of this thesis, several theorists have pursued this interpretation of cinema as a carnal, enfleshed medium of expression and perception (such as Steven Shaviro and Jennifer M. Barker). Most prominent among them, at least within the parameters of this project, is Laura Marks and her theory of haptic visuality.⁵⁹¹ In short, Marks conceptualises cinematic art as a kind of synaesthesia, such that the medium reciprocally translates haptic and somatic sensation into audio-visual sensation. Just as the person with synaesthesia may reconstitute the perception of the colour red as some other physical sensation, film reconstitutes other corporeal sense data in its audio-visual expression. In a very real sense, the eyes ‘grasp’ for sights and the ears ‘catch hold’ of sounds; such is the tactility of cinema. Phenomenological analysis like this serves to accentuate the significance of embodiment in the film experience. Methodologically, it is particularly crucial to the theological analysis of the art form, for the emphasis on corporeality opens up connections with the doctrines of creation and the incarnation, which the second half of this thesis explored in depth.

The significance of film-phenomenology as a methodological framework for this project rests on these two theoretical insights: re-conceiving (inter)subjectivity in cinematic art, and foregrounding the body in the film experience. Together, they paved the way for several key theological moves: they opened up an understanding of cinema as a theologically and incarnationally significant encounter ‘in the flesh’ (Chapter II); then, in comparison with the distinct temporality of film, they revealed the unique capacity of cinematic art for attentiveness and contemplation (Chapter IV); and, in Part Two, they informed the doctrinal investigations undertaken in the final

⁵⁹¹ Again, see Chapter VI for the full account of Marks’ theory and the theological implications for the doctrine of the incarnation.

three chapters. Ultimately, the phenomenological method has proved essential for interpreting the theological power of film, because it constitutes a methodological shift towards the experiential and performative analysis of cinema. Film-phenomenology makes the film experience the object of its interpretation, not limiting its inquiry to the exclusively textual analysis of certain films, and instead facilitating theological analysis of the cinematic medium itself. This is the only kind of analysis which can hope to pursue a properly theological account of the power of film.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES IN THEOLOGY AND FILM

In the wake of these methodological conclusions, it seems pertinent briefly to discuss the future of theology and film as an interdisciplinary discourse. First of all, and perhaps this goes without saying, the textual analysis of cinema will continue to be valuable to the theologian, because certain films and filmmakers will continue to explore theological ideas narratively and thematically in their work. As with any interdisciplinary study broadly situated within theology and the arts, there will always be value in research which explores a work of art as a theologically significant 'text', be it within music, literature, painting, film, or any medium. Yet I hope that this thesis has opened up a different space within the field, one for genuinely interdisciplinary theological-cinematic analysis; that is, analysis of the cinematic medium itself, which makes the film experience the object of its interpretation, and which takes seriously the insights of film theory for theological study. There are many ways in which such theological-cinematic analysis may proceed, of course, and no doubt I will not be able to foresee every possible avenue for future study in these short reflections. Perhaps a study of cinema through liturgical theology may prove fruitful,

for example (I will say more about this below); or a study which focuses primarily on the theological significance of filmmaking; and perhaps it would be productive to explore the theo-political significance of film, much in the same way that some liberation theologians have already explored Third Cinema.⁵⁹²

I would, however, like to take the time here to emphasise one particular area that I believe would be productive for future research: the interpretation of the film experience through the language of religious experience. I am not yet convinced by the credentials of a straightforward analogy between experiencing art and the phenomenon of religious experience, which is why I criticise certain aspects of Paul Schrader's theory of transcendental style (see below for my conclusions on Schrader, and see Chapter I for my full critique of transcendental style). However, many notable theologians, film theorists, and practitioners of film have observed or else hinted towards the potential for such an analogy,⁵⁹³ and a rigorous analysis of this potential will certainly be valuable for the interdisciplinary study of theology and film.

Schrader, I think, has the right intentions insofar as such an analysis might proceed, although his theology is largely underdeveloped, as well as being over-reliant on Rudolf Otto. Moving beyond Schrader's contribution, however, I think that the analogy between the film experience and religious experience would be best explored in dialogue with two particular thinkers. The first is Friedrich Schleiermacher (at least his early work), especially in light of his context within Romanticism and his insight into the role of art within religion.⁵⁹⁴ The second is William James, whose research into

⁵⁹² See, especially: Antonio D. Sison, *Screening Schillebeeckx: Theology and Third Cinema in Dialogue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁵⁹³ Including Tarkovsky himself, who wrote that, "in the case of someone who is spiritually receptive, it is therefore possible to talk of an analogy between the impact made by a work of art and that of a purely religious experience. Art acts above all on the soul, shaping its spiritual structure." Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 41.

⁵⁹⁴ Particularly in the *Speeches*: Schleiermacher, *On Religion*.

religious experience remains seminal reading in the study of theology and religion. Only from the foundation of a thorough account of religious experience can film theorists like Schrader adequately consider the analogy between the film experience and religious experience. Conversely, theologians must pursue a sufficient understanding of the film experience (and not just certain narrative and thematic readings of individual films) if they are to explore this analogy themselves.

Theology and film continues to evolve as a discourse, and this is just one of many avenues through which truly interdisciplinary research may proceed in the field. As more and more filmmakers create counter-currents to the rising tides of secularism and individualism, and as everyday spectators continue to try to make sense of their existence in the world through cinematic art, theologians and scholars of religion will have a vital role to play in interpreting the medium of film. While I hope that this project has helped to identify various lacunae for theological-cinematic analysis to investigate in future, these conversations must be left for another day. Now, though, it is time to draw some further conclusions about this thesis, and about the questions with which its inquiry began.

THE THEOLOGICAL POWER OF FILM

The methodological decisions and contributions summarised above opened the door for this thesis to address the research question with which it began: What is the theological power of film? This question, and particularly my somewhat idiosyncratic use of the word 'power', was expounded in the Introduction. As a response to this question, this thesis has engaged a diverse range of theological discourses, from the

incarnational theme of 'encounter' to theologies of prayer and contemplation, from the theology of participation to the eschatological rhythms of human being in the world. The task which this conclusion now attempts is to summarise and clarify the most important elements of this response. Doing so will emphasise several crucial insights and, in drawing these together now, this conclusion will be able to offer a final evaluation of the question at hand.

First, I want to begin by clarifying a critical element of this project's theological inquiry: the dialogue with sacramental theology and the use of the sacramental idiom in interpreting cinema. Sacramental theology has not had a chapter devoted to it in the way that the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and eschatology have had, but it has played a crucial role throughout this thesis, becoming a kind of leitmotif, returning to the fore again and again at crucial junctures. The appeal to sacramentality begins with the phenomenological method: with the recognition, on the one hand, that artistic expression and perception is fundamentally corporeal, contingent on the shared embodiment of artist and seer; and, on the other hand, that sacramentality cannot be divorced from the aesthetics of sensibility and sensuality. Indeed, representation is only possible because of the embodied reality of our being in the world, which enables art to re-present the world mimetically, by virtue of prior contact with the phenomena it witnesses.⁵⁹⁵ And so artistic representation signifies an encounter with the world, attending to this encounter even down to the most mundane detail. It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty deploys the sacramental idiom himself, when describing the work of the painter: "the body, the life, the landscapes, the schools, the mistresses, the creditors, the police, and the revolutions which might

⁵⁹⁵ I am referring particularly to the discussion of representation in Chapter VI, which emphasised the mimetic character of artistic representation - and especially cinematic representation - through Marks' theory of haptic visuality.

suffocate painting are also the bread his work consecrates.”⁵⁹⁶ To put it another way, as Richard Kearney does, “the flesh of art is invariably indebted to the bread of life.”⁵⁹⁷ The theologian can follow suit, taking recourse from the language of sacramentality, and using the sacramental idiom to interpret the processes of artistic representation and signification. It is in this manner that this thesis has interpreted cinematic art sacramentally, for the medium of film *consecrates* the world that it images in the very manner that Merleau-Ponty suggests.

Theologically, this interpretation of cinema depends on a particular understanding of sacramentality. It is necessary, for one thing, to extend the parameters of sacramental theology beyond the specific liturgical site of the sacraments themselves. Here, I have followed Louis-Marie Chauvet and his project “to develop a fundamental theology of sacramentality which would permit a global reinterpretation of Christian existence.”⁵⁹⁸ Such a ‘theology of sacramentality’ does not attempt to designate all of worldly existence as somehow *intrinsically* sacramental, which would erase the boundaries of divine disclosure and encounter on which the sacraments depend. (And not to mention introduce immense problems for theodicy as well.) Rather, Chauvet’s fundamental theology of sacramentality entails a reinterpretation of the doctrine of creation, realising that the world is posited as sacramental gift from the start.⁵⁹⁹ I will not re-narrate this particular argument in full here, since it has been anatomised in detail in earlier passages (especially in Chapter I and in the final section of Chapter V). Yet the crucial conclusion to be drawn is this: cinematic art can become a response to the gift of creation, where the cinematic image consecrates worldly existence by mimetically re-presenting it and offering it anew to the viewer’s gaze and loving

⁵⁹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 64.

⁵⁹⁷ Kearney, *Anatheism*, p. 90.

⁵⁹⁸ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* p. 548.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.* In particular, pp. 548-555.

attention.

There is a sense, too, in which the ritual of cinema consecrates the world, the bodies, and the lives which appear in the film experience. Filmmaking and film viewing uncover new significances in what is imaged, for both the screen and the camera become veils, drawing closed or opening up and offering the phenomena they witness to the communal table of 'all viewers viewing'. And it is a ritual in no small way; there is a 'liturgy' to the film experience, modified slightly from all angles of encounter. Among the cast and crew there is a certain rubric of call and response to check the sound, to start the action, to 'check the tapes' before moving on. Among the viewers, we take our seats and make ourselves ready in anticipation, at some customary point the lights go down, silence is observed, and then afterwards, as credits roll, there is an indistinct period of time which is implicitly given for introspection and contemplation.

These rubrics of film-viewing are not peculiar to the 'high church' of cinema-going, either, for they have become so ingrained in the film experience that they are replicated or re-enacted across the various other arenas of film-viewing. From the household's home cinema to the individual spectator on her laptop, from the pilgrimage of festival culture to the live-streamed indie premiere, the shapes of these rubrics are inscribed into the film experience as a common grammar among viewers. The power of this ritual, of this cinematic 'liturgy', is best expressed through the sacramental idiom. These various rubrics of filmmaking and viewing pronounce the significance of the film experience, which - through the haptic and somatic nature of the medium - is then presented to all viewers as an encounter in the flesh, calling for our attention, our participation, our response.

Here the language of sacramentality comes into contact with several other vital ideas that this thesis has explored. Again, I will not re-narrate these in full here, but only summarise and clarify those that are worth bringing to the fore in this conclusion. The first is cinema's capacity for attentiveness and contemplation, even to the point of prayerfulness. I suggested above that the cinematic image is offered to the loving attention of the viewer's gaze, and I contend that this is a crucial aspect of the theological power of film. Chapter IV explored this capacity for attentiveness, particularly through a sub-section which explicitly deployed the sacramental idiom ('the sacramentality of the mundane'), and through a close analysis of Walter Burghardt's theology of contemplation.⁶⁰⁰ However, such attentiveness is by no means necessary to the film image; it is contingent on certain stylistic and formal renderings, which may or may not be adopted by filmmakers. But a unique capacity for attentiveness is a potential of the cinematic medium nonetheless. In this sense, filmic attentiveness is intimately connected with the formal realism emphasised by the likes of Bazin; it is the potential for attentiveness to the minutiae of our mundane, quotidian existence. And so, there is a surprising materialism contained within the deeply spiritual movements of filmic attention. As Marks writes, recognising the space for love within the haptic visuality of cinema, "part of learning to touch it is to come to love its particularity, its strangeness, its precious and inimitable place in the world. [...] So materialism's close corollary is cherishing."⁶⁰¹

What is more, this capacity for attentiveness depends on another distinct formal quality of cinema; the medium's unique temporal aesthetic. This is why the arguments of Chapter IV emerged in the aftermath of my investigation into time and film, which

⁶⁰⁰ Expounded in: Burghardt, "Contemplation."

⁶⁰¹ Marks, *Touch*, p. xii.

was the focus of Chapter III. As Bazin recognised, the realism which he celebrated within cinema was inseparable from the temporality of the film image; he wrote that “the cinema is objectivity in time [...] the image of things is likewise the image of their duration.”⁶⁰² Time emerges as an enigmatic and essential category here, for filmic attentiveness is rendered through certain appropriations of time. To conceptualise it through Burghardt’s theology of contemplation, cinema can take ‘a long, loving look at the real’. Yet, this look is ‘long’ not in the sense of measured time or counted seconds, but in the sense that Henri Bergson captured with his concept of *durée* (duration). That is to say, in the sense of an intensity of time *felt*; not as a quantifiable period of time ‘spent’, but as a qualitative multiplicity of moments which endure in their appearance to consciousness.⁶⁰³

Chapter III expounded Bergson’s philosophy of time and applied it to the cinema in dialogue with Gilles Deleuze and his seminal concept of the ‘time-image’. It was also in this discussion that Tarkovsky emerged in a crucial role, for he recognised time as “the supreme idea of cinema as an art.”⁶⁰⁴ I will say much more about Tarkovsky later in this conclusion, but for now it is important to emphasise that his style of filmmaking, complete with its distinct protraction and distention of time, embodies the attentiveness that Chapter IV sought to describe and analyse. After all, it was Tarkovsky’s *Nostalgia* which prompted Loughlin to describe the film as “a kind of prayer,”⁶⁰⁵ and in doing so Loughlin realised the ultimate extension of this filmic attentiveness through the focal technique of the long take. For the long take, as well as distending the time felt in a shot, also becomes a *longing* take. It is a stylistic

⁶⁰² Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Vol 1*, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁰³ For Bergson’s understanding of time as a qualitative multiplicity (as interpenetrating past, present, and future) see my discussion in Chapter III. And, in the primary text: Bergson, *Time and Free Will*.

⁶⁰⁴ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 63.

⁶⁰⁵ Loughlin, “The Long Take,” p. 379.

manifestation of Burghart's *long, loving* look, which both primes and performs contemplation in the film experience. In this way, cinematic art can attend to the corporeal phenomena of creation in a truly contemplative manner. It can attend to the enfleshed other encountered on, through, and behind the screen, and to the mundane reality of our quotidian existence, re-presenting it to us through the haptic and somatic medium of film, and offering it anew to our gaze through the ritual and rubrics of the film experience.

Out of this understanding of the theological power of film, the doctrine of creation comes to the fore. Along with understanding the place of attentiveness and contemplation within this doctrine, it becomes crucial to interpret the role of the artist and of human creativity within the overarching order of divine creation. Here, as Chapter V examined this particular intersection between theology and film, another key concept within this thesis' argument emerged: the theology of participation. How might human art and creativity respond to the call to participate in the divine order of creation? In what way can it even be said that the human artist 'creates'? At the crux of these questions is the doctrine of the *Imago Dei* and the understanding that the analogy of being (the *analogia entis*) extends in some way to creativity and artistry. Jean-Louis Chrétien's theology was essential to my discussion of these issues in Chapter V, as his essay 'From God the Artist to Man the Creator' probed this space within the doctrine of creation, exploring the parameters of the *analogia entis*, while interpreting human artistry as a form of participation in the image and likeness of God.

There are two key moves Chrétien makes which are worth recalling and clarifying in this conclusion. The first is to revitalise a doctrine of the *ars divina*. Drawing on

Nicholas of Cusa in particular (and his analogy of the self-portrait),⁶⁰⁶ Chrétien explores the idea that God's creation is like a work of art which turns itself back towards the artist. And so, Chrétien argues, human creatures are oriented back towards God through the *ars divina*, "in contemplation of the works of this divine art" and in "the living relation of our arts to the divine art."⁶⁰⁷ In this way, the human artist, who is created in the image and likeness of God, actualises this likeness by participating in the creative act, which is itself made possible by divine creativity. The second key move Chrétien makes is to emphasise the manual and technical (τεχνη) nature of artistry and creativity. As he says of all creative and artistic work, "Every human work is manual: always and everywhere it is our hands at work, even when they do not labour."⁶⁰⁸ This is part of Chrétien's rejection of the conventional dichotomy between manual 'craft' and conceptual 'art'. Chrétien argues that it is precisely the manual, haptic, and somatic production of human artistry that becomes the site for participation in the *ars divina*.

At the end of Chapter V, I conceptualised this theology of artistic participation through the motifs of the garden and the gardener, where the work of the artist is to be understood as 'tending' and 'attending' to creation. The motif of the gardener, which draws on the Biblical metaphor of creation as 'garden', further develops several crucial insights into the theological power of film. For one, it accentuates the sacramental idiom that has played such an important role in articulating the arguments of this thesis. For another, and this is especially clear given the impact of Chrétien's theology, it possesses a revealing consonance with the insights of film-phenomenology, insofar as the work of the artist is to be understood as mediating an

⁶⁰⁶ From Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de Mente* ('Metaphors for Mind'). Cited by Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 121.

⁶⁰⁷ Chrétien, *Hand to Hand*, p. 121.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

an embodied encounter with the world as creation. Film-phenomenology shows that cinema can realise this encounter uniquely as an art form, since film mediates the world haptically and somatically, representing the phenomena it witnesses mimetically, by virtue of the prior touch of the camera. The filmmaker, through the various techniques and mechanics of the cinematic medium, shapes and transforms the garden given to her, participating in its creation, cultivating its landscape and recreating around her even as she is formed and transformed by the artistic act.

Finally, in light of these conclusions and by way of drawing together the key ideas of this thesis, it is fitting to give the last word to one particular argument which runs throughout the previous chapters: that the theological power of film is best revealed through dialogue with the doctrine of the incarnation. Chapter VI explored cinema specifically through this dialogue, but the incarnational significance of film has been equally prominent in the discussions of other chapters, especially in Chapter II. In that chapter I argued that the power of film is to mediate perception and experience through the shared reality of embodied being in the world. That power depends on the embodiment of all participants in the film experience; viewer, filmmakers, and the film itself, which is embodied in camera and technology as well as in that perceptive-performative and perceived-performed 'other' that Sobchack identifies. Film, like any experience in and of the world, is sensible only in the sensuous; it mediates worldly phenomena through their appearance to us in the flesh. As such, cinema becomes a way to respond to what Lissa McCullough describes as "our existential task," which is "to live into the world incarnationally in faith."⁶⁰⁹ In other words, the incarnation represents a call to live and love in the flesh of the world (for God "came to what was his own," John 1:11). Film, as an embodied and enfleshed medium of perception, as a

⁶⁰⁹ McCullough, "Prayer and Incarnation," p. 211.

form of representation facilitated by haptic and somatic contact with the phenomena it witnesses, is an art form through which we can discern and respond to this call.

TARKOVSKY: THE VOCATION OF THE FILMMAKER AND THE ROLE OF TIME-IMAGE

The last task of this conclusion is to reflect on the indispensable role Tarkovsky has played in this thesis. Tarkovsky, both through his filmmaking and through his reflections on cinema in *Sculpting in Time*, provides a singular illustration of the theological power of film. Even from a textual analysis of his oeuvre, the significance of his work is clear to the theologian. Spanning the genres of historical biography, dystopian and science fiction, family drama, and semi-autobiographical streams of consciousness, the theological weight of his cinematic corpus is inescapable. These seven films are pregnant with theological imagery, imbued with the motifs that Tarkovsky inherited from his Eastern Orthodox tradition, and they explore various theological ideas narratively and thematically with great subtlety. Between the images of icons that he fossilises on celluloid, between biblical tropes like the prophetic madmen of *Nostalghia* and *The Sacrifice*, and between the christological form of his characters, from the innocence of Ivan and the servant Rublev through to the Stalker and Gorchakov, the whole of Tarkovsky's oeuvre is suffused with his theological imagination.

Yet Tarkovsky's contribution goes beyond the narrative and thematic content of his own films, powerful though these are. Crucially, Tarkovsky's style of filmmaking and his written reflections on the cinema contribute to the experiential and performative analysis of film which this thesis has pursued. Here, as this conclusion draws to a

close, there are two vital contributions to emphasise: Tarkovsky's reflections on the spiritual and theological role of the artist; and his remarkable insight into the temporality of cinema and the theological significance therein.

Tarkovsky understands the role of the artist in a way which echoes the theology of participation that I expounded in dialogue with Chrétien. In particular, Tarkovsky explicitly connects the creative faculty of the artist with the doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, concluding *Sculpting in Time* by asking: "Perhaps our capacity to create is evidence that we ourselves were created in the image and likeness of God?"⁶¹⁰ From this, and from many similar ideas expressed across the pages of that remarkable hybrid of memoir and cinematic theory, it is clear that the artistic act plays a crucial role in Tarkovsky's theological anthropology. Yet Tarkovsky expresses the theological dimensions of human art enigmatically, leaving his reader consistently desiring him to say more. Usually, he expresses it in very general terms, as an aspiration towards the infinite, or some spiritual 'ideal': "I want to underline my own belief that art must carry man's craving for the ideal, must be an expression of his reaching out towards it; that art must give man hope and faith."⁶¹¹ And he will often express it as a striving towards spiritual 'truth', deploying the theological language of vocation: "Touched by a masterpiece, a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act."⁶¹² Crucially, the response to this call and the pursuit of this spiritual 'ideal' is not simply a matter of representing theological allegories or reproducing religious themes or narratives. Rather, the artist's response must be to represent experience itself; to *re-present* our being in the world through an encounter with the phenomena recreated in art. As Tarkovsky puts it himself, "the

⁶¹⁰ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 227.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

director's task is to recreate life: its movement, its contradictions, its dynamic and conflicts."⁶¹³

For Tarkovsky, the way in which the filmmaker 'recreates life' is through time. When he asks, in a key passage of *Sculpting in Time*, "What are the determining factors of cinema [...] not only formally, but even spiritually,"⁶¹⁴ his answer is unequivocally 'time'. "What is the essence of the director's work?" He asks one page later, before answering: "We could define it as sculpting in time."⁶¹⁵ As I observed in Chapter III, however, in the Russian the full sense of this phrase is closer to the idea of 'imprinting' or 'stamping', as with a wax seal, than it is to 'sculpting'. And so Tarkovsky, like Marks, understands film through the metaphor of haptics, as a kind of somatic contact with the world; as "printing on celluloid the actuality of time [...] complete with that material reality to which it is indissolubly bound, and which surrounds us day by day and hour by hour."⁶¹⁶ In other words, Tarkovsky thought that the ultimate potential of cinema is simply to mediate an experience in and of the world, which is facilitated by the art form's distinct realism and unique temporal aesthetic.

Time has been a critical focus of this project's theological-cinematic analysis. Alongside Tarkovsky, Gilles Deleuze has proved invaluable as a dialogue partner through his seminal two volumes on the cinema. Likewise, the analysis in Chapter III of the technical and mechanical appropriations of time available to the filmmaker has also been influential. Yet this investigation of cinematic time must trace its way back to the very beginning of this thesis, to Chapter I and the theological critique of Paul Schrader's transcendental style. For Schrader insightfully recognises the theological

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

importance of time in his film theory, even if he falls short of articulating this importance soundly. To Schrader's credit, he wrote *Transcendental Style in Film* more than a decade before Deleuze's dual-volume work on cinema and, when Schrader published the book in 1972, Tarkovsky had only made two films and was still largely unknown in the West. Schrader's particular achievement in that text was to recognise that certain filmic renderings of time - and particularly what he called 'dead time' - could facilitate a focus on the everyday, which (he argued) would set the stage for a spiritual experience.⁶¹⁷ I discussed the shortcomings of Schrader's theory in full back in Chapter I, but I do think his work is valuable; it is a raw, inchoate description of the critical role time plays in the theological power of film, which Deleuze and Tarkovsky would recognise more fully over the next two decades.

In 2018, in an essay which served as an introduction to the new edition of *Transcendental Style in Film*, Schrader himself reflected on the seismic impact Deleuze and Tarkovsky had on his theory. Adopting Deleuze's seminal concept of the time-image, Schrader argued that "transcendental style evolved as 'time-image'."⁶¹⁸ That is, that transcendental style depended on the cinematic image in which movement was subordinated to time, so that time becomes the substance of the image, as Deleuze puts it.⁶¹⁹ Likewise, Schrader included in that new introduction a section titled 'Tarkovsky is the Fulcrum'. Schrader viewed Tarkovsky's use of time as a defining moment in the history of cinema: "There is a before-Tarkovsky and an after-Tarkovsky,"⁶²⁰ he wrote. And, crucially, Schrader recognised that Tarkovsky was doing something very different to what he had tried to anatomise with transcendental

⁶¹⁷ See Chapter I for my critique of this; especially of Schrader's over-reliance on Otto and the false binary he sets up between transcendence and the everyday phenomena of the world.

⁶¹⁸ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 21.

⁶¹⁹ Recall Chapter III.

⁶²⁰ Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*, p. 9.

style.

Here is the difference between Tarkovsky and Schrader, in my view, and the reason why Schrader failed to understand the full theological significance of Tarkovsky's filmmaking and his reflections on the cinema. Tarkovsky's unique rendering of time is not simply a technique deployed within a system of filmmaking which is designed to elicit a certain response from the viewer, such as the techniques Schrader outlines in transcendental style. Rather, Tarkovsky's rendering of time is a way of performing attentiveness and contemplation; a way of being in the world contemplatively and even prayerfully, as Loughlin suggests and as the recent release of *A Cinema Prayer* further reveals.⁶²¹ Tarkovsky famously identified time as "the supreme idea of cinema as an art,"⁶²² but not so much in a technical sense as in a spiritual sense:

Time is a state: the flame in which there lives the salamander of the human soul. [...] Time cannot vanish without a trace for it is a subjective, spiritual category; and the time we have lived settles in our soul as an experience placed within time.⁶²³

It is almost certain that Tarkovsky did not read Bergson, but the above words resonate with the concept of *durée* in Bergson's philosophy of time. *The time we have lived settles in our soul as an experience placed within time.* With this Tarkovsky seems to articulate what Bergson described as the experiential appearance of time to consciousness, in which past, present, and future interpenetrate as a qualitative multiplicity. Just as

⁶²¹ This documentary, made by Tarkovsky's son, is a collection of home video footage exploring Tarkovsky's life and work. Much of this footage consists of Tarkovsky reflecting on the cinema, and the role of the artist in the modern world.

⁶²² Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, p. 63.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

Deleuze drew especially on this aspect of Bergson's philosophy in order to understand the cinematic time-image, so Tarkovsky understands cinema as an experience of 'being in time', which is indissolubly bound to our embodied being in the world. In this way, Tarkovsky argued that "what a person normally goes to the cinema for is *time*: for time lost or spent or not yet had. He goes there for living experience; for cinema, like no other art, widens, enhances and concentrates a person's experience."⁶²⁴

This is the theological power of film which this thesis has presented. Through cinematic art the filmmaker and viewer can live and love in the material and temporal flesh of the world, and cinema - in the widening and enhancing of experience that Tarkovsky describes - consecrates the phenomena that it witnesses, offering it anew to the viewer's gaze. The filmmaker, playing the role of the 'gardener', tends and attends to creation in her craft, participating in its creation and transforming the landscape around her. In the somatic crucible of the film experience, the viewer encounters the other on, through, and behind the screen. This encounter is mediated through the distinct temporality and haptic visuality on which filmic representation depends, such that cinematic art delivers us carnally, immediately, and intimately into the flesh of our existence. As such, film becomes a way of discerning and responding to the gift of creation, and to the incarnational task revealed in the life of faith. The medium of film invites this response to be loving, insofar as it confronts all participants with the embodied encounter at the heart of the film experience; it invites this response to be lived through the rhythms of promise, anticipation, and fulfilment, which is the logic of eschatology that characterises our being in the world; and it invites this response to be attentive and contemplative, to cherish the corporeality and materiality of creation, such that it recognises the full significance of the belief that, in

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Christ, God “came to what was his own.” (John 1:11)

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